

The transparency paradox: When transparency cues helps or backfires for brands?

Rafaela Reck^a, Ana Carina Castagna^{ad}, Saleh Shuqair^{bc}, Diego Costa Pinto^a

a NOVA Information Management School (NOVA IMS), Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Campus de Campolide,
1070-312 Lisboa, Portugal

b Coventry University, 113A Gosford St, Coventry, CV1 5DL, UK

c University of Balearic Islands, Spain

d University of Cologne WISO, Universitätsstraße 24a, 50931, Köln, Germany

This is the submitted version of the paper:

Reck, R., Castagna, A. C., Shuqair, S., & Costa Pinto, D. (2021). The transparency paradox: When transparency cues helps or backfires for brands? Manuscript submitted for publication in Journal of Cleaner Production. DOI/Link to the published version:

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.133381>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

TRANSPARENCY NUDGES IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

ABSTRACT

Transparency has become one of the key subjects of environmental policies research as ethical scandals and consumers skepticism are growing. Transparency nudges in corporate social responsibility (CSR), are used to positively impact a company's image. However, conflicting findings have emerged regarding the effectiveness of CSR messages. Further, little is known about how transparency improves consumer pro-environmental behavior, neither whether this can backfire. Does it impact the brand and trust towards brands? Do consumers perceive it as greenwashing? Three studies (one survey and two experimental studies; N = 582) were conducted to verify if information transparency of known (vs. unknown) fast-fashion brands can increase pro-social purchase behavior and trust. Further, we present greenwashing as a boundary condition of transparency effects on trust.

Keywords: Information transparency, CSR, Brand image, Greenwashing.

1. Introduction

The clothing industry is the world's third-biggest manufacturing industry (House of Commons, 2019), however, it is one of the industries that pollutes the most (BBC, 2017). There is a real concern about the fashion industry, as it encourages over-consumption and does not have a sustainable supply chain, often using underpaid labor and low-quality material. Recently, consumers are becoming more concerned about their choices, growing their pro-environmental choices and skepticism (Grazinni et al., 2020; Phau et al., 2015; Sweetin et al., 2013) and awareness regarding companies' ethical behavior (e.g., information transparency). To respond to this, some companies are becoming more transparent about their processes, providing information about the supply chain and the materials used in their products.

Transparency can be defined as disclosing information that can be used in decision-making processes. It is a way to disclose corporate social responsibility (CSR) messages transparently and clearly. A CSR strategy can be a minority support program, cause-related marketing, socially responsible employment, manufacturing practices, and environmental sustainability (Ellen et al., 2006; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). Using information transparency, companies can demonstrate that they are effectively doing the ethical principles they are alleging, and when this information is perceived as low, it can damage the business image (Turilli and Floridi, 2009).

Such as CSR, information transparency may be seen as greenwashing, according to the level of consumers' skepticism (Illia et al., 2013). Torelli et al. (2020) defined greenwash as different misleading communications, such as CSR messages, that have the purpose to develop positive beliefs regarding the company's environmental practices. Without confidence in the information disclaimed by the company, consumers don't know what or who to trust (Chen and Chang, 2014).

Transparency has become one of the key subjects of environmental policies research, once

transparency is better for the environment, for democracy, and the empowerment of the powerless (Mol, 2015). Thus, we claim that it can be an important factor in reducing the attitude-gap of pro-environmental choices. However, there is a lack of studies regarding the importance of information transparency for consumer pro-environmental behavior (Romani et al., 2013), especially using fast-fashion companies. Previous studies on information transparency within the fashion industry found that transparency has a significant and positive relationship with trust, attitude, and word-of-mouth but not with purchase intention (Brandão et al., 2018), that consumers perception of transparency directly affects attitude toward the brand (Kang and Hustvedt, 2014) and the presence of high information transparency on CSR messages of apparel brands influenced consumers' schemas positively, and in turn, they evaluated messages more favorably (Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire, 2017). Thus, to our knowledge, we are the first to study how transparency nudges as indexes, certifications, and ecolabels impact consumer pro-environmental behavior (see appendix A for literature review).

Drawing on this research needs, we manipulated the use of Fashion Transparency Index 2020, an annual report of 250 of the world's largest fashion brands (Fashion Revolution, 2020), and analyzed consumer's responses comparing two different brands. Extent literature in transparency has studied the 2017 Index to explore the transparency status of sustainability disclosures and discover higher transparency of supply chain in fast-fashion brands compared to luxury brands (Jestratijevic et al., 2020). Chang and Jai (2015) analyzed the use of attribute and benefit positioning approach of an H&M advertisement on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions and Neumann et al., (2020) investigate consumer perception, trust, and purchase intention of fast-fashion consumers. However, none of these studies used, in different experiments, the presence of an Index of transparency and how it influences consumers' purchase intention and trust of a fast-fashion brand, neither compared the level of perceived greenwashing with the presence of a CSR message.

We build on transparency and CSR literature to study fast-fashion brands and consumers'

perceptions regarding its transparency since it is well known as a not sustainable field. Therefore, we compare H&M, a known brand, with a fictitious one. Thus, in three studies we analyze if pre-concepts of a known (vs. unknown) brand influence CSR transparency perception. Therefore, we propose and test that the presence of an Index will not influence consumers' purchase intention or improve the image of the real fast-fashion brand, but will be associated with greenwashing perception. The focus on information transparency is a mandatory step needed in the industry to achieve significant changes by providing information for the customers to choose and support the brands that are actively doing something. For this, it is necessary to understand their behaviors regarding the purchase intention of products associated with it.

This research makes several theoretical and managerial contributions. We extend the literature on CSR and sustainable brands by examining in three experiments the use of different CSR messages (i.e., Index of transparency and sustainability points) and their effects on a real versus fictitious fast-fashion brand. We demonstrate the conditions in which the use of an Index or other CSR message (i.e., sustainability points) can lead to pro-environment purchase, brand image perception, and behavior. Further, we show that the brand type moderates the effect of transparency on trust and how greenwashing works as a boundary condition of our effects. To the best of our knowledge, this study contributes to the non-existing literature on the behaviors of consumers regarding CSR on transparency and greenwashing of the fashion industry.

From a managerial standpoint, this research alerts to the importance of the fast-fashion shift not only on transparency communication but also in firms' actions and production. That is, if consumers' perceived brand image is not aligned with companies' transparency communication, it will backfire. Thus, our results claim that fast-fashion brands that wish to shift toward a more ethical and sustainable production need to match their transparency communication with a new brand image. That said, companies and policymakers could benefit from these research findings as our results

highlight that, especially for well-known brands, a transparency plan needs to be carefully developed to increase congruency between brands' actions, products, and communication.

We organize the remainder of the study as follows. First, we introduce the purpose of research and research questions and define a theoretical framework. Afterward, we present our hypothesis development. Then, we present the results of our three studies. Finally, we discuss the implications for literature, marketers, research limitations, and provide directions for future research.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Information transparency and the Fashion industry

The concept of information transparency started to be related to the fashion industry after all the scandals became news worldwide regarding the poor conditions of the factories, mostly in third world countries (Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire, 2015; Brandão et al., 2018; Kang and Hustvedt, 2014). Many consumers and activists started to put pressure on apparel brands to solve the main problem of “sweatshops”, factories where workers are employed at low wages under poor conditions (Micheletti and Stolle, 2007). With that comes distrust and a lack of credibility of the companies.

Transparency is a way of establishing positive relationships between consumers and corporations, under the communication of CSR efforts and information about the processes of the companies (Reynolds and Yuthas, 2008). Transparency can be used as a strategy for companies to improve consumers' awareness of their values and efforts, especially those who involve sustainability (Lin et al., 2017). Thus, the efforts of companies to be transparent are to make

consumers trust in their transparent communication (Kitchin, 2003).

Previous research focuses on the analysis of information transparency in the fashion industry. Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire (2015, 2017) explore in two studies the role of brand schema in the effectiveness of communication of socially responsible practices, and gender differences in information processing, testing information transparency on messages. The presence of high information transparency in these messages positively influenced consumers' schema and evaluation of the message. Jestratijevic et al. (2020) explore the data of the Fashion Transparency Index 2017 to verify if the type of information disclosed is selectively prioritized. The authors found that there is a higher level of transparency among mass-market brands, also known as fast-fashion.

Fashion Revolution is a non-profit social enterprise responsible for developing reports and campaigns worldwide about transparency in the fashion industry, as the Fashion Transparency Index. They evaluate if brands are publishing about their environmental and human rights policies and how much information is publicly disclosed. In this Index, they developed a rating methodology to benchmark brands' public disclosure using five key areas: policy and commitment; governance; traceability; know, show & fix, and spotlight issues (Fashion Revolution, 2020).

