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THE TRANSPARENCY PARADOX

WHEN INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY BACKFIRES

Rafaela Reck

Dissertation presented as partial requirement for obtaining
the Master's degree in Statistics and Information
Management

NOVA Information Management School
Instituto Superior de Estatística e Gestão de Informação
Universidade Nova de Lisboa

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TRANSPARENCY BACKFIRES**

BY

Rafaela Reck

Dissertation presented as partial requirement for obtaining the Master's degree in Information Management/ Master's degree in Statistics and Information Management, with a specialization in market research

Advisor / Co Advisor: Diego Costa Pinto

Co Advisor: Ana Carina Castagna

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TO MIGUEL.

ABSTRACT

Information transparency has become one of the key subjects of environmental policies research as ethical scandals and consumer scepticism 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 behaviour, nor 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 in the form of an Index of known (vs. unknown) fast fashion brands can increase pro-social purchase behaviour and trust. Findings from Study 1 suggest that the presence of an Index did not influence purchase intention and consumer evaluation of a real fast fashion brand, only the fictitious one. Study 2 highlights these findings by showing that the presence of an Index does not influence trust. Further, we present greenwashing as a boundary condition of transparency effects on trust.

KEYWORDS

Information transparency; CSR; Brand image; Purchase intention; Greenwashing

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSR 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).

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, only behind the oil industry (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 labour and low-quality material. Recently, consumers are becoming more concerned about their choices, growing their pro-environmental choices and scepticism (Grazinni et al., 2021; Phau et al., 2015; Sweetin et al., 2013) and awareness regarding companies' ethical behaviour (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 (Bhaduri and Copeland, 2020). 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 scepticism of the consumers (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 behaviour (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 favourably (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 behaviour within the fashion industry (see Appendix 1 for literature review).

Most of the studies don't seek to understand the consumer's perceptions regarding products with certifications or ecolabels (Leire and Thidell, 2005), and depending on the industry, sustainability information can have a potential negative impact on product preference (Luchs et al., 2010; Sen and Battacharya, 2001). When a product has ecolabels attached, it can benefit from it if this product is congruent with sustainable

concerns (Luchs et al., 2010). In another study, Torelli et al (2012) studied the adoption of CSR activities by a luxury brand. They found that communicating CSR actions by this type of brand declines their evaluation. This effect doesn't happen when a brand is more emotional or conservationist. These findings drive further investigations regarding CSR messages and brands, like a fast fashion company.

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 analysed consumers' responses comparing two different brands. This Index analyses how much information these companies disclose about their social and environmental policies, practices, and their impacts. The Index comprises 220 indicators covering a wide range of topics like working conditions and supplier disclosure (Fashion Revolution, 2020). In this Index, H&M is the company that is in first place in information transparency.

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 (Jestratišević et al., 2020). Chang and Jai (2015) analysed 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, brand image 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 (BBC, 2017). Therefore, we compare H&M, a known brand, with a fictitious one. Thus, in three studies we analyse 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 behaviours 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 behaviour. 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 few literatures on the behaviours of consumers regarding CSR on transparency and greenwashing of the fashion industry.

From a managerial standpoint, this research alerts 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 congruence 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 about information transparency and Fashion Revolution's Index. 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. THEORETHICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To advance the examination of information transparency in the fashion industry, the purpose of this study is to better understand consumers' perception of the information and how it influences their purchase intention, brand image, and trust. Understanding how consumers process information transparency of fast fashion brands is extremely important, given that this is an industry that is known for forced labour and disposable products.

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. This research aims to extend these findings by answering the following research questions:

RQ1: Does the presence of an Index of information transparency make a difference in the purchase intention and brand evaluation of a fast fashion brand?

RQ2: Are fast fashion brands capable of being seen as “good” brands according to their level of information transparency?

To address these questions, we propose that customers of fast fashion brands can be influenced by information transparency but only if it is a fictitious brand. When it is a known brand such as H&M, the pre-concept of the brand will influence the evaluation and even increase the perceived greenwashing of the information disclosed.

2.2. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Information transparency and the Fashion industry

The concept of information transparency started to be related to the fashion industry after all the scandals became to be 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.

The Edelman Trust Barometer, research released by Edelman, a firm that partners with businesses to promote and protect brand reputations, frequently cites transparency as a mean to gain more trust with stakeholders (Rawlins, 2008). In their 2020 Barometer research, they found that 76% of the participants worry about false information, an increase of six points compared to 2018. Also, 64% of customers are belief-driven buyers, that is, they choose, switch, avoid, or boycott a brand based on its stands on societal issues (Edelman, 2020).

Technology created access to information through the internet and provided the means to share and verify information (Rawlins, 2008). That said, it is mandatory for brands to be transparent since consumers have more access to information and are more conscious about their society and environment (Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire, 2011). 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 defined as

truthful, substantial, and useful information; the participation of stakeholders in the process of defining the information needed; objective reporting of the activities and policies that hold the company accountable (Balkin, 1999). 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).

Brandão et al. (2018) refer to transparency as the effort to provide consumers with clear and relevant information about the practices and products of the organization. Transparent companies provide information in a form that all involved have access to the issues that are important for them, and it can enhance consumers to understand these efforts (Kaptein, 2008; Lin et al. 2017). The efforts of companies to be transparent are to make consumers trust in their transparent communication and (Kitchin, 2003).

Rawlins (2008) developed a stakeholder measurement of organizational transparency that measures three transparency reputation traits (integrity, respect for others, openness) and four transparency efforts (participation, substantial information, accountability, and secrecy). Kang and Hustvedt (2014) developed a model that portrays the relationships among transparency, social responsibility, trust, attitude, word-of-mouth intention, and purchase intention. Hustvedt and Kang (2013) developed, in their study, a scale to measure consumer attitudes toward the transparency of social responsibility.

Previous research focuses on the analysis of information transparency in the fashion industry. Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire (2011), through interviews with consumers expected to understand the factors that influence consumers' attitudes and purchase intention of apparel products from businesses that are transparent. Jestratijevec 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. However, they didn't analyse consumer perception of this transparency. 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. Nonetheless, these studies didn't include information about indexes.

Fashion Revolution is a non-profit social enterprise responsible for developing reports and campaigns worldwide about transparency in the fashion industry, such as the Fashion Transparency Index. It started after the 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh, a building with five garment factories, killing 1,138 people and injuring 2,500, mostly young women (Fashion Revolution, 2020). After this, Fashion Revolution started to promote more transparency in the industry by conducting an annual 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 such as policy and commitment; governance; traceability; know, show & fix, and spotlight issues. The methodology was developed using existing international standards including UN Sustainable Development Goals (Fashion Revolution, 2020). They believe that if fashion companies show more transparency this can be a first

step to understand what the issues are and, therefore, lead to greater accountability and changes in the industry (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 the best-rated brand among all the 250 of the world's largest fashion brands and retailers (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).

H&M is an example of this business model, with about 5076 stores across 54 markets and e-commerce in 51 markets (H&M Conscious Action Sustainability Report, 2020). Since 2014 they have 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. Their vision is "to lead the change towards circular and climate positive fashion while being a fair and equal company" (H&M Conscious Action Sustainability Report, 2020, p. 13). 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 analysed 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 analysed the perceptions of

information transparency in the H&M website nor used the Index to understand the consumer pro-environmental purchases and trust.

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

Recently, with consumers increasing awareness regarding ethics and environmental concerns, companies are using CSR messages to increase consumer trust and behaviour. 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 has 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 behaviour 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., 2014). 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 becoming more and more green using eco-friendly materials but, aren't improving in other aspects such as 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 to 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; Kim and Lennon, 2008; Pancer et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2004). 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, Y. S., & Chang, C. H. (2012, 2013);

Rahman et al., 2015). Szabo and Webster (2020) analysed 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) analysed 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 analysed the relationship between greenwashing and trust, none has highlighted this relationship in the fashion industry nor used an Index of information transparency.

3. 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 a real 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.

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) analyse 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 from the brand. In line with previous research (Luchs et al., 2010; Sen and Battacharya, 2001, Torelli et al., 2012), the real brand will be affected by the incongruence

between its image and a CSR message and will have a more negative evaluation compared to the fictitious brand. 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 demonstrates 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. 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.

