

# **Green or Greed: Analyzing Media Framing of H&M's Greenwashing Allegations**

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### **Abstract**

Recently, the fast fashion industry has received a lot of criticism, particularly for its social and environmental impact, unethical labor practices, and unsustainable production methods. As sustainability becomes an increasingly pressing issue worldwide, many individuals in society have been vocal in wanting fast fashion brands to take action. Therefore, an expanding movement has surrounded the fast fashion industry, in which they are faced with increasing pressure to become 'green'. H&M, a global leader in the fast fashion industry, has been repeatedly accused of falsely portraying itself as an eco-friendly company, but rather uses sustainability as a strategic tool without genuinely committing to being sustainable. While the phenomenon of greenwashing has been widely researched from a corporate or consumer perspective, limited research has been conducted on its framing in the media. Therefore, this thesis addresses this gap by answering the following question: *"How do international fashion magazines frame H&M's greenwashing allegations?"* To gain an in-depth understanding, a qualitative thematic analysis was conducted, combining both inductive and deductive coding strategies. Additionally, 43 articles from five different fashion magazines (Vogue, The Business of Fashion, Fashion United, Good on You, and Sourcing Journal) were analyzed. Following this, the thematic analysis revealed varied portrayals of H&M regarding its greenwashing allegations amongst fashion magazines. Some magazines frame the brand positively, portraying its sustainability efforts as genuine, and greatly use promotional language regarding H&M. On the other hand, some fashion magazines take an opposite stance by negatively portraying H&M and by pointing out inconsistencies in the brand's green marketing and questioning the authenticity of their environmental efforts. Across the dataset, several articles suggest that H&M's sustainability messaging may serve more as a marketing strategy than genuine CSR. Additionally, the findings frame consumers as the victims of the company's greenwashing but also as agents of change. Overall, this study aimed to contribute to the existing literature on fast-fashion brands' use of greenwashing. Additionally, this research can help brands make informed decisions regarding greenwashing and whether this is the correct approach to attract consumers and increase their revenues.

**KEYWORDS:** H&M, Fast fashion, Green Marketing, Greenwashing, and Framing

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	2
1. Introduction.....	4
1.1 Societal and Academic Relevance .....	6
1.2 Chapter Outline .....	8
2. Theoretical Framework.....	9
2.1 The Business Model of Fast Fashion .....	9
2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility and the Rise of Green Marketing .....	12
2.3 The Phenomenon of Greenwashing .....	15
2.4 Framing of Fast Fashion & Environmental Issues .....	18
3. Methodology .....	23
3.1 Qualitative approach .....	23
3.2 Method of Analysis: Thematic Analysis .....	23
3.3 Data Collection.....	24
3.4 Operationalization .....	25
3.5 Data Analysis .....	26
3.6 Validity, Reliability, Credibility.....	28
4. Results .....	30
4.1 Framing Brand Legitimacy .....	30
4.2 The Framing of Greenwashing Strategies .....	35
4.3 Accountability Frame .....	41
5. Conclusion and Discussion.....	48
5.1 Summary of Findings .....	48
5.3 Theoretical and Societal Implications .....	50
5.4 Limitations and Future Research.....	51
References:.....	53
Appendix A: Thematic Codebook.....	62
Appendix B: AI Use Declaration.....	65