The fast-fashion brand H&M was chosen as the real brand for our experiments 1b and 2 because in the 2020 Fashion Transparency Index, it was rated as the best fast-fashion brand (Fashion Revolution, 2020). Fast-fashion is a business model, where the companies use low prices and many new collections responding quickly to fashion trends (Byun and Sternquist, 2008). To be able to perform in time with new trends, these companies require a fast supply chain response (Li et al., 2014). Since 2014 they launched the "H&M Group Sustainability Performance Report" where they detailed the impacts along their value chain, their commitment to ethics, climate

change, sustainability, communities, and the reduction, reuse, recycling of their products. All the products from the brand have a product background on the product page with information about the materials and suppliers (H&M website, 2020).

Hill and Lee (2015) examined the perceptions of a sustainable line extension in a fast-fashion company using the brand-extension theory. They used H&M and Zara as a study case and found that consumers positively accept the fact that fast-fashion retailers have sustainable products based on their previous knowledge of the brand. Some studies analyzed the H&M sustainability and CSR efforts (Dach and Allmendinger, 2014; Bly et al., 2015; Li et al., 2014; Shen, 2014) however none of the studies analyzed the perceptions of information transparency in the H&M website nor used the Index to understand consumer pro-environmental purchases and trust.

2.2 The impact of CSR Transparency Messages on Pro-environmental behavior and Greenwashing perception

Recently, with consumers increase awareness regarding ethics and environmental concerns, companies are using CSR messages to increase consumer trust and behavior. Information transparency and certifications can be a way to promote CSR actions and increase consumer trust. Kim et al., (2020) using a fictitious fashion brand found that transparency have a positive effect on purchase intention if the information is perceived as fair. Lee et al., (2020) investigated the relationship between certification reputation and consumer behavior and found that the congruence between product and certification predicts purchase intention.

However, despite CSR being recognized by the literature as positive for the brand, some CSR actions and messages can backfire. Hence, to be perceived as transparent a brand needs to be congruent with its message (Torelli et al., 2012) and when the message is perceived as credible,

they are more likely to have intention to purchase (Kang and Hustvedt, 2014). Thus, this study will extend the previous findings by comparing a fictitious fast-fashion brand with a real one in order to identify the real outcomes of information transparency of a known company and its influence on purchase intention.

Many companies are adopting sustainable claims using green marketing to promote and differentiate their products (Chen et al., 2011). However, most of these strategies associating products with sustainability are unreliable. The term greenwashing comes from misleading consumers regarding the environmental benefits of products or environmental practices of a company (Parguel et al., 2011). It is also related to companies focusing only on the salient aspect of CSR and neglecting the unnoticeable, for example, fast-fashion brands are becoming more and more green using eco-friendly materials but, aren't improving in other aspects like working conditions in their factories (Wu et al., 2020).

CSR messages are the tools to communicate sustainability and in the formation of ethical corporate perceptions (Balmer et al., 2007; Fukukawa et al., 2007). Although, consumers can find it difficult to distinguish between truthful information or even trust the CSR information of a company since greenwashing is a tactic to mislead consumers to believe in the environmental practices and benefits of a product. With that in mind, the benefits of CSR messages may be questionable, even for truthful and responsible companies (Parguel et al., 2011).

That said, information transparency is a way of build trust with consumers. Previous studies found that the perception of a company's information transparency directly affects consumer trust and attitude (Kang & Hustvedt, 2014), as well as the congruence between a product and its certification (Lee et al., 2020). However, when a brand is not congruent with the transparency of sustainable claims the consumer can have a negative association and distrust (Torelli et al., 2012).

Some studies found that the relationship between certification and trust is not significant (Kimery and McCord, 2002; Wang et al., 2004; Kim and Lennon, 2008). This study will extend this analysis by using an Index of information transparency.

Even with the importance of understanding greenwashing, there is a lack of research articles related to trust (Aji and Sutikno 2015; Chen and Chang, 2012, 2013; Rahman et al., 2015). Szabo and Webster (2020) analyzed perceived greenwashing and its outcomes when consumers interact with a company website selling a t-shirt. It was found that perceived greenwashing is associated negatively to brand attitudes and purchase intentions and that even with truthful green marketing, consumers can view it as greenwashing because of past negative experiences with deceptive marketing. In this line, De Jong et al. (2018) presented, with three types of product information including a website page, a study regarding the effects of greenwashing on consumers. In their study, greenwashing has a detrimental effect on consumers' views of the communicative integrity of an organization (De Jong et al., 2018).

Greenwash strategies can puzzle consumers regarding the true attributes of a companies' products, because of the unreliable information used (Ramus and Montiel, 2005). Chen and Chang (2013) analyzed the perceived greenwashing of Taiwanese consumers and found that it is negatively related to green trust. This mistrust can directly affect third-party certifications and information transparency. To minimize this distrust, companies must disclose enough information not only the information they claim to be green (Chen and Chang, 2013). Although prior research has analyzed the relationship between greenwashing and trust, none has highlighted this relationship in the fashion industry neither used trust as the dependent variable.

3. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

Previous studies on information transparency within the fashion industry focused their models on the relationships among transparency, social responsibility, trust, and purchase intention (Kang and Hustvedt, 2014), purchase intention of women fashion consumers (Brandão et al., 2018), gender differences in brand schema (Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire, 2015), source of message and attitude towards the message (Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire, 2017), the type of information disclosed among luxury and mass-market fashion brands (Jestratijevic et al., 2020) and information transparency moderating the relationship between consumers' pre-schemas and post-schemas (Bhaduri and Copeland, 2020).

However, none of these studies used an Index of information transparency to measure its impact on consumers' actions. We propose that consumers can use certifications as a source of information to infer a company's level of transparency or sustainability (Lynch and Srull 1982). However, this certification will influence only the fictitious brand since the real brand has more previous associations, especially negative associations not congruent with a CSR message (Torelli et al., 2012). Therefore, it is unlikely that the use of an Index of information transparency will help consumers to perceive that brand as transparent or increase their purchase intentions. These previous associations can happen because consumers evaluate the brand in the context of prior knowledge (Torelli et al., 2012), therefore, they will evaluate the CSR message with this pre-concept in mind.

Based on the literature review, we develop our conceptual models manipulating information transparency in the form of an Index. We hypothesize that the presence of an Index will increase purchase intention and brand image of the fictitious brand, but not the real one.

Considering the above discussion, we argue that access to information transparency in the form of an Index will positively influence the purchase intentions and brand image of the fictitious

fast-fashion brand. We predict that using not only information about the product background but also information about the Index will have a higher impact on purchase intentions and brand image on the fictitious brand, which leads to the following hypotheses:

***H1.** The presence of an Index of information transparency will increase purchase intentions when consumers' have access to high information transparency (vs low information transparency) of a product for the fictitious brand but not for the real brand.*

***H2.** The presence of an Index of information transparency will positively increase the brand image of the fictitious brand, but not for the real brand.*

Building on the type of CSR message and perceived greenwashing, we propose in our second study that the type of CSR message will influence consumers' trust. Research suggests that depending on the context and the product, sustainable actions such as certifications can have a potential negative impact on product preference (Luchs et al., 2010; Sen and Battacharya, 2001). In a research Torelli et al. (2012) analyze the importance of the congruence between the brand concept and the adoption of CSR activities. For example, luxury brands and ecolabels. In the same line, fast-fashion brands are known as not sustainable, therefore, the presence of an Index of information transparency can be detrimental for the brand and its CSR messages.

In study 2 we will compare two different types of CSR messages, the Index of information transparency and a program of points for consumers who purchase sustainable products. Therefore, we theorize that consumers in the fictitious scenario will be more affected by the presence of CSR messages than the absence. The fictitious brand isn't connected with a pre-concept and bad image such as the real brand has. Formally:

H3. Brand type moderates the effect of transparency on trust.

Study 2 demonstrate the relationship between the CSR message and greenwashing on trust. Chen and Chang (2013) found in their study that greenwashing is negatively related to green trust. In their research, De Jong et al. (2018) found that greenwashing has a detrimental effect on consumers' view of the communication of the company, and Szabo and Webster (2020) found that perceived greenwashing is negatively associated with brand attitude and purchase intention.