4. METHODOLOGY AND OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

This research consists of three experimental studies. 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 analyses 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 messages, the Index and sustainability points, which awards consumers who purchase sustainable products. Further, Study 2 shows 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.

The constructs used in this study were measured and adapted from existing scales from literature. All the constructs were measured based on a 9-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 9 = *strongly agree*). The complete list of the measurements is shown in Appendix 10.

4.1. STUDY 1A. PERCEPTION OF INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

4.1.1. 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 Study 1b and 2 as related to information transparency Index.

4.1.2. PARTICIPANTS

A sample of 50 European adults was recruited through the Amazon Mechanical Turk platform in exchange for monetary compensation (62% men; $M_{age} = 31.2$; $SD = 8.97$; full sample demographic composition report is in Appendix 2). Amazon Mechanical Turk is a crowdsourcing website used to hire participants to perform tasks like research remotely.

4.1.3. 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%).

4.1.4. MEASURES

The survey design was based on the findings of an exploratory study with 5 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. The analysis of the open-ended questions was coded into themes as seen in Appendix 3 to 6.

The brand H&M was selected for this study in face of being elected with the highest degree of transparency in the 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 study 1b.

4.1.5. RESULTS

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 three open-ended questions showed us some interesting aspects of the respondent and were coded into themes (Appendix 3). Asked about what does the term 'information transparency' mean to them regarding the things they buy the

participants answered: “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 answered 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%) that means “Some websites allow us to access this information” (male, 26).

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 labour, 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 ($M = 5.94$, $SD = 1.73$).

<i>Descriptive statistics</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>SD</i>
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 labour, 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 at 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”, 22% said H&M. Only Zara (4%) had more than 1 citation, with H&M being the brand with more citation. All the other brands cited, except Apple, are present in the 2020 Fashion Transparency Index. Since our study is about H&M, we took more time analysing 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). Another participant also cited the H&M position in the Index.

All the 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%), “I would agree on that, H&M was always the first to do it. They publish all the product manufacturers and also processing facilities and fabric mills and they make all this information available” (male, 28, master’s degree), some of them said they buy from this brand (11.8%), and some 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.

In the sentiment analysis, using the Monkeylearn app, we tested the open questions except for the question “do you know a fast fashion brand that is transparent”. We found that 70% of the answers are positive, 24% negative, and 6% neutral. There were small differences between males and females, with males 71% positive 23% negative and females 68% positive 26% negative.

Analysing the results of the correlations matrix (Appendix 8) “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.

4.1.6. DISCUSSION

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 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 it 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 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 35.3% of respondents thought that H&M being 1st in the Index was a good thing. However, 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.

4.2. STUDY 1B. THE INFLUENCE OF INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY IN PURCHASE INTENTION AND BRAND IMAGE

4.2.1. OBJECTIVES

Study 1b goal analyses whether and how information transparency influences purchase intentions (H1) and brand image (H2). It extends Study 1a analysis using a 2x2 between-subjects experimental design. Similar studies analysed 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 colour as the one analysed.

4.2.2. 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; $SD = 11$; Appendix 2 for full sample demographic table). The participants were recruited from countries from Europe ($n = 125$) and North America ($n = 103$) to perform a comparison.

4.2.3. 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 better 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. The information used about the product background and the layout of the page was collected from the H&M website and rearranged for the study. 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 Index or without and Yoli with Index or without. 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 analysing 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 11 for scenarios). After the manipulation, participants indicate their likelihood of purchasing, brand image, perceived information transparency, and demographic variables as seen in the full questionnaire in Appendix 10. The demographic variables did not predict significant variance in the dependent variable interacting with the independent variable when tested with a two-way ANOVA, therefore we do not discuss these measures.

4.2.4. 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 III 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). Information and knowledge ($\alpha = .81$) were measured using 3 items on a nine-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 9 = *strongly agree*) adapted from Moon, et al. (2013), McNeill & Moore, (2015) and Morgan and Birtwistle, (2009).

To test the internal consistency of our measures we perform a reliability test using IBM SPSS Statistics™. It was found that for brand image scale the exclusion of the item "I need lots more information about this brand before I'd buy it" increased the level of internal consistency obtained by $\alpha = .83$. However, it did not increase the statistical results of the analysis when performing an ANOVA, therefore we will not discuss this.

4.2.5. RESULTS

A 2 (brand: H&M vs control) x 2 (Information transparency: 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 Intention. 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 ($F_{(3, 224)} = 2.667, p = 0.048, \eta p^2 = .035$). 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.

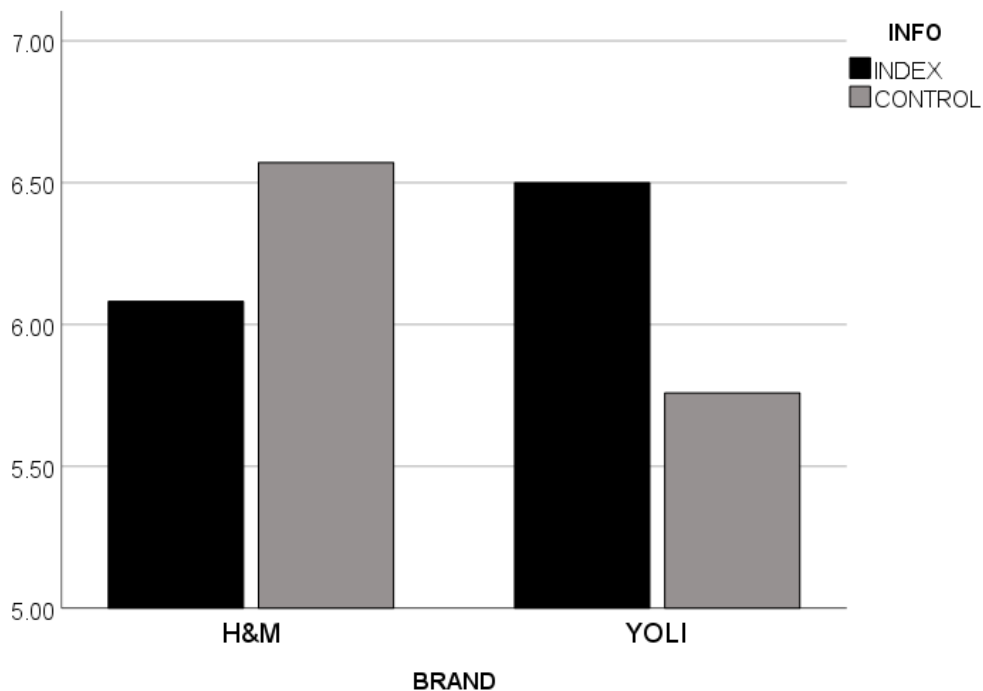


Figure 1. Means for Purchase intention in response to scenarios

analysing separately the variables of this construct in a two-way ANOVA, we found some significant results. For the variable “would you purchase from this brand?” There was a statistically significant interaction between the effects of brand and presence or absence of an Index on this variable, $F_{(1, 224)} = 6.950$, $p = .009$, $\eta p^2 = .030$. The significant interaction was investigated further by evaluating the simple main effects of the variables separately.

Just like the one-way ANOVA, main effect analysis showed that there was a significant difference between brands in the control condition $F_{(1, 224)} = 4.462$, $p = .036$, where H&M ($M_{\text{control}} = 6.839$, $SD = .241$) had higher purchase intention than Yoli ($M_{\text{control}} = 6.155$, $SD = .233$) but there were no differences between the two conditions in the presence of Index ($p = .105$).

Analysing the main effect of brands between their own scenarios there was a difference between the two conditions in Yoli $F_{(1, 224)} = 5.043$, $p = .026$, with Index ($M_{\text{Index}} = 6.907$, $SD = .241$) higher than without Index ($M_{\text{without}} = 6.155$, $SD = .233$), but there were no difference between H&M scenarios ($p = .141$).

