

Expertise and insight for the future

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Greenwashing and Fast Fashion: An International Comparison and Reflections on the Future

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This paper is about greenwashing in different countries with a focus on the fast-fashion industry. The countries used for comparison are Finland, France and Germany. The purpose of this paper is to find out if there are any differences within the fashion industry, and in how far greenwashing will still be conducted in the future. The problematic was approached by starting with an introduction into the topics greenwashing and fast fashion. Reasons and methods of greenwashing were introduced followed by its impact on consumer behavior and legal implications that might restrict greenwashing. The fast fashion industry was defined and its impacts on the nature were taken a closer look at. Moreover, few examples were given at that point. In order to have probable theories, the Hofstede cultural model was introduced. To answer the research questions, which were regarding the country comparison and the future of greenwashing a survey was conducted. The data was analyzed with the help of SPSS wherever possible and qualitative answers were used to formulate possible assumptions about what fast-fashion firms are greenwashing.

In the end, there were no major and significant differences between the countries when it comes to whether the citizens detect greenwashing. In addition to that it can be assumed that greenwashing itself will never stop and most likely change and evolve with time as times change. The majority of the respondents agreed to that. For companies it is important to know that being green is essential however greenwashing should be avoided since consumers are being educated and confronted a lot about this topic and start to get skeptical. A more detailed survey with a higher sample size as well as an expert interview with both firms and experts in market analysis could say more about the future of greenwashing.

Keywords	greenwashing, fast-fashion, sustainability, environment



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Glossary

UL Underwriter Laboratories

NGO Non-Governmental Organisation

CSR Corporate Social Responsibility

1 Introduction into the Topic Greenwashing

Greenwashing is an up-to date topic due to environmental reasons as well as new more misleading marketing techniques. Fast fashion has taken over the fashion industry and is present in nearly all markets. These two topics are relevant on themselves and in addition to that they can be associated together when the fast-fashion industry makes use of greenwashing.

Sitra as well as pwc consider the Climate Change as a mega trend. For Sitra, they explicitly mention Climate warming, increase in extreme weather phenomena, decreasing biodiversity, excessive consumption and variable availability of resources, soil degradation as well as the increase in the amount of waste (Sitra, 2020). Also pwc lists climate change as well as resource scarcity as their 5th megatrend already in 2016 (pwc, 2016). Climate change as well as Sustainability are therefore important topics in today's world. Sustainability itself has therefore gained importance and with it comes the pressure on individuals as well as businesses to be sustainable. According to McKinsey "Fashion makes a sizeable contribution to climate change" (Berg et al., 2020).

Being sustainable and taking care of the environment has gained importance in the last years. Sustainability as well as sustainable practices are set a high priority in today's society which can also be explained by the increasing awareness of the climate change. Not harming the environment and preserving nature seems to be very important for consumers. Especially in Europe this seems to be the case where the countries citizens seem to have a higher awareness and higher incentive to be eco-friendly. In addition to that, a higher motivation to purchase eco-friendly could be associated with the trend of being sustainable. Consumers buy more green products. Especially young consumers tend to be conscious towards their purchases which could be the explanation for the increase of importance in general. The demand for green products increased and consumers would prefer a sustainable brand over one which is not (Growth from Knowledge, 2020).

Most businesses are aware of these trends of sustainability and therefore follow the demand of green products. Especially in Germany they have gained popularity. Businesses design green products that are more environmentally friendly than nongreen products to satisfy their customers. For example, in the food industry, sales of



organic products increased. Organic Fish and Meat popularity increased but also energy efficient household appliances gained popularity (Federal Environment Agency UBA, 2014).

In order to promote these products with its sustainable characteristics, green marketing is being used. The promotion part of the marketing advertises the sustainable products. Green Marketing is being used to satisfy the needs of the customers. Conducting Green Marketing, however, does not mean that the business actually is being sustainable, but also that they just advert their actions as sustainable (Polonsky, 1994).

Whenever a firm or business conducts green marketing without being sustainable and environmentally friendly, they are misleading their consumers. According to the TerraChoice, which was acquired by UL "Greenwashing is the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service." (TerraChoice, 2007).

1.1 Importance Greenwashing in the Fashion Industry

The fashion industry has an enormous impact in the environment and is therefore strongly connected to Sustainability. Each production step impacts a different area ranging from water waste and water pollution, the use of hazardous chemicals, the use of electricity as well as the emission of carbon dioxide. This shows that the fashion industry is harming the environment in several ways. Especially in the Fast Fashion industry the increased consumption and short life cycle of the product lead to a high impact on environmental issues. In addition to that, the fashion also creates a large amount of waste, both during as well as after the consumption (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

Considering the consumers need for green products and the contradictory unsustainable production of clothing and apparel, the fashion industry and the retailers face a challenge that is especially hard to overcome. The production and supply chain are anything else but sustainable, but the consumers demand them to act. Possible solutions are implementing new, green strategies or greenwashing. These green strategies however cannot be implemented easily but require detailed planning and are connected to higher costs. Greenwashing is an easier solution to either temporarily or long-term mislead consumer in order to remain attractive and competitive.



2 Characteristics and Definitions of Greenwashing

2.1 Characteristics of Greenwashing

Greenwashing is usually used by businesses that have a bad impact on the environment, however they adjust their communication in order to make it sound as if they perform well when it comes to the environment. In this sense it is contradicting since their actions do not align with their communication. The Journal "Drivers of Greenwashing" goes into more detail on that topic. A figure explains the types of firms distinguished by two factors. The first factor is whether the firm is performing environmentally good or bad and the second factor is whether the business communicates positively or not existent. A matrix then combined the two possible characteristics of the businesses. A business with a good environmental performance that does not actively communicate is a "Silent Green Firm". If it has a good environmental performance combined with an actively positive communication, it is a "Vocal Green Firm". If the environmental performance is bad and there is no communication, then the firm is called "Silent Brown Firm". The last case is now when the firm performs poorly when it comes to the environment but in contrary it communicates positively about its actions. Then this firm is a "Greenwashing Firm". (Delmas & Cuerel Burbano, 2011) This explains that the greenwashing firms are both bad environmental performers in combination with an actively positive communication about their performance. This already proves that greenwashing manipulates the consumer because the firm states to be or do environmentally well whereas in reality it is the opposite. It can either be the company itself that is being greenwashed or their product. Most of the times it is a combination of both and the firm that greenwashes their products also greenwashes their corporate image.