Drawing from this literature, this research suggests that perceived greenwashing will be detrimental to the evaluation of the two CSR messages from the real brand, but not for the fictitious one. More specifically, consumers will not trust the information about the certification. When the perceived greenwashing is high, consumers will have higher trust in the certification in the fictitious scenarios than in the real brand. Also, we theorize that when perceived greenwashing is low, trust will be higher in the control scenarios. Therefore, we formally hypothesize:

H4. Greenwashing works as a boundary condition for the effects. The perceived greenwashing will decrease consumer trust for the scenarios with CSR messages for the real brand, but not the fictitious brand.

3. Methodology and Overview of Studies

This research consists of three experimental studies. The study 1a verified that there is a relationship of information transparency with purchase intention and that certifications are not an aspect of information that would influence the purchase decision of fashion products. Also, results

support the hypothesis that the brand used in our studies 1b and 2 (i.e., H&M) is related to information transparency in the fashion industry. Study 1b analyzes the impact of information transparency (vs. control) in the form of an Index on purchase intention and brand image. Study 2 extends previous findings by applying two different types of CSR message, the index and sustainability points, which awards consumers who purchase sustainable products. Further, Study 2 show the role of greenwashing perceptions on trust. Thus, when people perceive greenwashing it will decrease their trust for the scenarios with CSR messages on real brand scenarios, but not for the fictitious brand.

4. Study 1 a. Perception of information transparency in the fashion industry

Objectives

The purpose of the first study was more from an understanding perspective of consumers' perceptions about information transparency in the fashion industry. The main objective was verifying which aspects of information transparency the respondents considered most important when purchasing fashion products and to validate the brand used on Study1b as related to information transparency index.

Methodology

The survey design was based on the findings of an exploratory study with five females with different occupations, highly educated along with different knowledge about fashion and sustainability. All the participants in this study said that they didn't perceive information

transparency in women's fashion brands. Therefore, it was important for us to better understand the perceptions of consumers regarding the subject. The questions were adapted from Dach and Allmendinger, (2014), McNeill and Moore, (2015), and Öberseder et al., (2011), and used information from Fashion Revolution's Fashion Transparency Index 2020.

Selection of the fast-fashion brand

The brand was selected for this study in face of being elected with the highest degree of transparency in the Fast-Fashion Revolution's Fashion Transparency Index 2020 and because of the considerable number of studies using H&M combined with the Index, sustainability, and transparency. Further, we will verify if this selection is accurate in study1b.

Participants

A sample of 50 European adults was recruited through the Amazon Mechanical Turk platform in exchange for monetary compensation (62% men; $M_{\text{age}} = 31.2$; $SD = 8.97$). Amazon Mechanical Turk is a crowdsourcing website used to hire participants to perform tasks like research remotely.

Design and procedure

Participants were asked to answer open-ended questions about their perceptions about information transparency, and how they perceive information transparency in fashion brands. Then, they were asked to indicate using a nine-point scale (1=not at all important; 9=extremely

important) the level of information transparency that influences their purchase decisions ($M = 6$, $SD = 1.93$), to what extent they consider important five items of information transparency when buying fashion clothing and seven items of information transparency that would influence their purchase decision of fashion products. These items are taken from the Fashion Revolution Index. Following, they were asked in an open-ended question if they knew a fast-fashion brand with information transparency and why they considered it transparent. After that, they answered if they knew the brand H&M (100%) and their opinion on the information about the H&M's 1st place in information transparency in Fashion Revolution's Fashion Transparency Index 2020. After completing demographic questions, participants were asked to indicate if they wanted to be redirected to the H&M sustainability page (40%) or not: I will not check this information (22%); I already checked this information (38%).

Findings

Results confirm our supposition that H&M can be related to information transparency and that consumers perceive information transparency, or the lack of it, in the fashion industry. The first two open-ended questions showed us some interesting aspects of the respondent and were coded into themes. Asked about What does the term 'information transparency' mean to them regarding the things they buy: "Full information of process (where, by whom, how it was made" (52,6%) ("*Access all the true information about the things I want to buy*", male, 28), followed by "materials used" (15.4%), and "honest brand" (11.5%). The respondents answer about how they perceive information transparency in fashion brands as "non-existent" (30.4%), "an honest brand that informs" (23.2%), "in the communication" (12.5%).

When questioned if information transparency is a factor that influences their purchase decisions, participants have an above-average evaluation ($M = 6$, $SD = 1,94$). Participants considered “*What brands are doing to address forced labor, gender equality, living wages, freedom of association, waste, circularity, overproduction, use of more sustainable materials, microplastics, deforestation, climate change, and water use*” the most important when buying fashion clothing ($M = 6.78$, $SD = 1.97$).

The most important aspect of information transparency that would influence their purchase decision of fashion products was “Materials used in the product” ($M = 7.3$, $SD = 1.53$). “Certification and awards gained by the company” were the second least considered ($M = 5.94$, $SD = 1.73$).

Descriptive statistics				
	Mean	Min	Max	SD
Information transparency is a factor that influences my purchase decisions	6	1	9	1.938
To what extent do you consider the information below important when buying fashion clothing?				
What brands are doing to address forced labor, gender equality, living wages, freedom of association, waste, circularity, overproduction, use of more sustainable materials, microplastics, deforestation, climate change, and water use.	6.78	1	9	1.972
Brands’ social and environmental policies for both their own employees and workers in the supply chain	6.44	1	9	1.831
Brands to publish supplier lists at three levels: manufacturing, processing facilities and mills, and raw materials. (details such as supplier address, number of workers, gender, and union representation).	6.3	2	9	1.764
What brands disclose about how they assess suppliers against their policies, what are the results of these assessments, what do they do when problems are found, how workers can file complaints and how these are addressed.	6.12	2	9	1.923
Who on the executive board has responsibility for social and environmental performance and whether the person in charge can be easily contacted by the public.	5.54	1	9	1.971
Which aspect of information would influence most your purchase decision of fashion products?				

Materials used in the product	7.3	3	9	1.529
Recycling and reuse of garments	6.62	1	9	2.230
Working conditions in the supply chain	6.54	2	9	2.111
Actions on climate change, water, and deforestation	6.46	1	9	2.233
Inclusion and diversity policies	6.36	1	9	2.136
Certifications and awards gained by the company	5.94	2	9	1.743
Location of their factories and the number of workers	5.62	1	9	2.069

Note: Answers were given on a scale from 1 (not et all important) to 9 (extremely important).

Table 1 - Descriptive statistics

Asked if they knew a fast-fashion brand that has information transparency, 42% said they didn't know but 22% said H&M. Only Zara (4%) had more than 1 citation, with H&M being the brand with more citation. Since our study is about H&M, we took more time analyzing why they think this brand is transparent. One participant said, *“on their website every time you click on an H&M product you will be able to see the materials used to make the product”* (female, 26) and other said, *“It topped the list of 250 brands and is the only company to score over 70 percent”* (male, 26).

All participants knew H&M and were directed to the question *“H&M has been elected with a high degree of transparency, ranked in the 1st place in information transparency in Fashion Revolution’s Fashion Transparency Index 2020. What is your opinion on that?”*. Most of the responses said that *“this is good”* (35.3%), *“They publish all the product manufacturers and also processing facilities and fabric mills and they make all this information available”* (male, 28, master degree), some of them said they are *“unsure about the info”* (12%) *“My opinion is tentative as I am unaware of Fashion Revolution’s Fashion Transparency Index. Without knowing more about its credentials I couldn't place much value in the brand being number 1 in 2020. That said*

it might make me look up the Index and reconsider the brand" (male, 33, high school). Some of those who said this is good also said they are not sure about this information (10.8%). Five participants said they already knew about the Index and five questioned why the brand doesn't show this on their website or communication.

Analyzing the results of the correlations matrix "*Information transparency is a factor that influences my purchase decisions*" we can see the impact of information transparency in purchase intention. Thus, we validate the dependent variable since this variable has correlations superior or close to 0,5 with all but one question, "*Certifications and awards*", which is interesting to investigate since we are using information from an Index. Also, we found higher correlations in the variables that refer to the brand's actions validating our second dependent variable.

Discussion

The study 1a indicates that "*Materials used in the product*" is the most important aspect of information transparency that would influence their purchase decision of fashion products. Therefore, it validates the information about the product background that is used in our studies.

Also, it shows that H&M can be related to information transparency, since before being introduced to the questions about the brand and the Index, H&M was the one with more referrals when questioned if the participants knew a fast-fashion brand that is transparent. Considering that all of the participants knew H&M is also positive to validate our research and to go further to understand how this information can be used to influence the purchase decision. Some participants considered this a good thing but were also unsure about the information and the Index. They feel that they can't trust this, or they don't know Fashion Revolution's Transparency Index, so they

don't know if they are independent auditors. With that, we can see that some people don't trust certifications when they don't know the origin.