In the variable “I am likely to spread positive word of mouth about this brand” a two-way ANOVA, showed some significant results. There was a statistically significant interaction between the effects of brand and presence or absence of an Index on this variable, $F_{(1, 224)} = 8.715$, $p = .003$, $\eta p^2 = .037$. The significant interaction was investigated further by evaluating the simple main effects of the variables separately.

Main effect analysis showed that there was a significant difference between brands in the control condition $F_{(1, 224)} = 4.909$, $p = .028$, with H&M ($M_{\text{H\&M}} = 6.694$, $SD = .261$) higher than Yoli ($M_{\text{Yoli}} = 5.862$, $SD = .270$). We found a significant difference in the

Index condition also $F_{(1, 224)} = 3.870, p = .050$, with Yoli ($M_{Yoli} = 6.667, SD = .280$) higher than H&M ($M_{H\&M} = 5.889, SD = .280$).

Analysing the main effect of brands between their own scenarios there was a difference between the two conditions in Yoli $F_{(1, 224)} = 4.289, p = .039$, with Yoli with Index ($M_{Index} = 6.667, SD = .280$) and Yoli without Index ($M_{control} = 5.862, SD = .270$), and between the two conditions in H&M scenarios $F_{(1, 224)} = 4.428, p = .036$, with H&M without Index ($M_{control} = 6.694, SD = .261$) and H&M with Index ($M_{Index} = 5.889, SD = .280$). These results provide support for H1.

In this construct, we found a pattern in the means of the scenarios. When in the Index condition, H&M always had lower means than in the control condition, and Yoli had higher means in the Index condition than in the control. The mean for H&M without Index was always close to the mean of Yoli with Index.

To verify if the presence of the Index specifically influenced participants, we used the scale of information and knowledge. The ANOVA for information and knowledge did not have a significant result ($F_{(3, 224)} = 173, p = 0.16, \eta p^2 = .23$). A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of brand and presence or absence of an Index on the variable “if there is green information (such as an eco-index) provided for fast fashion products, I would consider this in making my purchase decision”. There was a statistically significant interaction between the effects of brand and presence or absence of an Index on this variable, $F_{(1, 224)} = 4.989, p = .026, \eta p^2 = .022$. The significant interaction was investigated further by evaluating the main effects of the variables separately.

Main effect analysis showed that there was a significant difference between brands in the Index condition $F_{(1, 224)} = 4.331, p = .039$. We found a significant difference between Yoli with Index ($M_{Yoli} = 6.630, SD = .239$) and H&M with Index ($M_{H\&M} = 5.926, SD = .239$) but there

were no differences between the two conditions in absence of Index ($p = .294$). This result supports H1

Analysing the main effect of brands between their own scenarios there was no difference between the two conditions in Yoli ($p = .067$) and H&M scenario ($p = .191$).

Brand image. The ANOVA for brand image did not have a significant difference between groups ($F_{(3, 224)} = 2.19, p = 0.09, \eta p^2 = .028$), and excluding the variable “I need lots more information about this brand before I’d buy it” did not improve the result ($F_{(3, 224)} = 1.21, p = 0.31, \eta p^2 = .016$). However, an ANOVA of the variable “this brand doesn’t pretend to be something it isn’t” had a significant effect ($F_{(3, 224)} = 3.45, p = 0.017, \eta p^2 = .044$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey analysis indicated that the mean for Yoli with Index condition ($M_{\text{Yoli}} = 6.81, SD = 1.60$) was significantly different than the H&M with Index ($M_{\text{H\&M}} = 5.78, SD = 1.78$). The other conditions did not differ in the post hoc analysis. Therefore, H2 was supported.

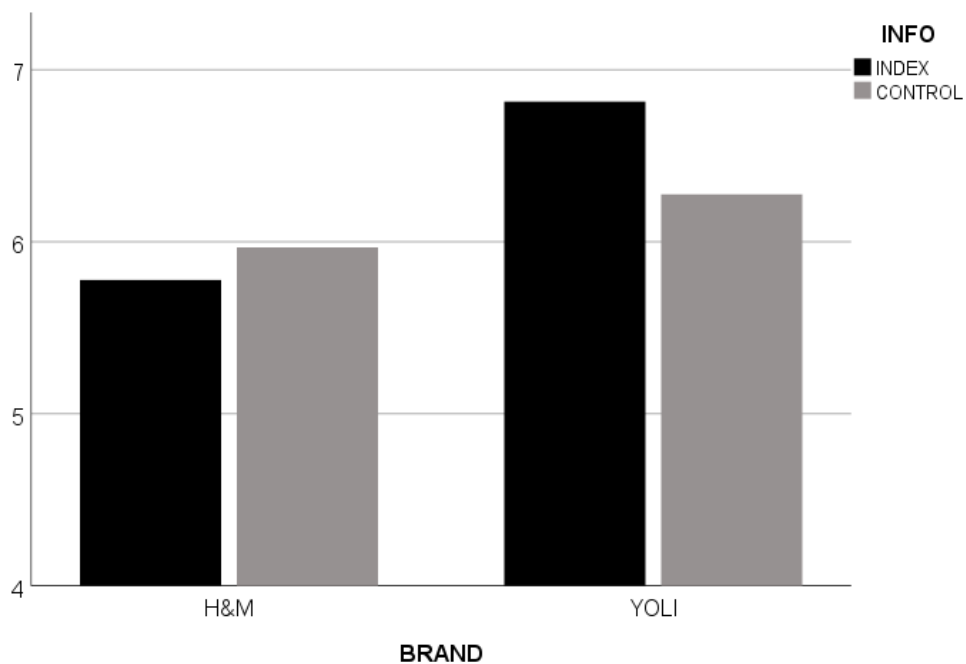


Figure 2. Means for “this brand doesn’t pretend to be something it isn’t” in response to scenarios

4.2.6. 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 as shown in the t-test. 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.

Although when analysing only the participants that correctly identify the presence or absence of an Index, we found significant results. We found that consumers in the fictitious brand with Index conditions had higher purchase intentions (H1) than in the fictitious brand without Index. For H&M there wasn't a significant difference in purchase intention when in the presence of an Index, which can indicate that even with an Index showing the first position of the brand in a ranking of information transparency, this does not make people consider it when buying a product of a known fast fashion brand that have information transparency.

When analysing 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. The biggest difference was in the question "I am likely to spread positive word of mouth about H&M" followed by "Information transparency is important to me when choosing a product". This last one can

indicate that when information transparency is related to a fast fashion brand, it can harm the evaluation of the information and not positively influence its presence.

Analysing 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 (Appendix 12). 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.

Making a comparison between participants from North America and Europe we found some differences in the means, but with no statistical difference. Although, usually, North American participants evaluate better than Europeans.

These results highlight the difference between a real fast fashion brand and a fictitious one. 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 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.

Also, the two-way ANOVA conducted on "if there is green information (such as an eco-index) provided for fast fashion products, I would consider this in making my purchase decision" showed that Yoli with Index had higher means than H&M with Index. This showed us that the presence of an Index on information transparency doesn't increase the purchase intention of a known fast fashion brand. Therefore, we will extend this in study 2 by analysing another type of CSR message, not only the Index, to compare if it is the type of message that influences consumers.

4.3. STUDY 2. THE INFLUENCE OF INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY ON TRUST AND PERCEIVED GREENWASHING

4.3.1. OBJECTIVES

Study 2 main goal is to further analyse the transparency information of Index but also comparing with another type of CSR message using a 2x3 between-subjects experimental design. Past research analysed 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).

This study uses the same structure as the first study with the same brands and a banner with information about an Index of transparency and a banner with information about getting rewarded with points by purchasing sustainable items from the brands. In this study there will be less product background information than Study 1, to verify if less information can lead to different results.

4.3.2. PARTICIPANTS

Three hundred and four participants were recruited through the Amazon Mechanical Turk platform in exchange for monetary compensation (64.1 percent men; M_{age} 35.4; $SD = 11$; Appendix 2 for full sample demographic table). 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 ($n = 31$).

4.3.3. 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 Peloza, (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 14 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.

The demographic variables did not predict significant variance in the dependent variable interacting with the independent variable when tested with a two-way ANOVA, therefore we do not discuss these measures.