When it comes to the greenwashed products, TerraChoice developed "The Seven Sins of Greenwashing" which categorizes the different kind of greenwashing into seven categories. The following table shows these different categories in addition to a small explanation:



Table 1 Different Categories of Greenwashing (TerraChoice, 2007)

Sin	Explanation
Sin of hidden trade-off	Is when a product has an environmentally friendly characteristic, but it does not make it sustainable in general.
Sin of no proof	If a product is said to have certain characteristics but it is not proven, meaning the statement is worthless.
Sin of vagueness	When something is claimed for a product, but it is too unspecific to be able to interpret this. A Hair Mask which is claimed to be 98% natural, but it is unclear what natural is. (Considering that water is also natural)
Sin of worshiping false labels	If a label is printed/shown on a product but the label does not exist. An example for this could be organic labels on groceries.
Sin of irrelevance	When a product is praised by something that is standard and not special.
Sin of lessor of two evils	When a product is assigned a good characteristic, but it actually does not make a difference for the product or the environment but actually distracts from other problems of the product.
Sin of fibbing	If something is claimed that is not correct and untrue.

These different techniques and strategies are used by the companies in order to mislead the consumers. Whereas some of them are true but irrelevant claims, others are simply lies that the consumers are told.

2.2 Drivers of Greenwashing

Delmas and Cuerel Burbano deal with the drivers of Greenwashing in their journal from 2011. In particular about why brown firms with no communication start to communicate positively about their environmental performance. They divide the drivers into four categories. The first category is "Nonmarket External Drivers". The second one is "Market External Drivers", the third is "Organization Drivers" and the last category is "Individual Psychological Drivers" (Delmas & Cuerel Burbano, 2011). Each of these categories contains more specific reasons which will be explained in the following paragraphs.

The first "Non-Market External Driver" is a "Lax and Uncertain Regulatory Environment". Whenever it is uncertain how firms and businesses have to act and it is unclear what is allowed and what not, these firms have the opportunity to make use of these loose regulations. In the U.S. there is an Acts that is supposed to limit the use of Greenwashing; however, it has not been applied often. It is not just that the act has not been enforced a lot but also that it is uncertain at what point greenwashing starts and when certain environmental claims from firms are misleading. (Delmas & Cuerel Burbano, 2011).

The second driver are external organizations like Activists, NGOs and Media Pressure. These groups of organizations have an influence on firms and expect them to the environmentally friendly. They pressure firms to act sustainably by threatening to expose them as a brown firm which is harming the environment. In addition to that, they observe crucially if a firm is conducting greenwashing and are willing to make them take responsibility for their actions of misleading and misinforming. These pressures that this group has on brown firms, might prevent the usage of greenwashing (Delmas & Cuerel Burbano, 2011).

The following category is the "Market External Drivers" which consists of Consumer, Investor and Competitor-Induced Incentives. Especially this group of drivers has high expectations of firms to be sustainable. They expect a firm to be sustainable which is



why the firm itself sees a higher need to meet these expectations. In order to meet them, the firm has then to decide whether they go green or choose the option of greenwashing. The option of staying a silent brown firm is eliminated due to the pressure from these drivers (Delmas & Cuerel Burbano, 2011).

Since it is clear, that consumers nowadays have a preference for green products and this trend for sustainable alternatives is increasing in importance this is reason enough for the firm to consider switching to becoming green or greenwashing. However, with the consumer pressure, the pressure of the investors contributes to that. The investors want the company to have a good reputation among the consumers and therefore form the second front influence and urge them to a change as well. Considering this is a trend that is gaining more importance as the society changes, more and more firms are in need of a green image. This leads to more and more firms aiming for that green image and the competition in the market forces businesses to jump on that train in order to make sure not to be left behind.

If another company seems to be successful with their green image, it is an incentive to start adapting the own strategy to align it with the one of the competitors. More and more businesses in the same sector and market start developing their green image. A brown firm in that sector might consider to communicate in a green way and thereby greenwash themselves into to group of successful firms. It specifically pointed out, that the lack of regulations makes consumers and investors suspicious for greenwashing because they can never feel certain that a firm is green (Delmas & Cuerel Burbano, 2011).

The third category is "Organizational Drivers". Organizational Drivers are Firm characteristics, Incentive Structure and Ethical Culture, Effectiveness of Intra-Firm Communication and Organizational Inertia. Firm characteristics have an influence on the ability, in how far the firm can conduct greenwashing. Several industries that are especially harming to the environment like chemical industries or energy producers are in the focus of attention of market external organizations which is why they need to be careful what they say. They are constantly observed, and risk being exposed for greenwashing. Same applies for large firms, simply because they have a greater impact. And even if the production of the product or the service itself alone is just moderately harmful for the environment, a mass production of such products increases the importance for a careful handling of the environmental impacts (Delmas & Cuerel Burbano, 2011).



In 2010, Greenpeace posted an online article exposing the British oil and gas company "BP" for greenwashing. They point out that this is one of the most harming industries for the nature and that they should be the last to think about doing green advertisements. They are described as liars whose priority is their own profit which they prioritize over telling the truth and standing by the fact that they are harmful towards the environment (Haley Walker, 2010).

Another driver in this category is Incentive Structure and Ethical Culture. An incentive structure in the business that is purely profit oriented is more likely to cause greenwashing. Whenever employees have the goal to generate a high profit, this is usually connected to unethical and unmoral actions. Being unsustainable might reduce the costs and is therefore favourable to increase profit. It is also pointed out that whenever a perfectly timed performance is expected, and a late performance results in a punishment, this also increases the likelihood of greenwashing (Delmas & Cuerel Burbano, 2011).

The firms profit from lower costs and higher profit or on-time performance without having to miss out the positive effects of being seen as sustainable by using greenwashing.

The ethical climate in the company and the therefore the thinking of the employees is also connected to this. When a business has moral norms and beliefs and values that the employees stick to, it determines whether affirm is green or not. If these norms, beliefs and values are green, the business will most likely be a green firm and act sustainably. However, if these beliefs are unethical and self-centred, the probability of green washing is higher. Whenever a firm has a code of conduct that implies ethical behaviour, greenwashing is unlikely to happen.

Organizational Inertia on the other hand is if the businesses routines and actions are very manifested, leading to a resistance towards change. This is more common in bigger older firms since they have developed their way of working and feel as they have established the optimal way to do so. They are the employees and the people involved in the business. Smaller newer firms are more open towards change and therefore also more likely to adopt sustainable strategies. For old strong firms organizational inertia is very strong and it takes time and effort to lead the business into a new era of change (Delmas & Cuerel Burbano, 2011).



Effectiveness of Intra-Firm Communication is another reason that could lead to greenwashing. If a firm's communication is suboptimal, misunderstanding could potentially lead to greenwashing. Product characteristics could be described by wrongly by departments concerned with the creation of the product and then these characteristics would be falsely advertised by the marketing department. A good communication and exchange between departments is therefore essential to make sure that no greenwashing is happening, even not by mistake (Delmas & Cuerel Burbano, 2011).