The results show an initial evidence that supports our prediction (H1) that information transparency is a factor that influences purchase decisions and that a company's information transparency influences the brand image (H2) since only 35.3% of respondents thought that H&M being the 1st in the Index was a good thing. Also, we could verify that some people can't trust certifications and would need more information about the company that's doing this certification. As seen in table 1, "*certifications and awards gained by the company*" is the 6th of 7 aspects listed to the participants to indicate which one would influence most in their purchase decision. This validates our hypotheses that certifications such as an Index don't influence the purchase intention regarding fashion products. In Study 1b we will extend these findings.

5. Study 1b

Objectives

Study 1b goal analyses whether and how information transparency positively influences purchase intentions (H1) and brand image. It extends Study1a analysis using a 2x2 between-subjects experimental design. Similar studies analyzed the relationship between transparency, social responsibility, word-of-mouth, and purchase intention (Kang and Hustvedt, 2014). Study 1b will extend this analysis by applying the presence of an Index and a real fast-fashion brand for comparison with a fictitious one.

This study manipulates the effect of information transparency in the form of the presence or absence of a banner with information about an Index of transparency on our main dependent

variables. Therefore, in this first study, we verify if an Index of information transparency can be used to influence consumers of fast-fashion brands. The main objective of this study was to verify if there is a difference of perceptions between the brand selected for this study and a fictitious one and if the brand influences the evaluation of information transparency. For this purpose, we created a fictitious brand, Yoli, with the same layout and color as the one analyzed.

Participants

Two hundred and twenty-eight participants were recruited through the Amazon Mechanical Turk platform in exchange for monetary compensation (59 percent men; $M_{age} = 35.8$; $SD = 11$). The participants were recruited from countries from Europe ($n = 125$) and North America ($n = 103$) to perform a comparison.

Design and procedure

The study design was a 2 (brand: H&M vs control) x 2 (information transparency: with Index vs without Index) between-subjects design. The study manipulates information transparency in two levels, high with the presence of a banner with information about the Index and low, without the presence of the banner, keeping constant other information about the product background. For information transparency manipulation, participants in the index condition were exposed to a banner of 1st place on the Index. This allows us to examine whether high information with the presence of an Index can lead to purchase intention and brand image. To verify if the brand influences our main effect, we manipulate the brand name, only changing it on the image,

maintaining the same design.

Four versions of an experimental product webpage for H&M and a fictitious brand called Yoli were developed. The text, image, and design are identical in every case, only the brand logo changed. A similar manipulation was applied by Green and Peloza, (2014) and Pinto et al., (2019).

First, participants are introduced to the scenario “Now you will see some examples of information available about PRODUCT BACKGROUND on the website of a brand. Please read carefully all the information”. We randomly assigned participants to one of four conditions: H&M with low or high information transparency and Yoli with low or high information transparency. Participants read “Imagine that you went to the H&M (Yoli) website store. This is a regular fast-fashion that sells cheaply manufactured clothing. You have found a basic sweatshirt that you really liked. Take your time analyzing this webpage, the next questions will be focused on that”. On the next page, they visualize the image of a website product page with information about the product background (See appendix for scenarios). After the manipulation, participants indicate their likelihood of purchasing, brand image, perceive information transparency and demographic variables.

Measures

Purchase intentions ($\alpha = .93$) were measured using 5 items on a nine-point Likert scale (1= Extremely unlikely to 9= Extremely likely) adapted from Berens et al., (2005) and Maxham and Netemeyer, (2003). Brand image ($\alpha = .54$) was measured using 4 items on a nine-point Likert scale (1= Strongly disagree to 9= Strongly agree) adapted from Erdem and Swait, (2004) and Hustvedt and Kang, (2013).

Results

A 2 (brand: H&M vs Yoli) x 2 (CSR message: with Index vs without Index) ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of the presence or absence of the Index of information transparency on purchase intention, brand image, and perceived information transparency.

Purchase Intentions. A 2×2 ANOVA examined the effect of information transparency and brand on purchase intentions. Results revealed that there was a significant effect of information transparency on purchase intentions ($F(3, 224) = 2.667, p = 0.048, \eta^2 = .035$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey analysis indicated higher purchase intention for H&M without Index ($M_{\text{control}} = 6.57, SD = 1.81$) than Yoli without Index ($M_{\text{control}} = 5.76, SD = 1.83$). However, the H&M with Index ($M = 6.08, SD = 1.77$) condition did not significantly differ from Yoli with Index, H&M without Index, and Yoli without Index conditions.

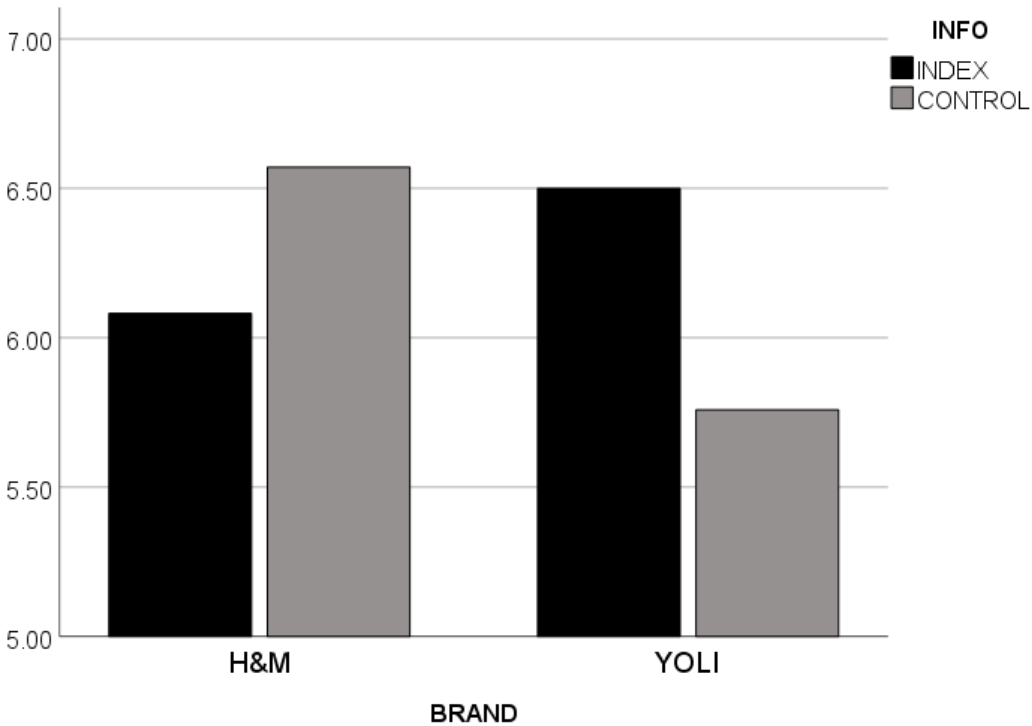


Figure 2 - Study 1: Means for Purchase intention in response to scenarios.

Brand image. The 2x2 ANOVA for the effects on brand image had a significant effect ($F(3, 224) = 3.453, p = 0.017, \eta p^2 = .044$). Tukey Post hoc comparisons analysis indicated that the mean for Yoli with Index condition ($M_{Yoli} = 6.81, SD = 1.60$) was significantly different than the H&M with Index ($M_{H\&M} = 5.78, SD = 1.78$). The other conditions did not differ in the post hoc analysis. Therefore, H2 was supported.

Discussion.

Findings from Study 1b suggest that the presence of an Index did not influence purchase intention and consumer evaluation of a real fast-fashion brand. When comparing the two H&M conditions participants did not identify the presence or absence of an Index like in the fictitious brand condition. This suggests that when in a real brand condition, the impact of an Index of

information transparency is not perceived and does not influence the evaluation of the scenario by the participants.

When analyzing the mean of the constructs, even without a statistical difference, we found a pattern of lower grades for the H&M with the Index condition compared to H&M without the Index condition. This pattern is not found in the Yoli with Index and Yoli without Index. In this case, the fictitious brand with Index had higher means than the without Index scenario. In almost all the constructs, the H&M with Index condition had lower means than H&M without Index condition.