4.3.4. MEASURES

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).

4.3.5. 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, $F_{(2, 298)} = 4.190$, $p = .016$, $\eta p^2 = .027$. The significant interaction was investigated further by evaluating the simple main effects of the variables separately.

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 ($M_{\text{H\&M}} = 7.37$, $SD = .189$) than Yoli ($M_{\text{Yoli}} = 6.76$, $SD = .191$), but there were no differences in the Index condition ($p = .863$) and the points condition ($p = .075$).

Analysing 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 ($M_{\text{points}} = 7.40$, $SD = .186$) was more trusted than Yoli control ($M_{\text{control}} = 6.76$, $SD = .191$) 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 H3.

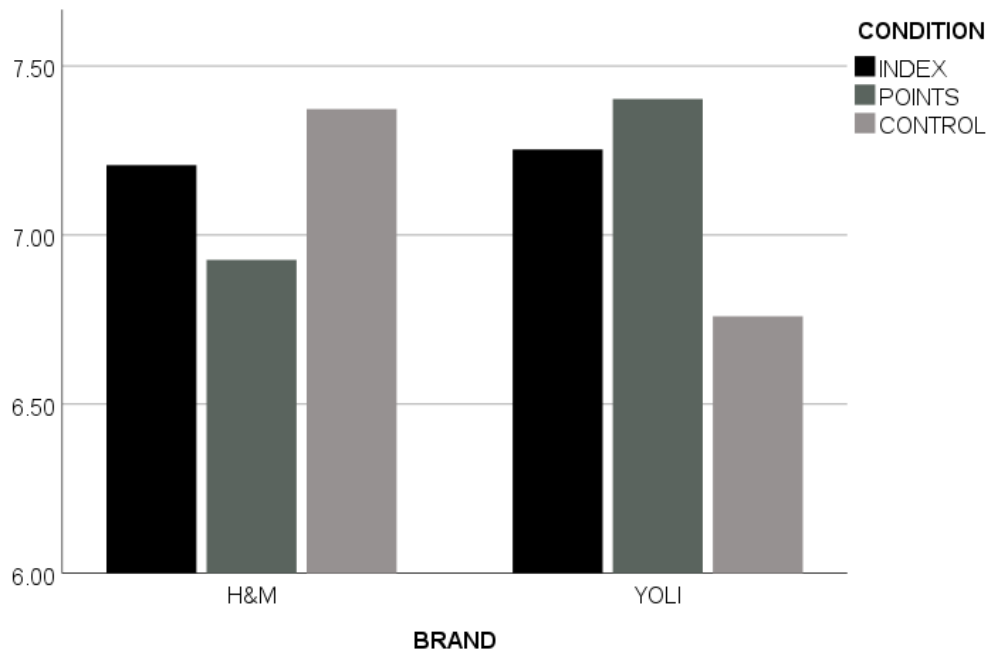


Figure 3. Means for Trust in response to brand and condition

Similarly, as Study 1b, we verify if the presence of the Index specifically influenced participants with a two-way ANOVA on the variable “if there are certifications (such as an eco-index) provided for fast fashion products, I would consider this in making my purchase decision”. There wasn’t a statistically significant interaction between the effects of brand and presence or absence of an Index on this variable, $F_{(2, 298)} = 2.12$, $p = .122$, $\eta p^2 = .014$.

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 ($p = .688$). These results partially support H4.

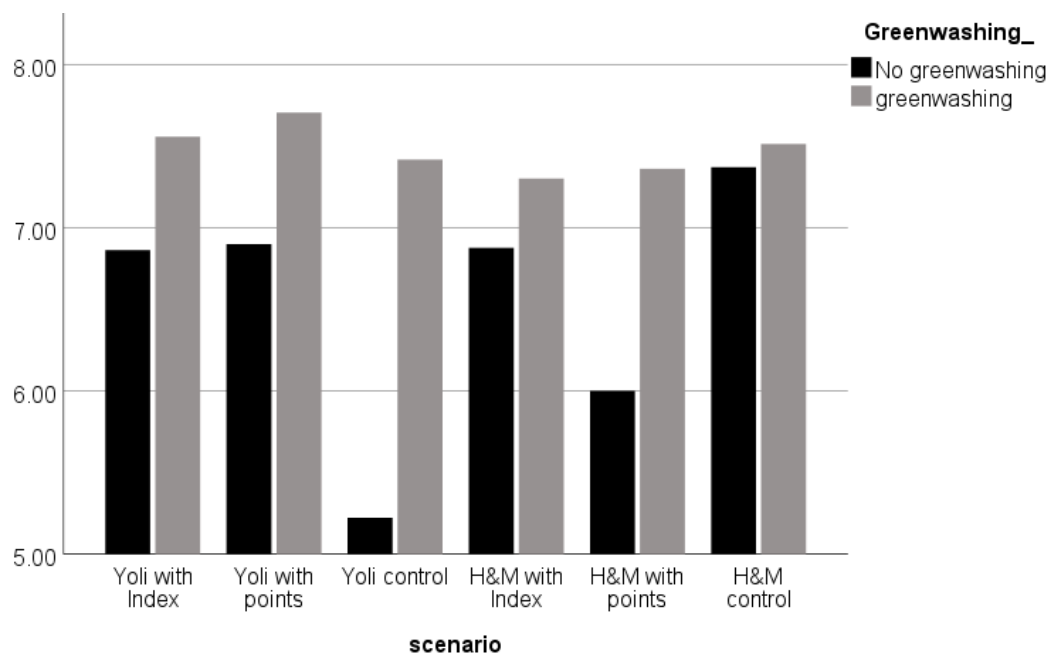


Figure 4. Means for Trust in response to Greenwashing and scenarios

4.3.6. 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.

Analysing 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. Since H&M ($M = 7.37$) had higher means than Yoli ($M = 6.76$) 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 (Index scenario) or worsens (points scenario) compared to the fictitious brand.

Second, study 2 also reveals the effect of greenwashing on certification trust. 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 the presence of the Index 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 tend to trust more in certifications, but not necessarily in the certifications presented in the study. In H&M with points participants in the greenwashing had more trust in certifications but in H&M with Index there were no statistical result, neither in Yoli with Index. Since the scenario with points wasn't a scenario with certification or Index, but a program of points, participants considered it a good thing, but when presented with a real certification in the Index scenarios they didn't have a significant trust.

5. 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 information transparency in the form of an Index can backfire. First, we found that Information transparency does not influence purchase intention and brand image of the real brand. Second, trust did not have a statistical difference in the real brand scenarios, even with another type of CSR message. Third, perceived greenwashing had effect only in the fictitious scenarios or in the real brand with the other type of CSR message.

The present research sheds light on the role of transparency and CSR messages in influencing consumers' pro-environmental purchases. Across three 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 analysed information transparency in a positive way within 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 lead to 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 information transparency or 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 information 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 bad actions against people and environment is increasing so any CSR or transparency message that a well-known fast fashion brand does, need to be congruent with their image and actions. With all the information about problems in the fashion industry being shown on the media, consumers can't see the congruence of a CSR message of a real fast fashion brand. Such as Lee et al., (2020) found, the product and its certification needs to be congruent, and this congruence extend to certification reputation and certification trust which positively influences purchase intention.

We reinforce this in Study 2 by showing that greenwashing is a sensitive perception when a fast fashion company enters 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 in the form of an Index 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 disclosed.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORKS AND LIMITATIONS

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 supports 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 perceive 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 congruence 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. Also, we include participants from all ages. In a future study it could focus only on young consumers that are the focus of this type of companies. These participants can have different perceptions towards certifications in the fashion industry.