An example for this would be if the product designers mention they have used natural materials. However, they don't mean by this that all components of the product are natural. Nevertheless, the marketing department understands that the product is completely made out of natural ingredients and this is how they advertise the product. This would be a false claim and therefore be seen as greenwashing.

The last category is the Individual-Level Psychological Drivers.

Narrow Decision Framing is a problem because decision makers for example, are not foresighted enough. They only think about doing something in the moment without considering what it takes to implement these ideas to make it happen (Delmas & Cuerel Burbano, 2011).

This is why greenwashing might not have been planned but just ended up being used, since the actual claims could not be fulfilled due to inadequate planning.

Hyperbolic Intertemporal Discounting happens when businesses are impatient and cannot wait for a future better solution because there is a short-term acceptable one. Then it comes to greenwashing. The business starts communicating in a good way and practices greenwashing, the best short-term solution. In the long way the business knows that implementing green practices is better and could result in more success. However, when the times comes to make the plans for future greenwashing come true, it is again, for the moment the better decision to greenwash. Meaning, that in the moment, greenwashing always seems to be the better solution whereas in the long-term green practices are actually seen as the better solution (Delmas & Cuerel Burbano, 2011).

Optimistic Bias causes greenwashing because businesses overestimate the positive outcome of the event and underestimate the negative outcome. In general, it means that



they have too high expectations that their actions will end up having a positive effect and are therefore too optimistic about future events and results. On the other hand, they do not think it is likely that the result of their actions will be negative. The business thinks that they have many benefits from greenwashing like good reputation, higher market share and more investment. Not just that but in a way that is too optimistic. On the other hand, they are suppressing the probability that they could get caught doing greenwashing and being exposed. This exposure could lead to a media scandal with fatal consequences which are not seen as likely to happen.

2.3 Impact on Consumer Behaviour

The following part will be about the consumers side on greenwashing and how it affects them.

Nowadays consumers are more aware of greenwashing and know that it is conducted by many businesses. They have already learnt several ways to deduct greenwashing and are more suspicious than before which makes them less likely to fall for false green claims. A study conducted by Chen and Chung had a closer look at the relationship between greenwashing, green consumer confusion, green perceived risk and green trust (Chen & Chang, 2013).

The following terms were defined by the authors as followed:

Greenwash for them, is the same as greenwashing. It's about a product or service that is portrayed as green and misleads consumers into the thinking of it or them being environmentally friendly (Chen & Chang, 2013).

Green consumer confusion means that the consumer can no longer detect in how far a product or service is acting well when it comes to the environment. It is too misleading that the consumers ability to interpreted characteristics is not sufficient (Chen & Chang, 2013).

Green perceived risk is even the consumer already doubts the greenness of a product or service. Meaning the consumer has the feeling that buying this product has negative



effects on the environment and therefore also not meet the consumers values and expectations (Chen & Chang, 2013).

Green trust is what companies should aim for. It's when the consumer beliefs that buying this product or using this service will not harm the environment. The consumer has trust in the business because it has already proven its trustworthiness and green acting (Chen & Chang, 2013).

The first and already anticipated relationship are between the greenwash and the green trust. It was found out that greenwash has a negative influence on green trust. It was also found out that greenwash causes both green consumer confusion as well as green perceived risk. Green consumer confusion and green perceived risk both have a negative impact on green trust, which makes the greenwash also indirectly responsible for the effect on green trust. As a result, all three factors would lead to a decline of green trust. The authors explicitly suggest firms to increase green trust and therefore to reduce greenwashing and thereby also green consumer confusion as well as green perceived risk (Chen & Chang, 2013).

In addition, a study also found out that when consumers know that greenwashing has been used it leads to a decrease of loyalty, satisfaction and benefits for products and therefore their brands. In addition to that the consumer ends up being confused. Also, attitudes and beliefs of the consumer suffer under greenwashing since they are related to the loyalty, satisfaction and benefits. (Braga Junior et al., 2019)

2.4 Legal and Regulatory Implications

Legal and Regulatory implications can help to prevent greenwashing from the governmental side.

In order for greenwashing to be restrained, government regulations are necessary. A punishment can make sure that reduce greenwashing among firms and even make them green. It is recommended that the government uses punishments and has a look on greenwashing activities conducted by businesses. These punishments should also be carried out. In addition to that, CSR should be enhanced, and the general society should



receive appropriate education since they can pressure businesses from the consumer side (Sun & Zhang, 2019).

Punishments do affect strongly, whether businesses apply greenwashing. The more the government punishes businesses for their misleading actions, the more these businesses start changing their businesses to a green business. It could end up being more expensive for the business to continue greenwashing instead of implementing a green strategy. Along with that it was found out that harder punishments lead to a faster implementation. It has to be made sure that greenwashing becomes less attractive than becoming sustainable. Simultaneously it has to be made sure that these businesses are supervised by the market. (Sun & Zhang, 2019)

Other than that, tax subsidies have also reduced the use of greenwashing, yet the effect is not that strong. These subsidies are an incentive to become green since they supplement them to decrease their innovation costs. However, the subsidies need to be high in order for forms to consider them as a reason to become green. Otherwise, they might have a better deal with greenwashing. Apart from that, firms need to properly interact with the consumer to make sure that they identify the real green product in the markets (Sun & Zhang, 2019).

Moreover, powerful enterprises are affected more than small firms. Especially when it comes to the reduced taxes and the punishments by the state. In addition to that they are also reacting faster to the regulation since they are more pressure to do so. Therefore, this means that these regulations have more influence on these dominant firms. Mostly the reaction to the regulations is in their own interest which is why they want to make sure their reaction is implemented as fast as possible. In addition to that it was pointed out that the greatest motivator for implementation of green practices are out of economical nature, which is why consumers should be skeptical whenever the company has no economical reason (Sun & Zhang, 2019).