Analyzing the brand image (H2) consumers perceived the fictitious brand as more reliable than H&M when in the presence of the Index. Even without a statistical difference between the groups, the mean of the H&M with Index is lower than the mean of H&M without Index in all the constructs of brand image. Especially when asked if “I believe this brand provides information about its environmental practices to customers in a clear way” participants in the H&M without Index had a better evaluation of the brand than in the H&M with Index condition. Since H&M is a fast-fashion brand and this type of company doesn’t have a good reputation regarding sustainable practices, this can mean that with the presence of an Index, people consider that the brand is practicing greenwashing. Also, they can think that the brand is even using false information and may not recognize the Index as being true. That’s why, with a fictitious brand, people evaluate it more positively than a real brand, because they don’t have a pre-concept of it. Also, for the CSR construct, even without a statistical difference, the mean of H&M with Index is lower than H&M without Index.

These results highlight the difference between a real fast-fashion brand and a fictitious one and make an alert for fast-fashion companies. Although we didn’t find statistical differences within H&M scenarios we verify the necessity of going further in the analysis of the relationship between

information transparency and fast-fashion brands. With that in mind, we will extend this relationship in Study 2 with the addition of trust and perceived greenwashing. Participants evaluate better the fictitious brand with the Index when considered that this brand doesn't pretend to be something it isn't. That means that they might consider the Index information shown in the H&M scenario, greenwashing.

6. Study 2

Objectives

Study 2 main goal is to further analyze the transparency information of Index but also comparing with another type of CSR message using a 2x3 between-subjects experimental design. Past research analyzed the relationship of CSR with ecolabels or certifications. Luchs et al. (2010) found that sometimes CSR messages, such as certifications, can backfire since consumers' perceptions are reduced by these messages and, consequently, reducing the preference for sustainable products. In the same line, brand concepts that aren't associated with CSR information (e.g. luxury and sustainability) cause disfluency and decline evaluation of the brand (Torelli et al., 2012). Study 2 extends this analysis using two different types of CSR messages, information transparency in the form of an Index and a program of points for clients who purchase sustainable products of the brand (i.e., sustainability program).

Participants

Three hundred and four participants were recruited through the Amazon Mechanical Turk

platform in exchange for monetary compensation (64.1 percent men; Mage 35.4; SD = 11). Since the demographic variables did not predict significant variance in the dependent variables of study 1, in this study we didn't select the countries of origin of the participants on MTurk. The participants were recruited from North America (n= 273) and other countries (n= 31) to perform a comparison.

Design and procedure

The study design was a 2 (brand: H&M vs Yoli) x 3 (CSR information: with Index vs sustainability points vs control) and a 2 (greenwashing: with greenwashing vs without greenwashing) x 6 (scenario: H&M with Index vs H&M with points vs H&M control vs Yoli with Index vs Yoli with points vs Yoli control) between-subjects design. The study manipulates CSR information in three levels, with the same banner with information about the Index of study 1, with a banner with information about points the consumer will receive when purchasing from the sustainable line and control, keeping constant other information about the product. Similar to the previous study, we verify if the brand influences this effect by manipulating the brand name, only changing it on the image and maintaining the same design.

Six versions of an experimental product webpage for H&M and a fictitious brand were developed. This study was adapted from Green and Pelozo, (2014) and Pinto et al., (2019). Similar to study 1b, participants were exposed to the scenario: "Now you will see some examples of information available about PRODUCT BACKGROUND on the website of a brand. Please read carefully all the information". We randomly assigned participants to one of six conditions: H&M with Index, points or control, and Yoli with Index, sustainability points or control. What differs from study one is the presence of an explanation about the Index or the points in the text

introducing the scenario (See Appendix for scenarios). After the manipulation, participants visualized a website product page with information about the product background. Then, they indicated their purchase intentions and reported their perceived trust and greenwashing.

Measures

Purchase intentions ($\alpha = .86$) were measured using 4 items on a nine-point Likert scale (1= Extremely unlikely to 9= Extremely likely) adapted from Berens et al., (2005) and Maxham and Netemeyer, (2003). Trust ($\alpha = .83$) was measured using 3 items on a nine-point Likert scale (1= Strongly disagree to 9= Strongly agree) adapted from Moon et al., (2013) and Lee et al., (2020). Greenwashing ($\alpha = .92$) was measured using 3 items on a nine-point Likert scale (1= Strongly disagree to 9= Strongly agree) adapted from Laufer, (2003).

Results

Trust. A 2 (brand: H&M vs Yoli) x 3 (CSR Message: with Index vs sustainability points vs control) two-way ANOVA was conducted. There was a statistically significant interaction between the effects of brand and condition on trust, $F_{(2, 298)} = 4.190, p = .016, \eta^2 = .027$. Main effects analysis showed that there were a significant difference between brands in the control condition $F(2, 298) = 5.190, p = .023$, where trust was higher in H&M (MH&M = 7.37, SD = .189) than Yoli (MYoli = 6.76, SD = .191), but there were no differences in the Index condition ($p = .863$) and the points condition ($p = .075$).

Analyzing the main effect of brands between their own scenarios we found a significant difference between Yoli scenarios $F(2, 298) = 3.154, p = .044$, where Yoli with points (Mpoints =

7.40, SD = .186) was more trusted than Yoli control (M_{control} = 6.76, SD = .191) but there were no differences between Yoli with Index versus Yoli with points ($p = .1.000$) or control ($p = .207$) or in the H&M scenarios ($p = .248$). These results support H5.

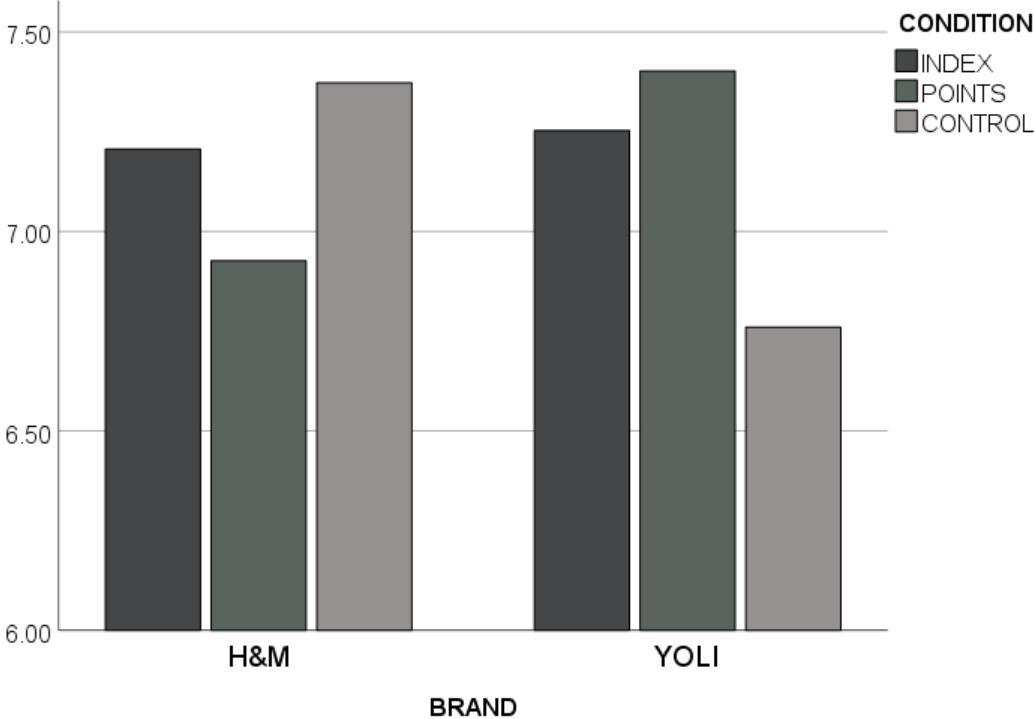


Figure 3 -Study 2: Estimated marginal means for trust in response to brand and condition.

Greenwashing. In order to verify if participants considered the information about certification greenwashing we recoded the variables into two groups. Those who considered it greenwashing were above average (M = 5.97) and those below average were those who didn't consider it greenwashing.

A 2 (greenwashing: with greenwashing vs. without greenwashing) x 6 (scenario: H&M with Index vs. H&M with points vs. H&M control vs Yoli with Index vs Yoli with points vs Yoli control) two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of greenwashing and the scenarios in the dependent variables. There was a statistically significant interaction between the effects of

greenwashing and the scenarios on trust, $F(5, 292) = 3.910$, $p = .002$, $\eta p^2 = .063$. The significant interaction was investigated further by evaluating the simple main effects of the variables separately.