In addition, this research was limited to two types of CSR messages. We manipulate using a banner of a real Index of information transparency and a sustainable program of points. Future research could examine the relationship between information transparency and fast fashion brands in different channels and formats. For instance, this information about the Index being used in the advertisement of the brand and in their social media.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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8. APPENDIX

1. Review of literature

Source	Dependent Variables	Fashion	Certification or labels	Information Transparency	Greenwashing	Findings
Bhaduri, G., & Copeland, L. (2020)	Perceived Message Persuasiveness, Opinion of ER Initiatives, Behavioural Intention	yes	no	yes	no	Both familiar and unfamiliar brands, increased congruity of consumers' schemas to information presented in brands' pro-environmental messages have more positive opinions about brands' initiatives as well as behavioural intentions toward the brand. The presence of high information transparency on environmental responsibility-related messages influenced consumers' schemas positively, and in turn, their evaluations were more favourable.
Bhaduri, G., & Ha-Brookshire, J. (2015)	Post-schema	yes	no	yes	no	Males were more likely than females to rely on their existing schemas for judgment in case of Made in the USA but not Fair Labour claims. The presence of information transparency in claims reduced participants' reliance on their schemas.
Bhaduri, G., & Ha-Brookshire, J. (2017)	Attitude towards message	no	no	yes	no	Increased congruity of consumers' schemas to the fact that brands are SR led to more favourable attitude toward brands' SR messages. The presence of high information transparency on SR messages influenced consumers' schemas positively, and in turn, they evaluated messages more favourably. However, consumers were not influenced by whether messages were made by brands or third-party organizations.
Bhaduri, G., & Ha-Brookshire, J. E. (2011)	Purchase intention	no	no	yes	no	Attitude and intention seemed to be affected by prior knowledge about the apparel industry, distrust on the business' efforts, values (hedonic and social responsibility value) gained by consumers by consuming transparent products, as well as price and quality of the product.
Brandão, A., et al. (2018)	Purchase Intention, WoM intention	yes	no	yes	no	Consumer attitude toward the brand acts as a mediator between transparency and purchase intention. Transparency has a significant and positive relationship with trust, attitude, and word-of-mouth intention; it does not have with purchase intention. Trust has a positive and significant relation with word-of-mouth communication; it does not have with purchase intention.
Busser, J. A., & Shulga, L. V. (2019)	Trust	no	no	yes	no	Involvement in CGA had positive effects on loyalty and trust for both brand customers and non-customers. Transparency builds perceptions of brand authenticity; both authenticity and transparency significantly and positively affected trust, but only authenticity influenced loyalty. There was a stronger impact of involvement with CGA on loyalty for non-customers than brand customers.
Chang, H. J. J., & Jai, T. M. C. (2015)	Purchase Intention	yes	no	yes	no	The findings of this study suggest that sustainability positioning strategies can lead to the positive perceived CSR effort, thus giving support to the effectiveness of sustainability marketing for fast fashion retailers. Furthermore, purchase intentions are significantly influenced by perceived CSR effort, price value and brand equity.

Source	Dependent Variables	Fashion	Certification or labels	Information Transparency	Greenwashing	Findings
Chen, Y. S., & Chang, C. H. (2012)	Green trust	no	no	no	yes	Greenwash is negatively related to green trust. green consumer confusion and green perceived risk mediate the negative relationship between greenwash and green trust.
Hill, J., & Lee, H. H. (2015)	Brand-cause fit, Brand-extension fit, Attitude toward brand extension	yes	no	no	no	Findings identified significant cause and brand effects on brand-cause fit and brand extension fit. In turn, brand extension was significantly predicted by brand-cause fit and brand extension fit. Consumers do view sustainable products as fitting with fast-fashion retailers, based on their previous knowledge and affect regarding the brand and the cause.
Jestratijevec, I., Rudd, N. A., & Uanhoro, J. (2020)	-	yes	yes	yes	no	The average corporate and supply chain transparency joint score was 19.6% in the Index. The type of information disclosed was selectively prioritized, and there was an 80% chance that brands were scored higher in corporate than in supply chain transparency. A comparison of the mass-market and luxury sub-sample revealed higher transparency of supply chain disclosures among mass-market brands.
Kang, J., & Hustvedt, G. (2014)	WOM intention, purchase intention	no	no	yes	no	Consumers' perceptions of a corporation's efforts to be transparent in the production and labour conditions and to be socially responsible by giving back to the local community directly affected these consumers' trust and attitudes toward the corporation, and indirectly affected their intentions to purchase from and spread positive WOM about the corporation.
Lee, E. J., Bae, J., & Kim, K. H. (2020)	Purchase intention, attitude toward product	no	yes	no	no	Certification reputation was found to have a positive influence on the congruence between product and certification, certification trust, and attitude toward product.
Lee, E. J., Bae, J., & Kim, K. H. (2020)	Purchase intention	no	yes	no	no	Consumers' purchase intention is highest when sustainable label and traceability information are provided simultaneously. Moreover, when consumer knowledge is high, purchase intention increases only when a sustainable label is provided. However, when consumer knowledge is low, purchase intention increases with a non-sustainable label. Furthermore, perceived risk and product efficacy dually mediate the effect of these interactions on purchase intention. The results imply that purchase intention can be increased by providing more transparent and diverse environmental cues based on information technology, and by increasing consumers' certification knowledge.
Lin, J., Lobo, A., & Leckie, C. (2017)	Brand loyalty	no	no	yes	no	Green benefits (utilitarian environmental and warm glow benefits) and green transparency had a direct influence on GPV. GPV was found to directly influence brand loyalty and indirectly influence brand loyalty via a self-brand connection.
Miotto, G., & Youn, S. (2020)	Corporate Legitimacy, CSR Perception, Brand Trust, Purchase Intention	yes	no	no	no	Fast fashion retailers' sustainable collections positively impacted corporate legitimacy, CSR perception, brand trust, and purchase intention. The company's sustainable collections increased consumers' attributions to altruistic motives and consumers' altruistic attributions had a positive influence on corporate legitimacy, CSR perception, brand trust, and purchase intention.

Source	Dependent Variables	Fashion	Certification or labels	Information Transparency	Greenwashing	Findings
Neumann, H. L., et al. (2020)	Purchase Intention	yes	no	no	no	Perceptions of social responsibility directly affect consumers' attitudes towards fashion brands, trust, and perceived consumer effectiveness. Consumers need to perceive sustainability efforts of these brands as altruistic, and trust was found to be a direct predictor of purchase intention. Both consumer attitude and perceived consumer effectiveness did not predict purchase intention.
Parguel, B., Benoit-moreau, F., Larceneux, F. (2011)	CSR perceived effort, Intrinsic vs extrinsic motives, corporate brand evaluation	no	yes	no	yes	Negative effect of a poor sustainability rating for corporate brand evaluations in the case of CSR communication, because consumers infer less intrinsic motives by the brand. Sustainability ratings thus could act to deter "greenwashing" and encourage virtuous firms to persevere in their CSR practices.
Rim, H., Swenson, R., & Anderson, B. (2019)	Company reputation	no	no	yes	no	High transparency signalling led to higher perceived integrity, but no significant effects on perceived competence and company reputation. The effects of transparency signalling were moderated by the nature of CSR on company reputation. Perceived integrity influenced the relationship between transparency and company reputation, while perceived competence was not influenced by transparency signalling.
Szabo, S., & Webster, J. (2020)	green value, green risk, brand attitudes, purchase intention	no	no	no	yes	Perceived greenwashing relates not only to environmental and product perceptions, but also to consumers' happiness while interacting with the website

2. Socio-demographic characteristics

<i>Socio-demographic characteristics</i>			
	Study 1a (n = 50)	Study 1b (n = 228)	Study 2 (n = 304)
	Total	Total	Total
<i>Gender</i>	50	228	304
male	31 (62%)	134 (59%)	195 (64.1%)
female	19 (38%)	94 (41%)	109 (35.9%)
<i>Average Age</i>	31.18	35.8	35.4
<i>SD Age</i>		11	11
18-24 years old	13 (26%)	28 (12.3%)	16 (5.3%)
25-34 years old	22 (44%)	84 (36.8%)	163 (53.6%)
35-44 years old	8 (16%)	72 (31.6%)	76 (25%)
45-54 years old	6 (12%)	22 (9.6%)	24 (7.9%)
55-64 years old	1 (2%)	18 (7.9%)	21 (6.9%)