The European commission carried out a "sweep", meaning scanning webpage of businesses including the apparel industry in regard to their sustainable claims. In all sectors they have detected about 40% of claims that could be categorized as greenwashing. The businesses where greenwashing has been detected were approached by national authorities and have to adjust their information on their websites (European Commission, 2021)



3 Fast Fashion

3.1 Definition and Characteristics of Fast Fashion

Fast fashion evolved because at the end of the last century the societies preferences changed from standardization to more individualization. This required a change in the industry. It started off by introducing more "fashion seasons", changing the two-seasoned production that used to be spring/summer and fall/winter into up to six seasons. This was needed in order to make sure customers' needs can be appropriately satisfied. The habits of the consumers changed, and they required a higher diversity of clothing. This led to an increase of demand for fast fashion. At that time the big retailers had a huge influence on the market and were able to enhance competition. It was popular to switch to shorter lead times to have a swift response but remain modest costs. A failed try to sell apparel in the proper season which was aggravated by the prompt change of customer habits. A reconstruction was necessary that implemented an agile response and shorter lead times. (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010)

Characteristics of Fashion are that it is hard or nearly impossible to predict, a strong desire to purchase, and that the life cycle of the products is quite short. Moreover, the market demand is also strongly unpredictable. It is known that this industry one needs to react promptly and be agile in order to be cost-effective. It is important to take consumer preferences into account when it comes to the design process and product development. This ensures an increased profit. Fashion runways as well as fashion shows are the two factors that have the biggest impact and influence on the industry. An immediate reaction as well as recreation of these trends is done by retailer like H&M, Zara and many more. Thereby they attract consumers since they want these runway trends for an affordable price. This makes a fast response these trends from fashion runways and fashion shows a key element in order to meet the customers' expectations. Especially since forecasting was no longer reliable, these trends from the high fashion industry were used for reference. However, production needed to happen fast since consumers want the fashion items as soon as possible and they would not sell as profitable after the fashion season has ended (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010).



3.2 Impact of Fast Fashion on the Environment

It is no secret that the fashion industry has a huge effect on the environment and harms it in several ways. The industry contributes with up to 10% to the global CO₂ emissions. Moreover, they are guilty of using immense amounts of water as well as causing its pollution, whereas 20% of the industrial water pollution comes from the textile industry. In addition to that they cabe held accountable for ca 35% of the oceans micro-plastic pollution. What is just as damaging to the nature is the huge amount of waste that is created in the process, which is more than 90 million tonnes per year. It is known that an increase of these numbers is caused by an increase in production and consumption. The fashion industry produces more than they used to due to the changing society and their increased demand. Since the consumers are increasingly affected by the fast fashion trend, this problematic connection between fast fashion and the environment becoming more and more important. The fast fashion trend has gained huge popularity among the consumers but as well for the retailers since this new fashion era has increased the demand and their profits immensely. Consumption has been increasing due to the change to low prices for products. The industry did not practice sustainable solutions, however the society puts pressure on them now which makes them having to take sustainability seriously and include sustainable practices in their actions (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

The huge impact on the environment is due to several different factors. They all contribute to the large impact that results being that large. First of all a look at the textile industry shows that about half of the textiles are made out of polyester, which is a cause for microplastic (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

Its characteristics include to be very resistant. However, these characteristics is what makes it also very dangerous. It hardly degrades. In addition to that, microplastic can get into the water, not only during the production process but also during the usage of the consumer for example when washing it in the washing machine. Because of that, this microplastic gets into the water system and therefore also in the waters on this planet which pollutes them. This plastic is then consumed by fish and whether it is by fish or by drinking water, we also might end up consuming these microplastic particles. Also important when it comes to the synthetic being used for clothing is that is gathered from mineral oil which is a resource that is not endless and whose process of collecting is also harmful for the environment. (Fischer, 2018).



In addition to that, low-labour costs for example in countries in Asia lead to higher transportations costs. The different production steps might end up in different countries which requires a lot of transportation within these production phases. This transportation causes a large amount of CO₂ emissions. Furthermore, the transportation of the finished goods also makes up a part of the emissions. The textiles need to be transported all over the world to reach all the customers (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

Another contributing factor that is connected to the production in countries in Asia is the problem of communication. The product and textile design are often set in Europe or North America which causes miscommunication and therefore a possible risk for mistakes. If mistakes occur these increase the amount of waste that occurs during production. Due to the need for faster deliveries especially for online shopping, the shipping method changes more often from container ship to air-cargo. However, this emits ways more CO_2 than the traditional container ship that takes longer. It also needs to be considered that whenever the consumer wants to depose their textiles, these might up ending up being shipped to other continents instead of being recycled, causing again more CO_2 emission from the transport and creating a lot of waste (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

One important impact that fashion has on the environment, is the immense water use that was already mentioned. In fact, nearly 80 billion m³ were used in 2015. Most of the water consumption comes from the watering of cotton plants and the water used in the textile manufacturing. The bleaching for example, that is not only associated with harsh chemicals, also uses a lot of water. The water usage is even of more importance if in the area water is scarce. In countries in which manufacturing is taking place, the industry makes up 7% of the water use. One needs to keep in mind that it is not only the huge amount of water that is used, but also the water that has been used pollutes the environment due to chemicals or other pollutants. When the wastewater is not disposed properly it gets into rivers and other water which makes these waters unusable. An example of this was given, stating that in Cambodia a country with a large textile industry, 60% of the water ended up being polluted (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

The textile industry belongs to the highest emitters of greenhouse gases in relation to the weighted amount of product. Despite differing estimations from different institutions, it is still obvious that the numbers are very high. The range of estimations is from 0.33 gigatons CO₂ emissions during production up to 3.3 gigatons. There are several reasons that contribute to that high amount of emissions. The first reason for the emissions is the



used energy during manufacturing. The energy use for textile manufacturing is very high and countries like China rely on coal-energy which emits more CO₂ than many other alternatives. Within the European area, the use of coal has already decreased more than in China (Niinimäki et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the Paris Climate Change Agreement from 2015 clearly states the goal to reduce this coal energy in order to reduce emissions and slow down climate change and the global warming. The reduction of investments and the following loss in popularity of coal, also in China might lead to a change in the form of energy being used. However, this will take time and in the near future this will not be visible (United Nations, 2018). Another reason that plays an important factor when it comes to the huge number of emissions is the type of fibre. Whereas the cotton fibre, if organically produced uses up less energy, the synthetic fibres have a big carbon footprint. As already mentioned, there is a difference between organically produced and conventional cotton production. (Niinimäki et al., 2020)

Another big contribution to the CO₂ emission is caused by the individual consumers that end up washing their product. The washing as well as drying needs high amounts of energy. In fact, is contributes a lot and individual consumers could decrease the CO₂ emissions by washing as less as possible.