Main effects analysis showed that there was a difference only in the group of participants who didn't consider the information greenwashing $F(5, 292) = 6.944$, $p < .001$. Comparing the scenarios, there were a difference in trust between the following groups: H&M control ($M_{\text{control}} = 7.37$, $SD = .245$) versus H&M with points ($M_{\text{points}} = 6.00$, $SD = .312$) and Yoli control ($M_{\text{control}} = 5.22$, $SD = .322$); H&M with Index ($M_{\text{Index}} = 6.87$, $SD = .286$) versus Yoli control ($M_{\text{control}} = 5.22$, $SD = .322$); Yoli with points ($M_{\text{points}} = 6.90$, $SD = .279$) versus Yoli control ($M_{\text{control}} = 5.22$, $SD = .322$) and Yoli with Index ($M_{\text{index}} = 6.86$, $SD = .266$) versus Yoli control ($M_{\text{control}} = 5.22$, $SD = .322$). There were no difference between the following groups: Yoli with Index versus Yoli points ($p = 1.000$); H&M with index versus Yoli with index ($p = 1.000$), Yoli with points ($p = 1.000$), H&M with points ($p = .589$), H&M control ($p = 1.000$); H&M with points versus Yoli with index ($p = .541$), Yoli with points ($p = .486$), Yoli control ($p = 1.000$); H&M control versus Yoli with index ($p = 1.000$), Yoli with points ($p = 1.000$).

There were some statistically significant results between greenwashing and no greenwashing. The results point to higher trust in the information about certification in the greenwashing groups. There were results in the following scenarios: Yoli with points scenario $F(1, 292) = 5.205$, $p = .023$, with greenwashing ($M_{\text{greenwashing}} = 7.70$, $SD = .217$) and no greenwashing ($M_{\text{no greenwashing}} = 6.90$, $SD = .279$); Yoli control $F(1, 292) = 32.515$, $p < .001$, with greenwashing ($M_{\text{greenwashing}} = 7.41$, $SD = .211$) and no greenwashing ($M_{\text{no greenwashing}} = 5.22$, $SD = .322$); H&M with points $F(1, 292) = 12.965$, $p < .001$, with greenwashing ($M_{\text{greenwashing}} = 7.36$, $SD = .214$) and no greenwashing ($M_{\text{no greenwashing}}$

= 6.00, SD = .312). There were no differences between the following groups: Yoli with Index ($p = .051$), H&M with Index ($p = .241$) and H&M control ($p = .688$).

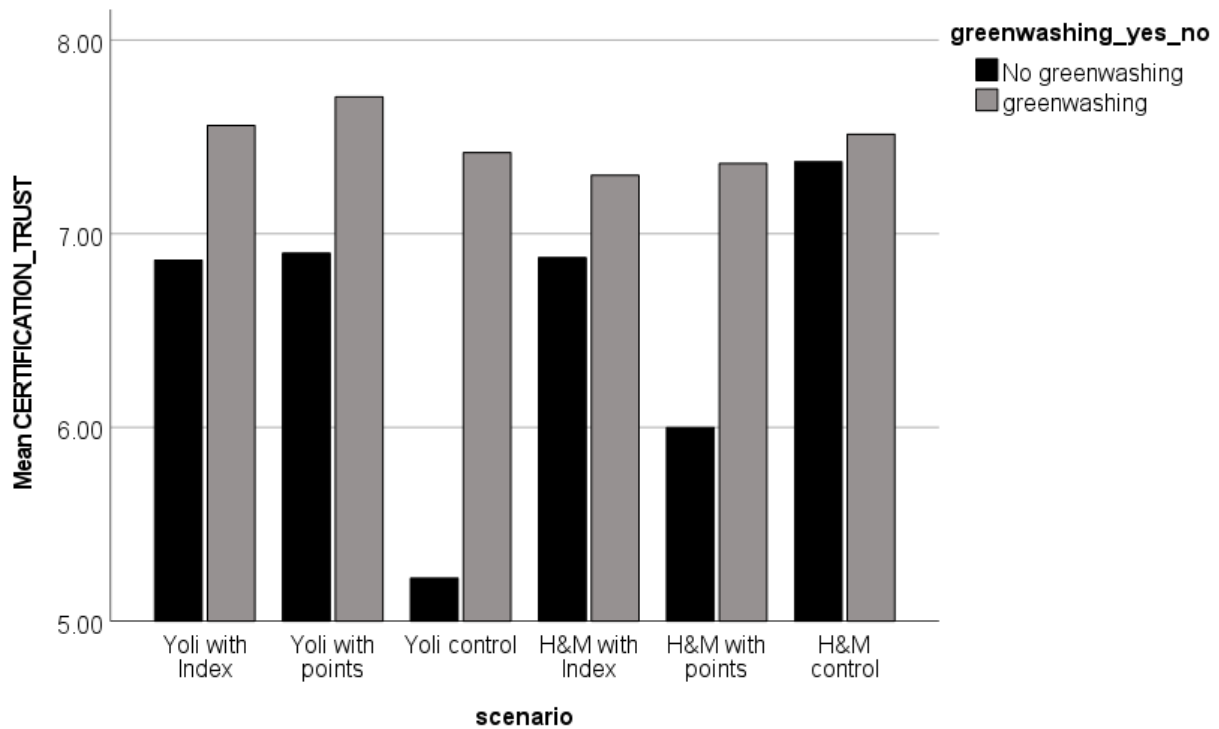


Figure 4 - Study 2: Estimated marginal means for trust in response to Greenwashing and scenarios.

Discussion

Study 2 extends the previous findings in important ways. First, it reaffirms the fact that for known fast-fashion companies such as H&M, information transparency in the form of an Index did not influence purchase intentions. This time, without any statistical difference. This indicates that the presence of CSR messages doesn't positively influence the purchase intentions of fast-fashion companies. Study 2 also extends the relationship of different types of CSR messages with the analysis

of a message with points to be used by the consumer. We find that consumers in the H&M with points condition had lower trust than in the H&M with Index or control conditions.

Analyzing the three groups, Index, points, and control separately there was a difference in trust only in the control condition, where participants evaluate H&M better than Yoli. This can indicate that people tend to trust more in scenarios with known brands, but when it has some type of certification or CSR message, they get more suspicious.

Comparing the brands between their conditions, H&M was more trusted than Yoli in the control condition. H&M in the control condition had the second-highest trust, only behind Yoli with points. Looking at the means of H&M with points ($M = 6.93$) and H&M with index ($M = 7.21$) we can verify that H&M with points had the lowest trust between H&M scenarios. With this information, we can verify that consumers have higher trust in certification in the Yoli scenario or the H&M without any CSR message.

When the scenario has the presence of the Index, trust is almost the same between the two brands, H&M ($M = 7.21$) and Yoli ($M = 7.25$), but when in the points scenario the evaluation of H&M is smaller ($M = 6.93$) than Yoli ($M = 7.40$). Since H&M had higher means than Yoli in the control scenario, this information shows us that the presence of any CSR message doesn't improve the brand image regarding certifications, only equals or worsens compared to the fictitious brand.

Second, study 2 also reveals the effect of greenwashing on trust (H6). Trust was always higher when participants considered the information greenwashing. Even without significant statistical results, H&M with points had the lowest trust between H&M scenarios, and the two scenarios with Index did not have significant statistical results. These findings suggest that consumers' trust doesn't increase with its presence or with some other CSR message.

By checking the differences between the greenwashing and no greenwashing scenarios, we can verify that trust has a higher mean when people consider greenwashing. That is, when people

consider what was presented as greenwashing, they value more certifications, but statistically significant results were only in the scenarios of Yoli with points, Yoli control, and H&M with points. Yet again, H&M with points had the lowest trust than all the others in the greenwashing groups.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

The focus on information transparency is a mandatory step needed in the fashion industry to achieve significant changes by providing information for the customers to choose and support the brands that are actively doing something. This research contributes to this area of the query, by providing additional knowledge regarding when and how transparency can backfire.

The present research sheds light on the role of transparency and CSR messages in influencing consumers' pro-environmental purchases. Across three experimental studies, this research demonstrates that CSR messages, in the form of an Index or sustainability points, increase brand image, purchase intention, and trust for a fictitious fast-fashion brand but not for a real fast-fashion brand (i.e., H &M). Our findings give an additional theoretical explanation for prior studies that studied positively information transparency with the fashion industry (Bhaduri and Copeland, 2020; Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire, 2015; Brandão et al., 2018; Chang and Jai, 2015). Additionally, we show that transparency does not always will lead to these positive responses, by comparing the results of a real fast-fashion brand (vs. unknown).