65 + years old	-	4 (1.7%)	4 (1.3%)
<i>Income</i>			
Under \$18,000	9 (18%)	22 (9.6%)	22 (7.2%)
\$18,000 - \$24,999	9 (18%)	37 (16.2%)	17 (5.6%)
\$25,000 - \$29,999	7 (14%)	28 (12.3%)	34 (11.2%)
\$30,000 - \$34,999	7 (14%)	23 (10%)	35 (11.5%)
\$35,000 - \$39,999	1 (2%)	12 (5.3%)	22 (7.2%)
\$40,000 - \$49,999	5 (10%)	20 (8.8%)	37 (12.2%)
\$50,000 - \$59,999	4 (8%)	23 (10%)	74 (24.3%)
\$60,000 - \$84,999	5 (10%)	29 (12.7%)	47 (15.5%)
Over \$85,000	3 (6%)	34 (14.9%)	16 (5.3%)
<i>Occupation</i>			
Student	16 (32%)	16 (7.9%)	-
Employed	22 (44%)	22 (68.4%)	251 (82.6%)
Self-employed	6 (12%)	6 (14%)	46 (15.1%)
Unemployed	4 (8%)	4 (7.9%)	3 (1%)
Parental leave	1 (2%)	1 (0.43%)	2 (0.7%)
Other	1 (2%)	1 (1.3%)	2 (0.7%)
<i>Education</i>			
High school	14 (28%)	14 (21.9%)	22 (7.2%)
Bachelor degree	20 (40%)	20 (50%)	193 (63.5%)
Master's degree	13 (26%)	13 (25%)	89 (29.3%)
Doctorate	3 (6%)	3 (3.1%)	-
<i>Country/born</i>			
USA/Canada	1 (2%)	102 (44.7%)	272 (89.5%)
Europe/UK	42 (84%)	100 (43.8%)	-
Others	7 (14%)	26 (11.4%)	32 (10.5%)
<i>Country/lives</i>			
USA/Canada	2 (4%)	103 (45.2%)	273 (89.8%)
Europe/UK	48 (96%)	125 (54.8%)	-
Others	-	-	31 (10.2%)

3. Study 1a - Open-ended survey results

Open-ended Questions	Themes derived from responses (Some respondents indicated more than one theme)	
	citation	%
How would you describe your shopping behaviour regarding fashion clothing?	I love it	14 28
	One step to sustainable	13 26

	Price people	5	10
	One word: Careful	4	8
	Not trendy	4	8
	Unhealthy	4	8
	Impulsive compulsive	2	4
	Comfortable	2	4
	Oh men	2	4
What does the term 'information transparency' mean to you, regarding the things you buy?	Full information of process (where, by whom, how it was made)	41	52.6
	Materials used	12	15.4
	Honest Brand	9	11.5
	Personal Information	4	5.1
	Price	4	5.1
	Sustainable	4	5.1
	Nothing	2	2.6
	Child Labour	1	1.3
	Quality	1	1.3
As a consumer, how do you perceive information transparency in fashion brands?	Non existent	17	30.4
	An honest brand that informs	13	23.2
	In the communication	7	12.5
	Very important	7	12.5
	I don't care	4	7.1
	Don't trust	3	5.4
	Not 100% honest, but decent	3	5.4
	Personal information	2	3.6

4. Study 1a - Do you know a fast fashion brand that is transparent - coded into themes

Do you know a fast fashion brand that is transparent? Which one and why.		
	citation	%
Don't know	21	42
H&M	11	22
Other fast fashion brands	9	18
Other brands	6	12
Zara	2	4
I don't buy "fast fashion"	1	2

5. Study 1a - Do you know a fast fashion brand that is transparent - only H&M responses

Do you know a fast fashion brand that is transparent? Which one and why. (Only H&M responses)	
H&M, I saw an ad on tv	

H&M because they state many of their index about many aspects of their work

H&M, in their website every time you click on an H&M product you will be able to see the materials used to make the product — and the sustainability of the materials, the country in which the product was made, the factory that made the product, how to recycle your unwanted clothes

I think H&M is a good brand because its policy and its way of product clothes can be accessible even with an online search

H&M, because I get answers for the questions I ask

H&M Group. It topped the list of 250 brands and is the only company to score over 70 percent

maybe h&m? but I am not entirely sure - based on their conscious range

H&M - discloses raw materials and publishes a list of its manufacturers

I don't know any, maybe H&M

H&M has been one of the brands in the past couple of years that rank high when it comes to disclosing aspects of their products

6. Study 1a - Opinion about H&M ranked in the 1st place

Opinion about H&M ranked in the 1st place		
	citation	%
This is good	36	35.3
I buy from the brand	12	11.8
Unsure about the info	11	10.8
This is good but unsure about the info	11	10.8
What is the index? Don't trust	5	4.9
Already knew it	5	4.9
Improve my opinion, surprises me	5	4.9
Influence my purchase decision	5	4.9
Why they don't show this?	5	4.9
Didn't know it	4	3.9
I don't shop there, don't have an opinion	3	2.9

7. Study 1a - Full questionnaire

Construct	Items	Scale
Shopping behaviour fashion	How would you describe your shopping behaviour regarding fashion clothing?	Open-ended
Perception of information transparency	What does the term 'information transparency' mean to you, regarding the things you buy?	Open-ended
Information perceived	As a consumer, how do you perceive information transparency in fashion brands?	Open-ended
Information influence	To what extent do you agree with the statement below: Information transparency is a factor that influences my purchase decisions	(1) never to (9) always
Factors from Index	To what extent do you consider the information below important when buying fashion clothing? Brands' social and environmental policies for both their own employees and workers in the supply chain 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.	(1) not et all important to (9) extremely important

	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).	
	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	
	What brands are doing to address forced labour, gender equality, living wages, freedom of association, waste, circularity, overproduction, use of more sustainable materials, microplastics, deforestation, climate change, and water use	
Factor to influence purchase	Which aspect of information would influence most your purchase decision of fashion products?	(1) not et all important to (9) extremely important
	Location of their fabrics and the number of workers	
	Materials used in the product	
	Working conditions in the supply chain	
	Actions on climate change, water, and deforestation	
	Recycling and reuse of garments	
	Certifications and awards gained by the company	
	Inclusion and diversity policies	
Transparency in brands	Now about information transparency in brands. Do you know a fast fashion brand that is transparent? Which one and why.	Open-ended
Knowledge of H&M	Do you know the brand H&M?	Multiple choice
	Yes	
	No	
	A little bit	
	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? Please justify your answer and give as many details as possible.	Open-ended
Go to website	Now that you completed the survey successfully, please indicate which option do you prefer:	Multiple choice
	Please take me to the H&M sustainability page	
	Please take me to the final page, I will not check this information	
	Please take me to the final page, I already checked this information	

Questions adapted from: Blazquez, M., et al., (2020); Dach, L., & Allmendinger, K. (2014); Jacobs et al, (2018) ; Lundblad & Davies, (2016) ; McNeill, L., & Moore, R. (2015); Öberseder, M., et al, (2011); Song & Ko, (2017); Sudbury & Böltner, (2011)

8. Study 1a - Correlation matrix

	Factor that influences	Brands' social and environmental	Who on the executive	Brands to publish	What brands disclose	What brands are doing	Location of their fabrics	Materials used in the product	Working conditions	Actions on climate change	Recycling and reuse	Certifications and awards	Inclusion and diversity policies
Factor that influences	1												
Brands' social and environmental	598	1,000											
Who on the executive	577	623	1,000										
Brands to publish	495	590	586	1,000									
What brands disclose	673	697	623	567	1,000								
What brands are doing	614	796	514	512	723	1,000							
Location of their fabrics	545	584	447	479	540	454	1,000						
Materials used in the product	475	448	331	322	390	361	321	1,000					
Working conditions	638	787	595	542	778	745	744	474	1,000				
Actions on climate change	566	713	536	493	623	695	697	479	859	1,000			
Recycling and reuse	581	681	475	444	582	598	698	525	794	925	1,000		
Certifications and awards	332	373	455	424	307	234	458	436	442	390	377	1,000	
Inclusion and diversity policies	592	632	598	534	650	615	683	329	798	833	788	466	1,000