Aside from the CO₂ emissions that are a problematic side effect of the Fashion industry, the amount of Chemicals used is also a threat for the nature as well as all living beings in that nature. During different steps of the production chemicals are being released into nature. The cultivation of cotton is responsible for 6% of the global pesticide use. In addition to that several other chemicals are being used to ensure a high amount of good cotton. These chemicals are very harmful for the human health and can cause diseases as well as deaths. Moreover they get into the soil and cause damage there such as making it unusable for future cultivation of crops or damaging plants and animals. In addition to the crop-cultivation, in the actual manufacturing processes of textile and clothing, a large amount of chemicals is being used. The several production steps use chemicals to make the threat softer as well as other chemicals like bleach or dye. The majority of clothing consumed in the EU is not manufactured there, meaning the high amount of chemicals is being used in other countries and damaging the nature there, making the problem less visible for the consumer in Europe. Some of these chemicals being used were found out to be very alarming for human health whereas others were alarming for the environment, however also connected to human health since they are known to cause diseases such as cancer or allergies. Whereas some countries have



regulations to limit the bad impact of the environment, these countries are mostly not chosen for manufacturing since they are also associated with higher production costs leading to higher costs in general. These on the other hand are tried to be kept at a minimum in the fast fashion industry resulting in the industry to choose their manufacturing according to the regulations of the country. The fewer regulations a country has, the cheaper the production is and the higher the consequences that need to be borne by the workers (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

Next to the CO₂ emissions and chemical pollution, waste plays a big role when it comes to the fast fashion industry and their effect on the environment. Waste comes into existence during the production process as well as after, which is the waste created by the consumers. During the production process, most of the waste comes from fabric. Around 10-15% of the manufacturing fabric ends up being wasted. It is being created within the several steps of manufacturing, mostly cutting and the amount of waste depends on the kind of fabric as well as the pattern. In addition to that, especially in the fast fashion industry, mistakes increase the amount of waste. A mitigation of the production speed and a followed lower number of quantities being improved increases the precision that could be worked with as well as the communication and therefore resulting in less waste during the production. Adding up to this amount of waste is what is being produced but never reaches the customer. There is a huge amount of textile and apparel that is produced however is either being returned and then stored or never ends up being sold and remains being stored. This clothing is therefore unnecessary waste and all the emissions and pollution by chemicals was for nothing. Also, the consumers create a lot of waste because of fast fashion. Textile waste makes up for more than 1/5 of the waste in the world. Most clothing articles have a short life of about three years. Not just the short life cycle is seen as problematic but also that only a low amount of the textile waste ends up being recycled. And in case of recycling, it was mostly recycled into something of lower quality. In addition to that some European countries report high recycling rates in total numbers, however not putting it in relation to how much that country consumes. Recycling itself is also not the best and only solution, however people need to buy and consume less. (Niinimäki et al., 2020)



4 Greenwashing Examples in the Fast Fashion Industry

The most prominent example, that will also be included in the following part is H&M. The H&M Group provides their customers with mostly fashion but also lifestyle products. The group includes the well-known H&M brand as well as H&M home and several smaller brands like Monki. In addition to that they have their own foundation, which is owned by the founding family. The focus is clearly on the fashion industry. Their main suppliers are therefore the textile industry that produces clothing for these brands. They describe their supply chain as "diverse and global" (H&M Group, 2019). Their supply chain consists of producers of the products as well as transport and service suppliers. However, the Sustainable issues involve mostly the Raw-Materials as well as Manufacturing. In their report on p.7 they have an easy to understand diagram that shows what impact the different stages of the value chain have. It can clearly be seen that Raw Material, Fabric production as well as Product Manufacturing have the highest impact on the climate and the water. This impact is mostly negative. According to them, the climate impact includes emissions as well as energy use which both have a negative impact on the environment. Also, the water can be described as negative since it is not only used but also contaminated with chemicals.

They are already officially stating that they are aware of the environmental impact of the industry they are operating in and also propose many solutions and improvements for their sourcing, production and distribution process. However, these solutions are not necessarily in relation to what they are advertising. They have their conscious collection that they claim to be sustainable, however they are simply less bad but not necessarily good for the environment. They claim that a large part of their collection is recycled however it is not the entire product and the other fashion lines are still not sustainable.

Moreover, there are more fashion retailers that are guilty of Greenwashing. The mother company of "Zara", which is "Inditex" sets its goal to produce less waste and develop circularity. Moreover, they also want to switch to the cultivation of organic cotton and introduce green packaging. However, they are still one of the greatest textile producers worldwide, being the 3rd when it comes to the ranking of the world's biggest apparel companies according to their sales in 2019, making them have a huge influence on nature, meaning the use of raw materials, and pollution of the environment. "Zara's" sustainable clothing line "Join Life" can be compared to the conscious collection of "H&M" They are using the claim to reduce the impact on the environment, however it is just one



collection and not the whole product range of them. In addition to that, the claim is vague insofar that only explanations are given without any relation to the actual impact the fashion industry has and in how far this makes a big difference.

5 Hofstede Model

Hofstede described 6 dimensions of culture, power distance, individualism/ collectivism, femineity/ masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation and indulgence/ restraint. Each country can be analyzed according to these dimensions. These countries characteristics can be applied to both human characteristics as well as characteristics of businesses whereas it needs to be kept in mind that this is just theoretical and can be applied to the majority but not everyone (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). In the following part the six dimensions will be explained in more detail.

The power distance is the first dimension of the Hofstede Model. It describes in how far the country has a strong hierarchical culture or not. Whether there are there a lot of leader- non-leader relations and in how far there are inequalities between people and how it is approached by the people. A country with a high "Power Distance" means that there is a strong hierarchy and those involved are on a different level of power. On the other hand, a low Power Distance means that those involved are on the same level of power and are treated as equals whereas an open discussion can take pace and not one parties gives orders. The next dimension is Individualism and Collectivism. This shows to what extent the society are rather focused on themselves or act like a family. For Individualism the members of the society face challenge on their own and take care of themselves. For the collectivism the society help each other out and sticks together in any kind of situation. Masculinity and Femininity are the next dimension. The Masculinity represents a highly competitive society. It strives for success rather cooperation. The feminine society has characteristics that are opposite to this which include protection of the members of the society and especially towards people that are in more need of help. The Uncertainty Avoidance Index has no explicit term for the two poles. Societies can either have a weak uncertainty avoidance or a strong uncertainty avoidance. If a society has a low uncertainty avoidance, they do not fear what happens in the future and are more willing to take risks. A strong uncertainty avoidance makes a society very precautious, and they prefer to have control over the situation and want everything to be insured. Long term orientation and short-term orientation is the next dimension to



differentiate societies. Short-term societies are rather traditional and have strong connections to the past. They keep traditions instead of introducing new innovation. Long term orientated societies think further into the future and plan ahead, innovate and take on more new ideas and education. Indulgence and restraint are the last of the Hofstede dimensions. In an indulgent society they put high value on enjoying themselves in their free time. Restraint on the other hand is characterized by having strong social norms that puts more value on the greater goal than personal happiness (Hofstede Insights, n.d.).