## 1. Introduction

Fast fashion is a global trend characterized by the capacity of fashion brands to adapt quickly to fast-changing trends and consumers' tastes while maintaining low costs (Niinimäki et al., 2020, p.189). The word “*fast*” in fast fashion refers to the speed at which retailers bring out new collections weekly by keeping up with the quick pace at which trends change (Bick et al., 2018, p.1). The fashion industry has had to adapt itself to the evolving desires of consumers due to the fact that fast fashion has transformed the way consumers buy and dispose of clothes (Bick et al., 2018, p.1). The fashion industry has been overtaken by fast fashion’s rapid pace and dominance, as it was originally characterized by timeless pieces that were time-consuming for creators to create. This production model prioritizes manufacturing speed over the quality of the clothes produced (Niinimäki et al., 2020, p.189). Therefore, fast fashion depends on recurring consumption and impulse purchasing. This behavior reflects a broader consumer culture that encourages constant purchasing and the expression of identity through fast-changing trends, leading to consumerism (Olivar Aponte et al., 2024, p.1). Moreover, it is renowned that fast fashion clothes are of lower quality than traditional fashion; however, they are sold at a more affordable price. Hence, consumers get less wear out of clothes from fast fashion brands and rapidly disregard them. Additionally, according to Gibson (2023), fast fashion brands produce around 500–1000 new clothes each week (p.142). Consequently, consumers are subconsciously encouraged to overconsume and quickly replace hardly used clothing items.

Recently, the fast fashion industry has received a lot of criticism, particularly for its social and environmental impact, unethical labor practices, and unsustainable production methods (Niinimäki et al., 2020, p.189). Key concerns include the use of hazardous chemicals, exploitation of workers, and excessive waste, among many others. To be more precise, the industry contributes to around 8 to 10 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions and accounts for 20 percent of global water consumption (Gibson, 2023, p.142). To put this into perspective, producing just one kilogram of cotton requires around 10,000 liters of water (Gibson, 2023, p.142). Furthermore, approximately 87 percent of clothes end up in landfills or are incinerated (Gibson, 2023, p.142). This shows the severity of the industry's ecological footprint and the urgent need for sustainable solutions. Despite the widespread awareness of the severity of the impacts of fast fashion, the industry continues to grow rapidly. Nevertheless, the industry’s social and environmental impact showcases the need to restore traditional fashion.

Companies are increasingly adopting a go-green stance in times of growing concerns regarding climate change, economic crises, and global warming. Additionally, with the rise of environmentally aware consumers and public attention on the climate crisis, the fast fashion industry is under pressure to adopt more sustainable practices and acknowledge its environmental impact (Niinimäki et al., 2020, p.190). As a response, many brands have been changing their practices to fit consumer expectations. This being said, consumer wants and needs have shifted to more sustainable products, and they are willing to pay higher prices for such products.

One of the leading fast fashion brands is the Swedish brand H&M. It was founded in 1946, has approximately 5000 outlets, and operates in 74 countries (Kaner, 2021, p.211). However, 79 years ago, H&M was founded with a single store in Västerås, Sweden (Sjöman, 2024, p.123). At the time, H&M was known under the name Hennes (Swedish for “hers”) and specialized only in women’s clothing (Sjöman, 2024, p.123). H&M has become the second-largest clothing retailer globally, closely behind the Inditex Group, which includes brands such as Zara and Massimo Dutti, among many others (Kaner, 2021, p.211). Being part of the fast fashion industry comes with certain pressures. For instance, the notion that adopting sustainable and eco-friendly practices is unachievable. Although H&M acknowledges its environmental and social impacts and has publicly stated that they are committed to reducing them, the company still faces skepticism, where many question the authenticity of its sustainability efforts (Kaner, 2021, p.211).

In 2010, H&M launched its first ‘Conscious Collection’, which refers to H&M’s sustainable clothing collection (Kaner, 2021, p.211). Since then, the company has launched one Conscious Collection a year (Kaner, 2021, p.211). In 2019, the Norwegian Consumer Authority criticized H&M for failing to provide clear information about the sustainability of the collection (Kaner, 2021, p.211). They believe that by doing so, H&M is misleading its consumers into buying products that might not be as sustainable as they claim. Additionally, H&M faces criticism for having one specific sustainable collection, while the majority of their product range consists of regular fast fashion items that are not eco-friendly (Kaner, 2021, p.211). In June 2022, H&M was sued and faced legal action for engaging in “misleading” and “false” sustainable marketing regarding its Conscious Collection (Kaner, 2021, p.211). In November 2022, H&M faced its second lawsuit concerning its green claims about recycled polyester.