Past research shows that information transparency has a positive effect on consumers and brand image (Bhaduri and Copeland, 2020; Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire, 2017; Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire, 2011; Brandão et al., 2018; Kang and Hustvedt, 2014) however, none of them used an Index as a form of certification of this transparency, neither evaluate the level of perceived

greenwashing. Thus, our results improve the conceptualization of when and how transparency on CSR messages can backfire.

Our results show that for the real fast-fashion brand, the presence of an Index made no difference in purchase intentions in both studies. Thus, our results make contributions to CSR and transparency literature to identify how CSR messages can backfire. Previous associations with a real brand can harm CSR messages, and diminish brand image. That is, consumer awareness regarding fast fashion is increasing so any CSR or transparency message that a well-known fast-fashion brand does need to be congruent with their actions. We reinforce this in Study 2 by showing that greenwashing is a sensitive perception when a fast-fashion company enters into a CSR campaign. This is in line with previous research (Luchs et al., 2010; Sen and Battacharya, 2001, Torelli et al., 2012), where the real brand is affected by the incongruence between the CSR message and its image. That said, this research extends previous research by proposing that for consumers of fast-fashion brands, information transparency is not a factor that influences purchase intention or improves the brand image. It can be seen as greenwashing and consumers can be suspicious about the information disclose.

The current research offers important practical implications to the shift on fast fashion business models, offering insights to companies and policymakers. The fashion industry is increasing its actions regarding information transparency and CSR messages. However, the use of sweatshops and not sustainable materials has gained media attention, and consumers are increasing awareness. With previous scandals of the fashion industry, this research support companies in their way to sustainability and ethical changes by reporting how and in which type of brand CSR transparency can backfire. That is, our results unveil the importance of shifting the current fast-fashion business models to increase congruence between the area and the CSR message.

A critical objective for firms who seek to achieve trust in the fashion industry is being congruent

with the company actions, avoiding greenwashing perceptions. Thus, we also claim that a transparency message needs to be carefully followed with a communication plan to present their true transparency actions and changes. Our results make an alert that if people´ perceived the brand image as not being aligned with companies' transparency communication, it will backfire. That said, companies and policymakers could benefit from these research findings as our results highlight that, especially for well-known brands, a transparency plan needs to be carefully developed to increase congruency between brands' actions, products, and communication. Thus, fast-fashion companies that wish to change toward a more ethical and sustainable production need to match their transparency communication with a new brand image.

While the study showed some contributions, it has some limitations and offers avenues for future research. This research study focused on only one real brand and was conducted mostly with American consumers. An analysis comparing other real fast-fashion brands and consumers from other countries should be made to generalize the findings. In addition, this research was limited to two types of CSR messages. Future research could examine the relationship between information transparency and fast-fashion brands in different channels such as social media.

References

- Aji, H. M., & Sutikno, B. (2015). The extended consequence of greenwashing: Perceived consumer skepticism. *International Journal of Business and Information*, 10(4), 433.
- Alhouti, S., Johnson, C. M., & Holloway, B. B. (2016). Corporate social responsibility authenticity: Investigating its antecedents and outcomes. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(3), 1242-1249.
- Balkin, J. M. (1999). How mass media simulate political transparency. *Journal for cultural research*, 3(4), 393-413.
- Balmer, J. M., Fukukawa, K., & Gray, E. R. (2007). The nature and management of ethical corporate identity: A commentary on corporate identity, corporate social responsibility and ethics. *Journal of business ethics*, 76(1), 7-15.
- BBC, (2017). Qual é a indústria que mais polui o meio ambiente depois do setor do petróleo? Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/geral-39253994> (accessed on 20 March 2020)
- Berens, G., Van Riel, C. B., & Van Bruggen, G. H. (2005). Corporate associations and consumer product responses: The moderating role of corporate brand dominance. *Journal of Marketing*, 69(3), 35-48.
- Berrone, P., Fosfuri, A., & Gelabert, L. (2017). Does greenwashing pay off? Understanding the relationship between environmental actions and environmental legitimacy. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 144(2), 363-379.
- Bhaduri, G., & Ha-Brookshire, J. E. (2011). Do transparent business practices pay? Exploration of transparency and consumer purchase intention. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 29(2), 135-149.

Bhaduri, G., & Ha-Brookshire, J. (2015). Gender differences in information processing and transparency: cases of apparel brands' social responsibility claims. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*.

Bhaduri, G., & Ha-Brookshire, J. (2017). The role of brand schemas, information transparency, and source of message on apparel brands' social responsibility communication. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 23(3), 293-310.

Bhaduri, G., & Copeland, L. (2020). Going green? How skepticism and information transparency influence consumers' brand evaluations for familiar and unfamiliar brands. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*.

Bly, S., Gwozdz, W., & Reisch, L. A. (2015). Exit from the high street: An exploratory study of sustainable fashion consumption pioneers. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 39(2), 125-135.

Brandão, A., Gadekar, M., & Cardoso, F. (2018). The impact of a firm's transparent manufacturing practices on women fashion shoppers. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 9(4), 322-342.

Byun, S. E., & Sternquist, B. (2008). The antecedents of in-store hoarding: measurement and application in the fast fashion retail environment. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, 18(2), 133-147.

Chang, H. J. J., & Jai, T. M. C. (2015). Is fast fashion sustainable? The effect of positioning strategies on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions. *Social Responsibility Journal*.

Chaudhuri, A., & Holbrook, M. B. (2001). The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: the role of brand loyalty. *Journal of marketing*, 65(2), 81-93.

Chen, Y. S., & Chang, C. H. (2013). Greenwash and green trust: The mediation effects of green consumer confusion and green perceived risk. *Journal of business ethics*, 114(3), 489-500.

Chen, Y. S., Lin, C. L., & Chang, C. H. (2014). The influence of greenwash on green word-of-mouth (green WOM): The mediation effects of green perceived quality and green satisfaction. *Quality & Quantity*, 48(5), 2411-2425.

Cherian, J., & Jacob, J. (2012). Green marketing: A study of consumers' attitude towards environment friendly products. *Asian social science*, 8(12), 117.

Dach, L., & Allmendinger, K. (2014). Sustainability in corporate communications and its influence on consumer awareness and perceptions: A study of H&M and Primark. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 130(15), 409-418.

De Jong, M. D., Harkink, K. M., & Barth, S. (2018). Making green stuff? Effects of corporate greenwashing on consumers. *Journal of business and technical communication*, 32(1), 77-112.

De Vries, G., Terwel, B. W., Ellemers, N., & Daamen, D. D. (2015). Sustainability or profitability? How communicated motives for environmental policy affect public perceptions of corporate greenwashing. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 22(3), 142-154.

Edelman (2020). Edelman Trust Barometer [pdf] Available at: <https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2020-01/2020%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report.pdf>.

Ellen, P.S., Webb, D. J., & Mohr, L. A. (2006), Building Corporate Associations: Consumer Attributions for Corporate Socially Responsible Programs, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 34 (2), 147–57.

Erdem, T., & Swait, J. (2004). Brand credibility, brand consideration, and choice. *Journal of consumer research*, 31(1), 191-198.

Fashion Revolution (2020). Fashion Transparency Index 2020 [pdf] Available at: <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/about/transparency/>

Fukukawa, K., Balmer, J. M., & Gray, E. R. (2007). Mapping the interface between corporate identity, ethics and corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 76(1), 1-5.

Grazzini L, Acuti D, Aiello G, Solving the puzzle of sustainable fashion consumption: the role of consumers' implicit attitudes and perceived warmth, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.125579>.

Green, T., & Pelozo, J. (2014). Finding the right shade of green: The effect of advertising appeal type on environmentally friendly consumption. *Journal of Advertising*, 43(2), 128-141.

Haws, K. L., Winterich, K. P., & Naylor, R. W. (2014). Seeing the world through GREEN-tinted glasses: Green consumption values and responses to environmentally friendly products. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 24(3), 336-354.

Hill, J., & Lee, H. H. (2015). Sustainable brand extensions of fast fashion retailers. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*.

House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee. (2019). Fixing Fashion: Clothing Consumption and Sustainability. [pdf] Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvaud/1952/report-summary.html>

H&M Conscious Action Sustainability Report 2014. [pdf] Available online: https://about.hm.com/content/dam/hmgroup/groupsite/documents/en/CSR/reports/Conscious%20Actions%20Sustainability%20Report%202014_en.pdf (accessed on 20 March 2020).