9. Stimuli used in Studies 1b and 2

<i>Instructions</i>	
Study 1b and 2 Conditions	Now you will see some examples of information available about PRODUCT BACKGROUND on the website of a brand. Please read carefully all the information.
Manipulation study 1b	Imagine that you went to the H&M (Yoli) website store. This is a regular fast fashion that sold cheaply manufactured clothing. You have found a basic sweatshirt that you really liked. Take your time analysing this webpage, the next questions will be focused on that.
Manipulation study 2 - control	Imagine that you went to the H&M (Yoli) website store. This is a regular fast fashion that sold cheaply manufactured clothing. You have found a basic sweatshirt that you really liked. Take your time analysing this webpage, the next questions will be focused on that.
Manipulation study 2 - with index	Imagine that you went to the H&M (Yoli) website store. This is a regular fast fashion that sold cheaply manufactured clothing. You have found a basic sweatshirt that you really liked. H&M (Yoli) 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. Fashion Revolution is a not-for-profit global movement represented by The Fashion Revolution Foundation and Fashion Revolution CIC with teams in over 100 countries around the world. Take your time analysing this webpage, the next questions will be focused on that.
Manipulation study 2 - with points	Imagine that you went to the H&M (Yoli) website store. This is a regular fast fashion that sold cheaply manufactured clothing. You have found a basic sweatshirt that you really liked. H&M is the first brand to create a program of rewarding consumers who purchase sustainable products, give back products to recycle, or bring their own shopping bags to the store. The points can be used as vouchers for the next purchases. Take your time analysing this webpage, the next questions will be focused on that.

10. Scales of the Studies 1b and 2

<i>Study</i>	<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Scale</i>
1	PURCHASE INTENTION & WOM			
	<i>Purchase intention</i>	Would you purchase from this brand? If you were planning to buy a product of this type, would you choose this brand? If a friend were looking for a product of this type, would you advise him or her to purchase this brand? I am willing to pay a higher price for this brand products than others	Berens, Van Riel, & Van Bruggen (2005)	(1) Extremely unlikely to (9) Extremely likely
	<i>Word-of-mouth intention</i>	I am likely to spread positive word of mouth about this brand	Maxham III & Netemeyer (2003)	
	1 BRAND IMAGE			
	<i>Brand credibility</i>	This brand doesn't pretend to be something it isn't I need lots more information about this brand before I'd buy it	adapted from Erdem & Swait (2004)	(1) Strongly disagree to (9) Strongly agree
	<i>Brand Transparency</i>	I believe this brand provides the information needed to understand the environmental impact of its product I believe this brand provides information about its environmental practices to customers in a clear way	adapted from Hustvedt & Kang (2013)	
1	INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE			
	<i>Adoption of sustainable fashion</i>	If there is green information (such as an eco-index) provided for fast fashion products, I would consider this in making my purchasing decision	adapted from Moon, et al. (2013)	(1) Strongly disagree to (9) Strongly agree

	<i>Knowledge Seeking</i>	I would be interested to hear more about the environmental sustainability initiatives of fast fashion companies in the news	McNeill & Moore (2015)	
		Having knowledge of whether fast fashion companies have environmental sustainability initiatives in place affects my purchase decisions	Morgan & Birtwistle (2009)	
2	TRUST	If there are certifications (such as an Index) provided for fast fashion products, I would consider this in making my purchasing decision	adapted from Moon, et al. (2013)	(1) Strongly disagree to (9) Strongly agree
		Certification is important to me when choosing a product	adapted from Lee, Bae & Kim (2020)	
2	GREENWASHING	Certified products are trustworthy		
		This brand misleads with words in its environmental features	Laufer (2003)	(1) Strongly disagree to (9) Strongly agree
		This brand has a green claim that is vague or seemingly unprovable		
		This brand leaves out or masks important information, making the green claim sound better than it is		

11. Study 1b -Manipulations

 Shopping bag(0)

Women Men Divided Kids H&M HOME Sale Sustainability



1st place in The Fashion Transparency Index 2020

The Index where 250 of the world's largest fashion brands and retailers are ranked according to how much they disclose about their social and environmental policies, practices and impacts.



Sweatshirt

19,99 €

Select size

ADD

PRODUCT BACKGROUND

We believe that greater transparency will help lead the change towards a more sustainable future. As a step in this long-term commitment, we're sharing how and where our products are made wherever possible.

Materials

Our goal is to use 100% recycled or other sustainably sourced materials by 2030.

Sustainably sourced materials — Organic cotton 100%

COTTON

Currently, we're using three types of sustainably sourced cotton: organic cotton, which is grown without chemical pesticides and fertilisers, and contains no genetically modified organisms; recycled cotton, which comes from used garments and textile leftovers; and cotton sourced through the BCI (Better Cotton Initiative), which helps reduce stress on the local environment and improves the welfare of farming communities.

OUR SUPPLIERS

China

SHANGHAI HUA XIANG W.DR.CO.LTD.

+

All our products are made by independent suppliers, often in developing countries where our presence can make a real difference. Our business helps to create jobs and independence, particularly for women — consequently lifting people out of poverty and contributing to economic growth. We only work with partners who share our respect for people and the environment, and who are willing to work with us to improve their practices. All suppliers and factories must sign our strict Sustainability Commitment, which includes requirements for fair wages and good working conditions for all. We employ dedicated sustainability staff in our worldwide production offices to make sure the commitment is followed.

 Shopping bag(0)

Women Men Kids Sale Sustainability



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Shopping bag(0)

[Women](#)
[Men](#)
[Divided](#)
[Kids](#)
[H&M HOME](#)
[Sale](#)
[Sustainability](#)




Sweatshirt

19,99 €

Select size

ADD

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China

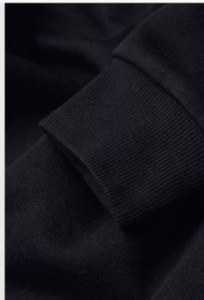
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Shopping bag(0)

[Women](#)
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[Sale](#)
[Sustainability](#)

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12. Study 1b - Descriptive Statistics

	Total		H&M with Index		H&M without Index		Yoli with Index		Yoli without Index	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
PURCHASE INTENTION										
Would you purchase from this brand?	6.57	1.79	6.35	1.84	6.84	1.74	6.91	1.56	6.16	1.92
If you were planning to buy a product of this type, would you choose this brand?	6.52	1.86	6.63	1.88	6.82	1.90	6.54	1.78	6.09	1.83
If a friend were looking for a product of this type, would you advise him or her to purchase this brand?	6.32	2.03	6.24	2.24	6.69	2.01	6.65	1.79	5.71	1.96
I am willing to pay a higher price for H&M products than others	5.46	2.35	5.3	2.25	5.81	2.45	5.74	2.35	4.98	2.31
I am likely to spread positive word of mouth about H&M	6.29	2.08	5.89	2.03	6.69	1.93	6.67	2.09	5.86	2.17
BRAND IMAGE										
This brand doesn't pretend to be something it isn't	6.2	1.83	5.78	1.79	5.97	2.09	6.81	1.60	6.28	1.66
I need lots more information about this brand before I'd buy it	5.39	2.25	5.06	2.35	5.32	2.26	5.8	2.23	5.41	2.14
I believe this brand provides the information needed to understand the environmental impact of its product	6.52	1.78	6.35	1.74	6.6	1.77	6.52	1.79	6.6	1.86
I believe this brand provides information about its environmental practices to customers in a clear way	6.72	1.71	6.39	1.76	6.95	1.60	6.85	1.61	6.67	1.84
INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE										
If there is green information (such as an eco-index) provided for fast fashion products, I would consider this in making my purchasing decision	6.23	1.77	5.93	1.86	6.35	1.72	6.63	1.72	6.02	1.73
I would be interested to hear more about the environmental sustainability initiatives of fast fashion companies in the news	6.58	1.93	6.24	2.14	6.79	2.04	6.81	1.80	6.47	1.68
Having knowledge of whether fast fashion companies have environmental sustainability initiatives in place affects my purchase decisions	6.33	1.99	6.15	2.18	6.47	2.09	6.65	1.87	6.05	1.79