## *1.1 Societal and Academic Relevance*

Fast fashion is one of the most polluting industries globally. As sustainability becomes an increasingly pressing issue worldwide, many individuals in society have been vocal in wanting brands to take action. They did this through, for example, protests and boycotting brands, among other things (Bytof & Ritch, 2023, p.8738). The fashion industry, specifically, has been targeted, and in response, many fast fashion brands have launched sustainability initiatives. Specifically, companies increasingly strive to meet societal demands as stakeholders hold them accountable for their actions. However, certain companies lie about their sustainable practices (Kaner, 2021, p.211). This refers to greenwashing: “the intersection of two firm behaviors: poor environmental performance and positive communication about environmental performance” (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020, p.2). The prevalence of greenwashing in the fashion industry is increasing at an alarming rate (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020, p.2). Given that sustainability lacks a universal, quantifiable, and clear definition, companies can use ambiguous terminology such as “eco-friendly” to represent certain characteristics of their products without being accountable for potential misinformation. Over time, many fast fashion companies have adopted such vague terminology to promote their so-called sustainable products, leading to consumer confusion and positioning greenwashing as a primary marketing strategy (Berrone et al., 2017, p. 369).

Recently, a huge amount of scholarly work has been written about greenwashing, as there has been an increase in environmentally aware consumers. Firstly, research has explored how companies manipulate sustainability narratives to maintain a positive brand image (Bytof & Ritch, 2023, p.8742; Kaner, 2021, p.268; Parguel et al., 2011, p.16). Furthermore, previous research has investigated occurrences where brands have failed to implement substantive environmental changes and the impacts this may have on themselves, as a company, and their customers (Berrone et al., 2017, p. 376; Polonsky et al., 2024, p.396). Additionally, the effects of green claims on brand attitudes have previously been studied, regarding the food and beverages industry (Olsen et al., 2014, p.125). In terms of research concerning greenwashing, many scholars have focused on specific industries such as automotive, technology, and food and beverage (Batista et al., 2020, p.37; Olsen et al., 2014, p.125) Additionally, some scholars have focused on finding ways to avoid falling into greenwashing traps (Vollero, 2022, p.120). Research concerning the fashion industry and the role of greenwashing is usually investigated from the perspective of consumers and the impact this might have on their purchasing decisions. For instance, Lu et al. (2022) researched

whether or not young consumers' greenwashing perception influences their purchasing intention. Moreover, according to research, greenwashing negatively impacts consumers' purchasing intention (Javed et al., 2020, p.3; Zhang et al., 2018, p. 700). However, there is a lack of research concerning the framing of greenwashing in the media.

Additionally, there is limited research on H&M's greenwashing allegations and the lawsuits. Hence, addressing the gap in the research is crucial because the way an issue is presented in news articles or other media content can influence how audiences perceive it. According to Gerbner (1998), when exposed to the media, viewers' perception of reality is influenced and shaped, leading to the portrayal in the media becoming their reflection of the real world (p.80). Similarly, according to Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), media framing refers to the assumption that how an issue is portrayed in the news or media texts may influence how the audience perceives it (p.864). This being said, corporate accountability, consumer behavior, and the reader's perception of the brands can be significantly influenced by the way media outlets address and frame H&M's greenwashing allegations. Therefore, a greater amount of empirical research is needed regarding this topic. This would allow a greater understanding of how media outlets construct and frame greenwashing narratives to uncover the complexities regarding the media's role in shaping perceptions concerning environmentally sensitive issues such as greenwashing. Thus, questions regarding the framing of greenwashing in media outlets are left unanswered, and through this research, this paper aims to bridge this gap by investigating the H&M greenwashing case.