Finland, France and Germany are a little different in some categories. Power distance is for France higher than for the other countries meaning that in French companies the CEOs of the company decide more and are the driving force of greenwashing. When it comes to individualism, all three countries are on the same level. Masculinity is for Finland the lowest, Germany the highest and France in between the two of them. Finland is a very feminine country meaning that they care about their free time and quality of life. That's also a reason for which they enjoy spending time in nature and value their surroundings more. They want to feel good, and they want everything around them to be good. French people also enjoy their life's but to a lesser extent. Germany on the other hand is very masculine which can be seen because it is an industrialized country. In Germany the people work hard, put value on their industry and know that it may be harming to the environment. Companies in Germany might consider greenwashing because citizens want to have good impact in their private life if they don't in their job. The uncertainty avoidance of France is a lot higher, meaning that they do not like leaving anything for risk. There are lots of rules and guidelines to follow and especially greenwashing can be seen as unethical. However, the fact that it is not wanted and is tried to be prevented makes it still happen. The hard regulations are needed because the society and firms would otherwise not consider it. When it comes to long term orientation, Germany is for sure a country that is very long term oriented. Especially compared to Finland which is very short-term oriented. When it comes to the nature however it can be said that Finland has a very long-term oriented goal of being green and preserving their nature and forests. All countries joined the Paris Agreement and are therefore at least to a certain extent long term oriented. When it comes to indulgence, Germany is very low which makes them more precautious towards the future and they assume the worst which is why they might try to prevent that worst case scenario by having restrictions against unsustainable actions. Finland the others are slightly higher meaning they are more optimistic which can also be projected on the environment as well as being more naïve when it comes to Greenwashing itself (Hofstede Insights, n.d.).

6 Methodological Approach

6.1 Explanation of Methodological Approach

The Literature Review was done with the help of already existing sources, mostly secondary data. With the help of journals, the backgrounds of the topics greenwashing, fast fashion and a culture model were explained as well as more background information given as to why it is important. Also included were websites and especially official documents published by political institutions. Videos as well as informal websites and documents were used to get a general knowledge and understanding, however were excluded as sources for this paper. The Sources were found with the help of keywords search. Sources with a high number of citations were prioritized since they can be considered as more relevant and can be seen as more credible. In addition to that a source was considered of higher quality and therefore relevance if more than one author was writing it or if for example a journal was peer-reviewed. Additional writer or peer-reviewed literature is more credible since it is double checked by another person. Furthermore, snowball sampling was applied in order to find more relevant literature that is connected to already used literature.

6.2 Methods of Data Collection

The data collection method was a quantitative research which was conducted with Google Forms. A questionnaire was drafted with Google Forms and published on 11th April. The target group was initially Finnish and German citizens, however, was extended to other countries in order to get more results. The survey was forwarded via messengers in order to reach more people. It was shared privately and therefore a low to moderate number of answers was expected. The goal was to get 100 answers to have a foundation to some statistical tests. The number of answers is expected to have a low to moderate significance. The sample size ended up being n = 103. Among this sample. 38 respondents identify themselves as male, 64 identify themselves as female and 1 preferred not to say. The majority, being 72,8% of the respondents are between 18-24 years old. 18.4% are between 25-34 years old and 7.8% between 51-65. One person is between 35 and 50. More than half, 57 of the respondents are from Germany, 26 from France, 17 from Finland and 3 from Italy. 51.5% of the respondents have completed secondary school, 32% have a bachelor's degree, 10.7% a master's degree, 2.9% a



Doctorate and 2.9% a completed professional training. 67% of the respondents are students at university, 26.2% are full-time employed 3.9% are part-time employed, 1% is 75%-employed, 1% is doing an apprenticeship and 1% is a student at school. (See appendix 1)

6.3 Methods of Analysis

The Analysis of the survey was done with the help of Excel- tables and SPSS, a software that is specialized on the work with questionnaires and data analysis. In the beginning all responses were checked for missing data. Some small corrections were done, such as renaming answers to a synonym in order to be able to have a common term. This was used in categories such as highest level of degree when the different respondents from different nations used a different terminology but in fact it is the same level of education. In addition to that spelling mistakes were corrected and one answer in the age category was adapted since it contained a wrong range. However, it was clear what was meant and, therefore it was corrected, and the data was still used.

Most of the tests used in the system were under the descriptive statistics category. The majority of the variables were classified as either ordinal or mostly nominal, which is why the tests for a correlation were the chi-square test. Measures of location or measures of dispersion were also not possible or meaningful. The majority of results were absolute or relative numbers.

7 Clarification and Discussion of the Research Questions

7.1 Differences of Greenwashing between Finland, France and Germany and in how far the Consumers can Detect Greenwashing in the Fast Fashion Industry.

The purpose of this question is to find out whether there are any differences between the countries Finland, France and Germany when it comes to detecting Greenwashing in the Fashion industry. The results of the questionnaire were used in after giving some first speculations about the results.



Taking the EPI scores into consideration it can be noted that all three countries can be found I the top ten countries with France being fifth, Finland ranking seventh and Germany ranking tenth. This already gives away that all countries do care about their environmental performance (Yale University, 2020). Finland has extraordinarily good results in categories like air and water quality. When it comes to climate change, France is the best in this category ranking fourth in total, followed by Finland ending ninth in total and Germany being last with a position in the total ranking of 14th. However, these results could be derivate from Finland being located further north and therefore using more energy for heating and this energy needed causes a huge amount of Greenhouse gases. Especially heating is much more needed due to the colder temperatures all over the year. France makes use of nuclear energy which is a cause for lower greenhouse gas emissions. (*Anteil Der Energieträger an Der Stromerzeugung in Frankreich Im Jahr 2019*, 2019)

In general Finland seems to be a country that values its nature and is environmentally friendly wherever and whenever possible. This is why it was potentially assumed that Finland's population is more into being sustainable and therefore also greener. In combination with their good education system, which is considered as one of the best, and also teaches critical thinking Finland's population might be more aware of Green Marketing as well as Greenwashing (OECD, 2018).

However, the survey results indicated that there is no correlation between the nationality and the awareness about greenwashing. In fact, in Finland relatively fewer people know about greenwashing. In Germany as well as Finland only slightly more than half of the respondents were aware of greenwashing. For Finland 10 respondents know greenwashing and 7 do not. In Germany 30 respondents know about greenwashing and 27 do not. Surprisingly in France nearly one third of the respondents is aware of the term greenwashing. 19 respondents from France know the term greenwashing and only 7 did not know it. It was especially surprising to see that French respondents were more likely to know the term. It needs to be kept in mind that could be coincident, nevertheless they were more aware of this marketing technique. This was unexpected because France was ranked lower in the PISA studies. A possible explanation for this could be the higher relevance of greenwashing in the society. Possibly greenwashing is a more current and relevant in France since more people of the society are more affected by it, meaning there are for example more advertisements the people are confronted with. Another explanation for the lower awareness of the term in the Finnish society is that Finnish



people have a lot of trust. They do not expect to be mistreated. Also, the advertisements in Finland are rather less offensive when it comes to green claims.