13. Study 1b – ANOVA results

ANOVA

Purchase Intention

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	25.223	3	8.408	2.677	0.048
Within Groups	703.51	224	3.141		
Total	728.733	227			

ANOVA

Brand Image: This brand doesn't pretend to be something it isn't

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	33.716	3	11.239	3.453	0.017
Within Groups	729.003	224	3.254		
Total	762.719	227			

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: if there is green information (such as an eco-index) provided for fast fashion products, I would consider this in making my purchase decision

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	17.207a	3	5.736	1.858	0.138	0.024
Intercept	8825.586	1	8825.586	2859.016	0	0.927
Brand	1.904	1	1.904	0.617	0.433	0.003
Info transparency	0.478	1	0.478	0.155	0.694	0.001
Brand * Info transparency	15.4	1	15.4	4.989	0.026	0.022
Error	691.473	224	3.087			
Total	9565	228				
Corrected Total	708.68	227				

a. R Squared = .024 (Adjusted R Squared = .011)

Univariate Tests

Dependent Variable: if there is green information (such as an eco-index) provided for fast fashion products, I would consider this in making my purchase decision

INFO		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
INDEX	Contrast	13.37	1	13.37	4.331	0.039
	Error	691.473	224	3.087		
CONTROL	Contrast	3.415	1	3.415	1.106	0.294
	Error	691.473	224	3.087		

Each F tests the simple effects of BRAND within each level combination of the other effects shown. These tests are based on the linearly independent pairwise comparisons among the estimated marginal means.

Univariate Tests

Dependent Variable: if there is green information (such as an eco-index) provided for fast fashion products, I would consider this in making my purchase decision

BRAND		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
H&M	Contrast	5.31	1	5.31	1.72	0.191
	Error	691.473	224	3.087		
YOLI	Contrast	10.487	1	10.487	3.397	0.067
	Error	691.473	224	3.087		

Each F tests the simple effects of INFO within each level combination of the other effects shown. These tests are based on the linearly independent pairwise comparisons among the estimated marginal means.

14. Study 2 - Manipulations





1st place in the Fashion Transparency Index 2020

The Index where 250 of the world's largest fashion brands and retailers are ranked according to how much they disclose about their social and environmental policies, practices and impacts



Sweatshirt
19,99 €

Select size

ADD

MATERIALS

Currently, we're using a cotton sourced through the Better Cotton Initiative, which **helps reduce stress on the local environment** and improves the welfare of farming communities.

Sustainably sourced materials - Organic cotton 100%

OUR SUPPLIERS

All suppliers and factories must sign our strict Sustainability Commitment, which includes requirements for **fair wages and good working conditions for all**. We employ dedicated staff worldwide to make sure the commitment is followed.

CHINA - SHANGHAI HUAXIANG W.DR.CO.LTD.





Get rewarded for a more sustainable lifestyle

You will receive points every time you purchase a sustainable item, recycle clothes or bring your own shopping bag. Your points will transform into vouchers for your next purchase



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YOLI

YOLI

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19,99 €

Select size

ADD

MATERIALS

Currently, we're using a cotton sourced through the Better Cotton Initiative, which **helps reduce stress on the local environment** and improves the welfare of farming communities.

Sustainably sourced materials - Organic cotton 100%

OUR SUPPLIERS

All suppliers and factories must sign our strict Sustainability Commitment, which includes requirements for **fair wages and good working conditions for all**. We employ dedicated staff worldwide to make sure the commitment is followed.

CHINA - SHANGHAI HUAXIANG W.DR.CO.LTD.

YOLI



Sweatshirt

19,99 €

Select size

ADD

MATERIALS

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15. Study 2 - Descriptive Statistics

	Total		H&M with Index		H&M with points		H&M control		Yoli with Index		Yoli with points		Yoli control	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
TRUST														
If there are certifications (such as an Index) provided for fast fashion products, I would consider this in making my purchasing decision	6.91	1.625	6.98	1.606	6.58	1.43	7.08	1.51	7.12	1.624	7.09	1.656	6.62	1.872
Certification is important to me when choosing a product	7.15	1.614	7.14	1.649	7.08	1.589	7.42	1.247	7.28	1.629	7.42	1.55	6.56	1.875
Certified products are trustworthy	7.4	1.491	7.31	1.606	7.12	1.304	7.82	1.32	7.36	1.425	7.7	1.218	7.1	1.898
GREENWASHING														
This brand misleads with words in its environmental features	5.81	2.547	5.78	2.587	6.2	2.129	5.26	2.664	5.54	2.749	5.89	2.577	6.16	2.526
This brand has a green claim that is vague or seemingly unprovable	5.93	2.327	5.86	2.408	6.16	1.765	5.68	2.236	5.92	2.671	6.04	2.418	5.9	2.443
This brand leaves out or masks important information, making the green claim sound better than it is	6.2	2.266	6.2	2.425	6.6	1.841	5.7	2.261	5.96	2.373	6.34	2.312	6.38	2.329

16. Study 2 - ANOVA results

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Dependent Variable: TRUST						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	16.685a	5	3.337	1.828	0.107	0.03
Intercept	15549.805	1	15549.805	8518.838	0	0.966
Brand	0.068	1	0.068	0.037	0.847	0
CSR message	1.366	2	0.683	0.374	0.688	0.003
Brand * CSR message	15.298	2	7.649	4.19	0.016	0.027
Error	543.952	298	1.825			
Total	16131.444	304				
Corrected Total	560.637	303				

a. R Squared = .030 (Adjusted R Squared = .013)

Univariate Tests

Dependent Variable: TRUST

CSR message		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
INDEX	Contrast	0.054	1	0.054	0.03	0.863
	Error	543.952	298	1.825		
POINTS	Contrast	5.826	1	5.826	3.192	0.075
	Error	543.952	298	1.825		
CONTROL	Contrast	9.473	1	9.473	5.19	0.023
	Error	543.952	298	1.825		

Each F tests the simple effects of BRAND within each level combination of the other effects shown. These tests are based on the linearly independent pairwise comparisons among the estimated marginal means.

Univariate Tests

Dependent Variable: TRUST

BRAND		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
H&M	Contrast	5.12	2	2.56	1.403	0.248
	Error	543.952	298	1.825		
YOLI	Contrast	11.512	2	5.756	3.154	0.044
	Error	543.952	298	1.825		

Each F tests the simple effects of CONDITION within each level combination of the other effects shown. These tests are based on the linearly independent pairwise comparisons among the estimated marginal means.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: TRUST

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	105.565a	11	9.597	6.158	0	0.188
Intercept	13796.804	1	13796.804	8852.814	0	0.968
scenario	40.45	5	8.09	5.191	0	0.082
greenwashing	61.821	1	61.821	39.668	0	0.12
scenario * greenwashing	30.469	5	6.094	3.91	0.002	0.063
Error	455.072	292	1.558			
Total	16131.444	304				
Corrected Total	560.637	303				

a. R Squared = .188 (Adjusted R Squared = .158)

Univariate Tests

Dependent Variable: TRUST

greenwashing		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
No greenwashing	Contrast	54.111	5	10.822	6.944	0
	Error	455.072	292	1.558		
greenwashing	Contrast	3.508	5	0.702	0.45	0.813
	Error	455.072	292	1.558		

Each F tests the simple effects of scenario within each level combination of the other effects shown. These tests are based on the linearly independent pairwise comparisons among the estimated marginal means.

Univariate Tests

Dependent Variable: TRUST

scenario		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Yoli with Index	Contrast	5.966	1	5.966	3.828	0.051
	Error	455.072	292	1.558		
Yoli with points	Contrast	8.111	1	8.111	5.205	0.023
	Error	455.072	292	1.558		
Yoli control	Contrast	50.673	1	50.673	32.515	0
	Error	455.072	292	1.558		
H&M with Index	Contrast	2.152	1	2.152	1.381	0.241
	Error	455.072	292	1.558		
H&M with points	Contrast	20.205	1	20.205	12.965	0
	Error	455.072	292	1.558		
H&M control	Contrast	0.252	1	0.252	0.162	0.688
	Error	455.072	292	1.558		