Therefore, this paper will investigate how H&M's greenwashing allegations are framed in international fashion magazines, since these magazines hold significant power in shaping public discourse within the fashion sector. With globalization and the rise of the internet, this study is relevant as media outlets have become widely used, as they have become easily accessible to all, and in turn, may influence public perception. In this case, when brands greenwash, media outlets will report it, which could negatively influence consumers' perception of the brand. Lastly, this research's findings can encourage and drive greater transparency in the industry through communication with stakeholders and by encouraging fast fashion brands to align their sustainability efforts with authentic, genuine, and measurable actions, instead of deceiving their consumers with false claims.

As such, the study will aim to answer the following research question: "*How do*

*international fashion magazines frame H&M's greenwashing allegations?"* Moreover, this research will be structured around the following sub-question:

1. What frames dominate the discussion on this topic?
2. How do dominant frames differ across different international fashion magazines?

This research contributes to the existing literature by adding a new dimension to studies on the fast fashion industry and the framing of greenwashing in international fashion magazines by addressing these sub-questions.

### *1.2 Chapter Outline*

This paper is structured into six key sections. The subsequent section of this paper will present an overview of the literature regarding the business model of fast fashion, the rise in green marketing, consequently, the phenomenon of greenwashing, and the framing theory. Following this, chapter three provides the methodological procedures used to analyze the data by explaining why a qualitative approach was chosen. To continue with, an explanation of the thematic analysis will be discussed to analyze fifty international fashion magazines, as well as the operationalization of the variable and the reliability, validity, and credibility. Additionally, chapter four of the paper presents the results that emerged from this analysis through different themes. Finally, the paper concludes with chapter five, providing a conclusion to this research, followed by acknowledging the potential limitations and recommendations for future research.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This section of the paper aims to outline existing theory and literature that are associated with fast fashion, the rise of CSR and green marketing, and how certain brands take advantage of this, leading to greenwashing. Additionally, framing theory will be discussed according to Entman (1993), regarding environmental issues, CSR, and the potential impact this could have on H&M following their greenwashing allegations.

### *2.1 The Business Model of Fast Fashion*

The concept of 'Fast Fashion' was first coined by the New York Times in the early 1990s, as Zara launched in New York (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010, p.169). This concept was created to portray Zara's goal to complete a full cycle of designing and selling clothes in less than 15 days. As the industry evolved, fast fashion brands released 42 trend-led collections per year, 500 designs a week, and almost 20,000 per year (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010, p.169). Therefore, fast fashion can be described as affordable clothes, manufactured quickly by mass-market retailers, based on the latest fashion trends, often copying high-end designs by using lower-quality materials (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010, p.168). According to Buzzo and Abreu (2018), the fast fashion industry can be defined through three main elements (p.3). First, there is a rapid response, since fast fashion brands try to grasp information concerning what is trendy at the moment amongst higher-end fashion designers in order to rapidly recreate a cheaper version for their consumers. Secondly, there is a constant change in consumer demand as trends change rapidly. These two elements drive fast fashion's operations (Buzzo & Abreu, 2018, p.3). To continue with, the third element is the selling of clothes at an affordable price, showcasing how the industry creates business value. Additionally, the leading countries in the global fast-fashion market are Sweden, Germany, the United Kingdom, the USA, and China (Li, 2023, p.453). This being said, China dominates the industry due to its low economic cost, extensive production capacities, growth in domestic demand, and large-scale retail space for fast fashion products (Li, 2023, p.453).

Moreover, the fast fashion business model is the defining characteristic that shapes the industry's operations and success (Buzzo & Abreu, 2018, p. 12). In this case, the sector produces trendy clothes at a low price using cheap labor from underdeveloped and developing countries. It sells them for a short period before being replaced by newer and more fashionable clothing.