When it comes to the question whether consumers are aware of greenwashing among their fashion brands, the different countries also do not differ too much. Nevertheless, fewer people from Germany answered this question with yes. Only 25 respondents, 44% of the German respondents answered with yes whereas 32, about 56% answered with no. In Finland and France more than half of the respondents were aware of Greenwashing among their brands they are shopping. In Finland 10 respondents, about 60% answered with yes and 7, ca 40% with no. Similar for France where 16 answered yes, which is about 62% and 10, being about 38% answered no. When it comes to the question whether the respondents have already been tricked, the highest proportion being tricked is in Germany being around 23%. In Finland 18% reported to have been tricked by greenwashing and in France around 16%.

There is a possible correlation between the question whether people know the term greenwashing and whether they think they have been tricked by it as it can be seen in table 2. 30% of the respondents that know greenwashing think that they have already been tricked compared to only 4% of the respondents that do not know greenwashing think that they have been tricked. (see Appendix 2)



Table 2: Cross Table: Do you know the term "Greenwashing"? - Have you already been tricked by greenwashing?

		Have you already been tricked by greenwashing?		total
		No	Yes	
Do you know the term "Greenwashing"	Yes	42	18	60
	No	41	2	43
total		83	20	103

The sample also stated where they go shopping. The brand that was mentioned the most is H&M with 44 respondents stating that they go shopping at "H&M". Also, "Zalando" was chosen 42 times and "Amazon" 37 times. "H&M" is a well-known brand that is part of the Fast-Fashion Industry. Zalando sells different brands in its online-store and Amazon is a general e-commerce company that sells all kinds of products including fashion.

When it comes to brands that people saw Green advertisements, the majority of the answers included the brand "H&M". In fact, 78% of the sample included them thinking that they have seen green advertisements of them. Not only "H&M" but also other brands were mentioned by the respondents, especially "Zalando" with 35 mentions and "Amazon" with 35 respondents believing they have seen green advertisements. Reasons for this might be the societal pressure that makes them believe they have a competitive advantage by having green advertisements. Currently "H&M" is focusing on green campaigns with several advertisements that point out their sustainable clothing line and their green actions as well as making use of celebrity endorsement in combination with pointing gout the relevance of green clothing production.

An Example of this is the campaign with their famous brand ambassador Maisie Williams. She represents a clothing line of them and is part of the "Loop" program which is all about circular economy, meaning the reuse, remake and recycling, and in the fashion brands case of clothing. This is one of their many green campaigns and in addition to that one of the greatest when it comes to showing their sustainable actions and goals. It is pointed out that their goal is for their materials to be either recycled or more sustainably sourced

by 2030 (H&M, 2021b). This campaign in general is a very good start for more sustainability and it is clear that they are trying to be more sustainable, but it needs to be kept in mind that their main goal is and will be to be economically profitable. In addition to that their statement is very vague when they say that, they want to be more sustainable. It does not give any concrete details what "more sustainable" means. This campaign is most likely intended for an international if not global market which could be a reason for all countries being aware of greenwashing to the same degree. Same goes for other big companies that are more likely to do greenwashing like Zalando. They do their campaigns for a large market and not a local market. This is why the markets are exposed to a similar amount to these green advertisements. In addition to that the European Laws apply in each of these countries, making it possible for the firms to use the same slightly misleading claims in all three countries.

In addition to the new campaign with Maisie Williams, they have their conscious line in their product range. It is a sustainable line that is less harming for the environment and therefore more sustainable. They claim their conscious line to be at least to 50% be made out of more sustainable materials, except for their organic cotton which is for quality reasons to a maximum of 20% recycled. (H&M, 2021a) However it is again not mentioned what exactly "more sustainable" means and how much more sustainable it is. This line is well known among all the nationalities in the sample.

7.2 Will Greenwashing Evolve and Become a Standard in the Future Society or Will Firms be Forced to be Sustainable in the Fast Fashion Industry

Companies are under a lot of pressure when it comes to acting green. This pressure comes from both stakeholders and with that the pressure comes from the competition. It is the consumers that demand more and more sustainable products and services and if the competitors offer this option to the consumer the market will have to adapt to that. Meaning the other firms of the market have to offer sustainable products or services themselves or at least make them look like they are.

In the market there will be an increasing number of companies that are totally green. It will be a future trend to offer sustainable products and services and there will be no longer any traditional products. It will most likely be standard to offer sustainable products. Therefore, it is very likely that many firms adapt their strategy to a more sustainable one or at least pretend to do so. There will be more regulations towards



greenwashing but with new regulations come new strategies to avoid having to follow these regulations.

This is why it is very likely that greenwashing will always be present in the market and will not disappear by more regulations. However, it can be already seen, that in addition to greenwashing the firms are also really trying to be more sustainable. The example of H&M showed that even though the efforts they are doing are not as high as they are supposed to be and they are claiming to be, they are still adapting their production to a more sustainable one. Especially if the big companies start implementing green strategies, the smaller firms are more likely to follow.

In the survey that was conducted a clear majority of the respondents answered that they believe that greenwashing will not end in the future. 91.3% of the respondents gave the answer that it will continue.

8 Critical Reflection of the Elaboration

The topic is of great importance in today's society. A lot of information can be found about this on the internet and the media. In addition to that it can be seen in everyday life. However, since greenwashing is meant to be subliminal, it cannot clearly be seen and proven. It is about being vague and a proof of greenwashing is not possible. One can find many examples of greenwashing however it is not exposed by the company itself. This is why a lot of assumptions can be found about companies doing greenwashing, however one will most likely never know if the company is intending to do the greenwashing or just intends to become green and fail with that. In the survey several respondents stated that they know greenwashing. However, it is pretty clear that such a small sample of the very large population cannot be a significant result. The sample size is with n=103 not very high. In addition to that it is highly probable that a high proportion is studying business and knows about this paper being written and therefore have heard about the topic. In addition to that, the majority of the respondents are students studying at university since the survey was spread privately and these respondents might be more likely to know about this issue. Also, the majority of the answers is from German citizens, since it ended up being challenging to find participants from other countries. The results generated from the survey might be valid for this specific sub-population, nevertheless it is unclear as well as unlikely that it can be projected on the population.



Despite the huge amount of research conducted, the topic is much broader than initially assumed. It is present in so many parts of life. Even in the fashion industry there are many examples that could not be covered all in this paper.