Hustvedt, G., & Kang, J. (2013). Consumer perceptions of transparency: a scale development and validation. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 41(3), 299-313.

Illia, L., Zyglidopoulos, S. C., Romenti, S., Rodríguez-Cánovas, B., & del Valle Brena, A. G. (2013). Communicating corporate social responsibility to a cynical public. *MIT Sloan management review*, 54(3), 2.

- Jestratijevic, I., Rudd, N. A., & Uanhoro, J. (2020). Transparency of sustainability disclosures among luxury and mass-market fashion brands. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 11(2), 99-116.
- Jung, S., & Jin, B. (2014). A theoretical investigation of slow fashion: sustainable future of the apparel industry. *International journal of consumer studies*, 38(5), 510-519.
- Kang, J., & Hustvedt, G. (2014). Building trust between consumers and corporations: The role of consumer perceptions of transparency and social responsibility. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 125(2), 253-265.
- Kaptein, M. (2008). Developing and testing a measure for the ethical culture of organizations: The corporate ethical virtues model. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, 29(7), 923-947.
- Kim, H. S., & Damhorst, M. L. (1998). Environmental concern and apparel consumption. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 16(3), 126-133.
- Kim, N. L., Kim, G., & Rothenberg, L. (2020). Is Honesty the Best Policy? Examining the Role of Price and Production Transparency in Fashion Marketing. *Sustainability*, 12(17), 6800.
- Kim, M., & Lennon, S. (2008). The effects of visual and verbal information on attitudes and purchase intentions in internet shopping. *Psychology & Marketing*, 25(2), 146-178.
- Kitchin, T. (2003). Corporate social responsibility: A brand explanation. *Journal of Brand Management*, 10(4), 312-326.
- Lai, O. K. (1993). Making sense of the greening of consumption and production. *Journal of cleaner production*, 1(1), 43-47.
- Laufer, W. S. (2003). Social accountability and corporate greenwashing. *Journal of business ethics*, 43(3), 253-261.

Lee, E. J., Bae, J., & Kim, K. H. (2020). The effect of environmental cues on the purchase intention of sustainable products. *Journal of Business Research*, 120, 425-433.

Lee, E. J., Bae, J., & Kim, K. H. (2020). The effect of sustainable certification reputation on consumer behavior in the fashion industry: Focusing on the mechanism of congruence. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 11(2), 137-153.

Leonidou, C. N., & Skarmeas, D. (2017). Gray shades of green: Causes and consequences of green skepticism. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 144(2), 401-415.

Leire, C., & Thidell, Å. (2005). Product-related environmental information to guide consumer purchases—a review and analysis of research on perceptions, understanding and use among Nordic consumers. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 13(10-11), 1061-1070.

Li, Y., Zhao, X., Shi, D., & Li, X. (2014). Governance of sustainable supply chains in the fast fashion industry. *European Management Journal*, 32(5), 823-836.

Lin, J., Lobo, A., & Leckie, C. (2017). The role of benefits and transparency in shaping consumers' green perceived value, self-brand connection and brand loyalty. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 35, 133-141.

Luchs, M. G., Naylor, R. W., Irwin, J. R., & Raghunathan, R. (2010). The sustainability liability: Potential negative effects of ethicality on product preference. *Journal of Marketing*, 74, 18-31.

Lynch, J. G., & Srull, T. K. (1982). Memory and attentional factors in consumer choice: Concepts and research methods. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9, 18-37.

Maxham III, J. G., & Netemeyer, R. G. (2003). Firms reap what they sow: the effects of shared values and perceived organizational justice on customers' evaluations of complaint handling. *Journal of Marketing*, 67(1), 46-62.

McKinsey & Company (2019). *The State of Fashion 2019* [pdf] Available at: https://cdn.businessoffashion.com/reports/The_State_of_Fashion_2019.pdf

- McNeill, L., & Moore, R. (2015). Sustainable fashion consumption and the fast fashion conundrum: fashionable consumers and attitudes to sustainability in clothing choice. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 39(3), 212-222.
- Micheletti, M., & Stolle, D. (2007). Mobilizing consumers to take responsibility for global social justice. *The annals of the American academy of political and social science*, 611(1), 157-175.
- Miotto, G., & Youn, S. (2020). The impact of fast fashion retailers' sustainable collections on corporate legitimacy: Examining the mediating role of altruistic attributions. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*.
- Mol, A. P. (2015). Transparency and value chain sustainability. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 107, 154–161.
- Moon, K. K. L., Youn, C., Chang, J. M., & Yeung, A. W. H. (2013). Product design scenarios for energy saving: A case study of fashion apparel. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 146(2), 392-401.
- Morgan, L. R., & Birtwistle, G. (2009). An investigation of young fashion consumers' disposal habits. *International journal of consumer studies*, 33(2), 190-198.
- Neumann, H. L., Martinez, L. M., & Martinez, L. F. (2020). Sustainability efforts in the fast fashion industry: consumer perception, trust and purchase intention. *Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal*.
- Nyilasy, G., Gangadharbatla, H., & Paladino, A. (2014). Perceived greenwashing: The interactive effects of green advertising and corporate environmental performance on consumer reactions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 125(4), 693-707.
- Öberseder, M., Schlegelmilch, B. B., & Gruber, V. (2011). “Why don’t consumers care about CSR?”: A qualitative study exploring the role of CSR in consumption decisions. *Journal of business ethics*, 104(4), 449-460.

- Parguel, B., Benoît-moreau, F., Larceneux, F. (2011). How sustainability ratings might deter 'greenwashing': a closer look at ethical corporate communication. *J. Bus. Ethics* 102(1), 15–28.
- Phau, I., Teah, M., & Chuah, J. (2015). Consumer attitudes towards luxury fashion apparel made in sweatshops. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 19(2), 169–187.
- Pinto, D. C., Herter, M. M., Gonçalves, D., & Sayin, E. (2019). Can luxury brands be ethical? Reducing the sophistication liability of luxury brands. *Journal of cleaner production*, 233, 1366-1376.
- Rahman, I., Park, J., & Chi, C. G. Q. (2015). Consequences of "greenwashing": Consumers' reactions to hotels' green initiatives. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*.
- Ramus, C. A., & Montiel, I. (2005). When are corporate environmental policies a form of greenwashing?. *Business & Society*, 44(4), 377-414.
- Rawlins, B. (2008). Give the emperor a mirror: Toward developing a stakeholder measurement of organizational transparency. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 21(1), 71-99.
- Reynolds, M., & Yuthas, K. (2008). Moral discourse and corporate social responsibility reporting. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 78(1-2), 47-64.
- Ritter, Á. M., Borchardt, M., Vaccaro, G. L., Pereira, G. M., & Almeida, F. (2015). Motivations for promoting the consumption of green products in an emerging country: exploring attitudes of Brazilian consumers. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 106, 507-520.
- Romani, S., Grappi, S., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2013). Explaining consumer reactions to corporate social responsibility: The role of gratitude and altruistic values. *Journal of business ethics*, 114(2), 193-206.
- Sen, S., & Bhattacharya, C. B. (2001). Does doing good always lead to doing better? Consumer reactions to corporate social responsibility. *Journal of marketing Research*, 38(2), 225-243.

- Shen, B. (2014). Sustainable fashion supply chain: Lessons from H&M. *Sustainability*, 6(9), 6236-6249.
- Su, H. J., Comer, L. B., & Lee, S. (2008). The effect of expertise on consumers' satisfaction with the use of interactive recommendation agents. *Psychology & Marketing*, 25(9), 859-880.
- Sweetin, V. H., Knowles, L. L., Summey, J. H., & McQueen, K. S. (2013). Willingness-to-punish the corporate brand for corporate social irresponsibility. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(10), 1822–1830.
- Szabo, S., & Webster, J. (2020). Perceived greenwashing: the effects of green marketing on environmental and product perceptions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 1-21.
- Torelli, R., Balluchi, F., & Lazzini, A. (2020). Greenwashing and environmental communication: Effects on stakeholders' perceptions. *Business strategy and the Environment*, 29(2), 407-421.
- Torelli, C. J., Monga, A. B., & Kaikati, A. M. (2012). Doing poorly by doing good: Corporate social responsibility and brand concepts. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 38(5), 948-963.
- Turilli, M., & Floridi, L. (2009). The ethics of information transparency. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 11(2), 105-112.
- Wu, Y., Zhang, K., & Xie, J. (2020). Bad greenwashing, good greenwashing: Corporate social responsibility and information transparency. *Management Science*, 66(7), 3095-3112.