Scholars have argued that the fashion business model has been operating in the same way for the last 250 years, stating that the industry is driven by "creative theft, disregard for others, corruption, and pollution" (Thomas, 2019, p.23). Thomas (2019), amongst many others, advocates the need for change and proposes a more ethical and sustainable approach to reduce fast fashion's harmful impact (p.23). However, Lorenzoni (2016) argues that the fast fashion business model works by taking advantage of key strengths within the company while also relying heavily on outside resources, allowing the business structure to be lightweight and efficient (p.70). In Lorenzoni's (2016) research, the fast fashion business model is depicted as achieved with limited resources and follows the motto: "*Do more with less*", emphasizing the optimization of production processes and cost efficiency (p.70). In particular, the fast-fashion business model heavily depends on outsourcing production to low-wage countries (Lorenzoni, 2016, p.70). This strategy allows fast-fashion companies to minimize their overall costs while still having rapid product turnover.

This reflects the principles of the neoliberalism model, which has greatly shaped the fast fashion industry to this day. According to the authors Dholakia and Zilibierberg (2024), the neoliberalism model is characterized as market-oriented reform policies and the prioritization of profit above anything else (p.2). In fact, by maximizing profits and efficiency and simultaneously keeping prices low, the fast fashion industry's business model aligns with the neoliberalism model. Therefore, consumers have the option to purchase cheaper clothing while easily disposing of it, increasing the industry's economic growth. Consequently, consumerism has risen, and it is driven by the trend of the demand for new, cheaper, and trendier clothes. The fact that consumers are actively buying, disposing and rebuying new clothing constantly leads to significant environmental degradation and exploitative labor practices. As a result, this normalizes a society where constantly buying new clothes and wasting them is a routine (Dholakia & Zilibierberg, 2024, p.6). To be more specific, according to Connell (2019), consumerism can be characterised as a social ideology that encourages individuals to purchase goods and services (p.298). Aligning with the neoliberal model, which encourages individual freedom, this behavior and the growing habits of society fit with the rise of consumerism. As a result, within the neoliberal model, consumers are encouraged to buy in large amounts, creating a sense of pressure for brands to keep up and meet the increasing demands for trendy clothes. This being said, this convergence of neoliberalism and consumerism sustains the fast fashion business model. By reinforcing the cycle of overproduction and promoting overconsumption, severe environmental and social consequences are increasingly becoming

prominent.

While the neoliberalism model is greatly criticized by scholars, some offer a different perspective. For instance, Soboleva and Sánchez (2024) believe that individuals are not as easily influenced as they are reflected within the model, but the authors rather see them as agents of change (p.10). Given the growth of citizen awareness and political consumerism, people are no longer seen as passive participants but are increasingly starting to challenge these unethical practices. Additionally, individuals are increasingly turning to more sustainable alternatives and seeking better quality products.

Furthermore, in Buzzo and Abreu's (2018) research, the fast fashion production chain is described through five main components: "commodities, component supply, production networks, sales channels, and marketing networks" (p. 4). Additionally, Bick et al. (2018) highlight that since the business model of fast fashion has become the norm, consumer preferences have altered, leaving behind the slow and traditional fashion business model (p.3). According to the authors, there has been an increase in the demand for inexpensive clothes due to the rise of consumerism, resulting in environmental and social degradation within all the supply chain steps in recent years (Bick et al., 2018, p.3). This being said, the fashion industry accounts for 8 to 10 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions and is predicted to rise by around 50 percent by 2030 if no radical changes are made in this industry (Gibson, 2023, p.142).

Moreover, Binet et al.'s (2019) research focuses on fast fashion's business model through the exploration of its supply chain management (p.1). Similarly, according to Barnes and Lea-Greenwood (2006), effective supply chain management is crucial to the success of fast fashion (p.9). This is because it is essential for retail competitiveness, as it is the supply chains themselves, rather than individual companies, that compete with each other. For this reason, businesses increasingly collaborate with other firms to enhance the performance of their customer value delivery systems. Through this collaboration, brands can mutually agree on profitable strategies (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006, p.9). This can be showcased through the fast fashion brand H&M, which often collaborates with other brands, such as Lee. Together in 2021, they collaborated and advertised for the next generation of more sustainable denim.