9 General Conclusion of the Thesis

Greenwashing is a topic that can occur in various forms and is used in many different industries. It is gaining importance and relevance since the consumers pay more attention and put more value on the characteristic of being sustainable. The terms "green marketing" band "greenwashing" were introduced, followed by an explanation of the several forms of greenwashing that differentiate the strategies of the firms. Afterwards the reasons, also called drivers for greenwashing were explained, whereas they were either market-internal, market-external, organization drivers and the last category is individual psychological drivers. The impact on consumer behaviour was followed by legal and regulatory impactions that reduce the impact on consumer behaviour. Afterwards the Fast-Fashion Industry was introduced in a more detailed way, starting off with its evolution and why it is as successful as it is today followed by detailed consequences for the environment that are caused by fast-fashion. Moreover, greenwashing examples in the fashion industry were given, whereas the most important ones are "H&M" and "Zara". The Hofstede model was introduced. The research questions were answered, whereas when it comes to the first question there was no difference found between the countries when it comes to detecting greenwashing. For the second question whether greenwashing will end in the future it was assumed that greenwashing will not stop and be of great importance.

Especially the fast-fashion industry has a huge impact on the nature and is therefore more inclined to consider greenwashing. When it comes to greenwashing in different countries, it cannot be said clearly whether one country or another is more aware of it. In the survey that was conducted French participants turned out to me more aware of it, however these results cannot be projected on the whole population.



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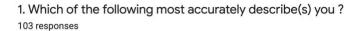
Appendices

Results of the Survey about Greenwashing

The following section is a short representation of the results. The complete set of data can be found in the following excel-table.

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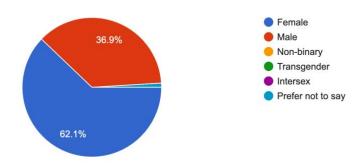


Figure 1: Which of the following most accurately describe(s) you?

2. How old are you? 103 responses

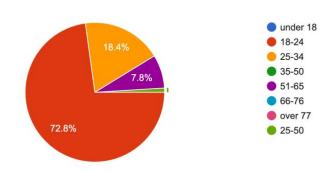


Figure 2: How old are you?

3. Where are you from? 103 responses

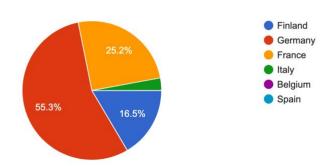
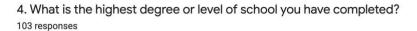


Figure 3: Where are you from?



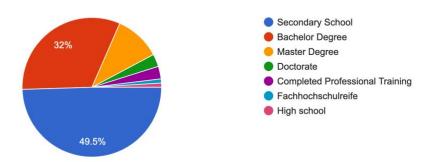


Figure 4: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

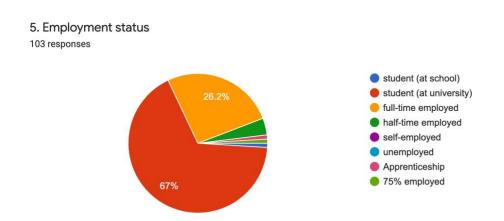


Figure 5: Employment Status

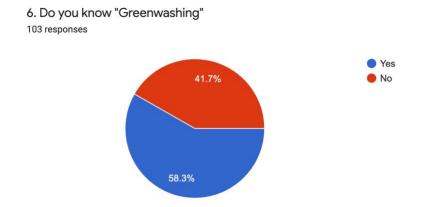


Figure 6: Do you know the term "Greenwashing"?

7. How often do you go shopping? (clothing) 103 responses

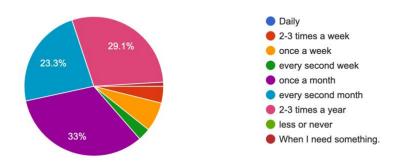


Figure 7: How often do you go shopping? (clothing)

8. What is your preferred type of shopping? 103 responses

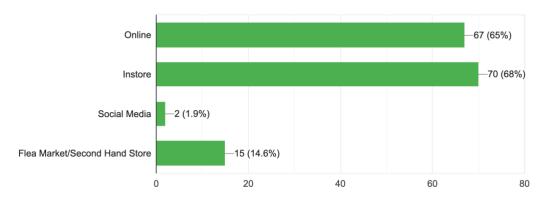


Figure 8: What is your preferred type pf shopping?



9. Where do you usually go shopping?

103 responses

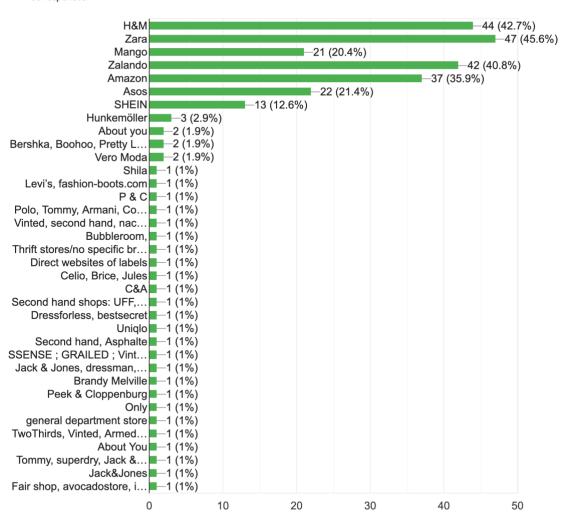
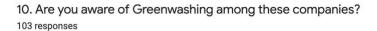


Figure 9: Where do you ususally go shopping?





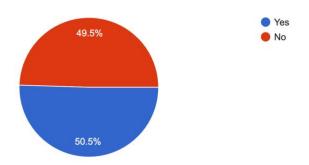


Figure 10: Are you aware of Greenwashing among these companies?

11. For what company have you seen green advertisements? 103 responses

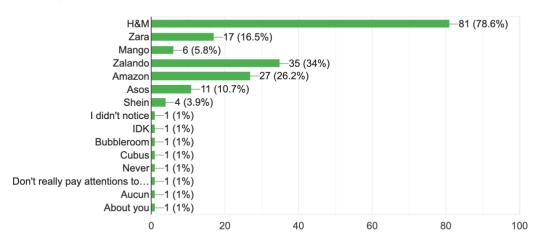
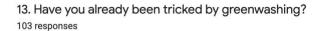


Figure 11: For what companies have you seen green advertisements?





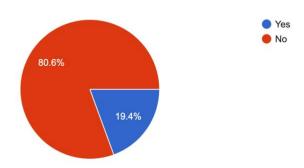


Figure 12: Have you already been tricked by greenwashing?

15. Do you think greenwashing will keep on being used in the future? 103 responses

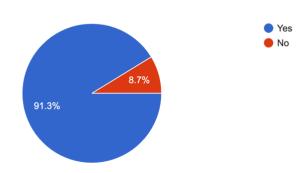


Figure 13: Do you think greenwashing will keep on being used in the future?

Results of Chi-Square Test

Table 3: Results of the Chi-Square Test

Chi-Square-Test			
	value	df	Asymptotic Significance (two-sided)
Chi-Square after Pearson	10,286a	1	0,001
number of valid cases	103		