However, according to Barnes and Lea-Greenwood (2006), the fast fashion supply chain encounters many issues (p.17). Concerns about the costs, production quality, coordination, timing, and reliability make supply chain management complex. Furthermore, environmental impacts can

be observed within the fast fashion supply chain (Binet et al., 2019, p.262). In their research, Binet et al. (2019) report that the environmental consequences of the current supply chain model are worsening through overproduction and low quality of products, which contribute to excessive consumption (p.262). Currently, 60% of the clothes produced in fast fashion are discarded into incinerators or landfills within a year of production (Long & Nasiry, 2022, p.1276). According to Long and Nasiry (2022), there is a quick response in supply chain systems with uncertain demand (p.1279). The only way to solve this issue would be by developing a new business model to make the fast fashion industry environmentally friendly, by utilizing its resources sustainably, and eliminating waste. However, according to McNeil and Moore (2015), what matters most to consumers is “price, value, trends and brand image”, resulting in the unlikeliness to shift back to traditional fashion (p. 212).

## *2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility and the Rise of Green Marketing*

The fashion industry has become the second most polluting industry globally, highlighting the urgent need to transform it into a more sustainable sector (Daukantienė, 2023, p. 991). However, stakeholders, investors, and consumers have increasingly become environmentally and socially conscious over the years (Balluchi et al., 2020, p.2). When purchasing, they consider social and environmental impacts, giving rise to the desire for eco-friendly products. For this reason, companies are obliged to adapt and become more socially accountable, especially by thinking beyond their revenues (Balluchi et al., 2020, p.2). Specifically in the fashion industry, consumers have been encouraged and are willing to adopt the principles of traditional fashion (slow fashion) instead of fast fashion trends (Daukantienė, 2023, p. 998). This change in consumer demand has not gone unnoticed by fast fashion brands, giving rise to a popular practice that companies have been incorporating within their ethics and values: ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ (CSR). CSR can be characterized as a source of competitive advantage and a business model created to guide companies to be economically, socially, and environmentally accountable (Camilleri, 2022, p.649). CSR activities can be distinguished from other organizational activities through two main attributes: firstly, they benefit society or the general interest, and secondly, they are not obligated by law. This being said, CSR strategies are commonly used by companies that have social and environmental impacts (Guedes et al., 2017, p.1193). This is particularly true in the fast fashion industry, which has been extensively examined concerning

its high social and environmental impacts, specifically its exploitative labour conditions and its impacts on air, water, and soil (Guedes et al., 2017, p.1194).

This being said, many fast fashion brands now utilize CSR as a strategy to differentiate themselves from competitors, specifically by taking a 'green' stance. Consumers influenced this movement amongst fast fashion brands through their purchasing power and imposed on companies the need to change their practices to more responsible ones (Guedes et al., 2017, p.1194). As a consequence, some fast fashion brands altered their practices, leading to companies becoming increasingly socially and environmentally aware, with new business practices emerging (Guedes et al., 2017, p.1194). Therefore, when companies engage in effective CSR programs, this enhances their brand image and improves their consumers' brand perception and purchasing intentions (Wei & Jung, 2022, p.209). Additionally, some fast fashion brands wrongly utilize CSR initiatives and see it as a strategy to differentiate themselves from others and to increase their brand competitiveness (Jiang, 2022, p.100). One example is H&M, which claims that they are highly responsible in terms of three aspects of CSR: socially, economically, and environmentally (Jiang, 2022, p.104). Through its detailed sustainability reports, H&M distinguishes itself from other fast fashion brands by focusing on CSR communication and transparency to its consumers (Jiang, 2022, p.105). Within H&M's sustainability reports, information regarding the company's social CSR efforts, improvements in their supply chains, financial information, and details regarding their employees' diversity and equity can be found. Amongst fast fashion brands, H&M is reportedly putting the most effort into their CSR practices and has higher communication and transparency with their consumers (Valet, 2019, as cited in Jiang, 2022, p.105). Therefore, as a result of CSR emerging globally, most companies have shifted their strategies and adopted a "go green" approach, leading to the phenomenon of green marketing (Aggarwal & Kadyan, 2014, p.22).

As defined by Polonsky (2008), green marketing refers to "all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with a minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment" (p.2). Additionally, green marketing incorporates many different activities for companies to undertake, such as product modification, packaging changes, modifying their advertising, and lastly, changes to the production process (Polonsky, 2008, p.1). To continue with, green marketing is important as it addresses the current challenge society faces of meeting

unlimited consumer demand with limited natural resources (Polonsky, 2008, p.3). Thus, brands can apply green marketing to their products to keep up with rapidly changing consumer needs, and by doing so, sustainably. To convey their new environmental image to their consumers, these brands adopted a “go green” approach and utilized trademarks to position themselves within the new sustainable fashion industry (Gibson, 2023, p.147). Trademarks can be defined as certain words, labels, or symbols used to identify a product’s source (Gibson, 2023, p.147). These trademarks play a crucial role in establishing, promoting, and spreading products and in enhancing their appeal through the aesthetic and cultural significance they bring to them.

In research, there are diverse perspectives and ongoing debates regarding the motivations behind brands' engagement in green marketing. Polonsky (2008) discusses this within the context of social responsibility, emphasizing that brands gradually recognize their role in society and how much of an impact they have. Thus, they must behave environmentally responsibly, resulting in green marketing being integrated into the firm's core values and ethics (Polonsky, 2008, p.4). According to the author, there are two perspectives on the firm’s social responsibility and its willingness to undertake green marketing. Either a firm uses this simply as a strategic tool to attract customers without genuinely committing to being sustainable, or, on the other hand, brands become environmentally responsible as it truly becomes part of the company’s culture, without actively promoting it. On the other hand, Chen (2010) identifies five main reasons why brands use green marketing within their company (p.307). The reasons include responding to environmental pressures, gaining a competitive advantage over other brands, improving their brand image, seeking new opportunities and markets, or enhancing the value of their product. In addition, Polonsky (2008) argues that the motivation for brands to incorporate these practices in their business could be a result of the pressures imposed by governments (p.6). In fact, governments want to “protect” society by regulating green marketing through the restriction of harmful products, the promotion of responsible consumption, and ensuring transparency in environmental claims (Polonsky, 2008, p.6). These regulations help prevent misleading marketing, though they can sometimes unintentionally affect legitimate environmental initiatives. Furthermore, according to Mishra and Sharma (2014), brands’ motivation for green marketing is to ensure sustained long-term growth along with profitability, as it saves money in the long run, even though it can initially be expensive (p.81).

According to Gibson’s (2023) research, when consumers receive information regarding the

sustainability of a product, they are more likely to choose it over a non-sustainable alternative (p.148). However, for a brand to incorporate green marketing or a green trademark into their company, it does not require them to have a specific environmental quality level, leading to a drastic increase in the last fifteen years (Berrone et al., 2017, p. 369). Since both sustainable and non-sustainable companies can include green marketing as part of their strategy, there has been debate on whether it is reliable, especially in the fashion industry. This has led to companies misusing green marketing to portray themselves as sustainable in the eyes of consumers and simply using it as a strategy to gain revenues, resulting in a superficial approach to CSR, and most importantly, greenwashing (Berrone et al., 2017, p. 369). Therefore, as fast fashion brands are increasingly promoting their CSR efforts through green marketing, in reality, most fast fashion brands continue to use the traditional business model and are falsely promoting sustainability initiatives to their consumers. However, both consumers and the media are becoming aware of the disconnect between a company's CSR claims and sustainability efforts and their actual actions. This blurred line between strategic 'green' marketing and a company's actions is actively leading to greenwashing becoming a more prevalent phenomenon in society to address.

### *2.3 The Phenomenon of Greenwashing*

Due to greenwashing being a widely used term, several definitions exist to date. Since identifying and defining greenwashing is challenging, the study by de Freitas Netto et al. (2020) will serve as a reference for putting together the most widely accepted definitions in academia. Therefore, according to de Freitas Netto et al. (2020), greenwashing refers to falsely promoting an organization's environmental efforts or spending more resources to promote the organization as green than are spent to engage in environmentally sound practices (p.2). Greenwashing is a side effect of what green marketing offers and is the dissemination of false or deceptive information regarding an organization's environmental strategies, goals, motivations, and actions (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020, p.2). Greenwashing is very common in the fashion industry, through the emergence of brand strategies built on green and sustainable promises (Kaner, 2021, p.204). Furthermore, greenwashing can take many forms, ranging from unclear or unsupported statements delivered by the company to the deliberate withholding of essential details regarding a product's environmental effects. When less transparent brands utilize trademarks such as "eco-friendly", they often lack explicit meaning and fail to provide adequate information regarding how

environmentally friendly the product is, often misleading consumers. Therefore, through the use of misleading claims, greenwashing concerns arise among stakeholders and consumers. This is because brands will tend to lean more toward adopting greenwashing actions due to their inability to keep up with the CSR actions, they promised their consumers they would undertake. This being said, one objective of greenwashing is for consumers to believe that the products they are buying are eco-friendly, thus reducing their ecological impact (Becker-Olsen & Potucek, 2018, p. 1318).

As greenwashing has become more prevalent in society, skepticism toward green marketing has also increased. Genuine eco-friendly claims may face heightened doubt, as consumers struggle to determine the credibility of various green marketing initiatives (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020, p. 2). However, when brands greenwash, this can harm the market demand by creating consumer confusion and making them hesitant to purchase green products, leading to a potential decrease in consumers purchasing green products. Therefore, this decreases brand value and potentially harms the bond between the brand and the consumer (Kaner, 2021, p.204). Ideally, to avoid greenwashing allegations, fast fashion brands should be completely transparent and honest throughout their green marketing strategy at every step of the supply chain to build green relations (Kaner, 2021, p.204).

Additionally, according to Zhang et al. (2018), there is a widely recognized framework for identifying greenwashing in companies' misleading claims, also regarded as "*The Seven Sins of Greenwashing*" (p.740). Almost 98% of products with environmental claims mislead consumers by committing one or more aspects of the "seven sins of greenwashing" (Zhang et al., 2018, p.740). The seven sins are "*Sin of the Hidden Trade-off*", "*Sin of no Proof*", "*Sin of Vagueness*", "*Sin of Irrelevance*", "*Sin of Lesser of Two Evils*", "*Sin of Fibbing*", and, lastly, "*Sin of worshipping False Labels*".

As mentioned, H&M has grown into one of the biggest fast-fashion brands globally and has expanded to producing trendy clothes, footwear, accessories, and, finally, household products, under its H&M Home division. Furthermore, H&M strongly aligns with the fast fashion business model, thereby increasing the company's market share through the consistent addition of trendy collections (Strähle & Hauk, 2017, p.66). Additionally, over the last years, H&M has faced both criticism and praise regarding its business practices. Many scholars, consumers, and individuals in general have expressed different perspectives on this, with some scrutinizing the company's actions in terms of environmental actions, while others acknowledge its efforts toward sustainable

fashion (Javed et al., 2020, p.11). Nevertheless, despite these green claims coming from H&M, the company has been accused repeatedly of taking part in greenwashing, especially regarding its *Conscious Collection*. To be more precise, this collection was accused of the first sin of greenwashing: *The Sin of the Hidden Trade-off*, which refers to the case where a product's environmental claim is misleading since it focuses on limited criteria while ignoring other significant environmental impacts. Additionally, Kaner (2021) discusses the ongoing debates surrounding H&M's green marketing practices and the greenwashing allegations the brand has faced.

Currently, H&M's communication strategy is built around its sustainability efforts (Alexa et al., 2021, p.265). Additionally, H&M wants their consumers to feel a sense of pride whilst wearing their products due to their sustainability efforts (Alexa et al., 2021, p.265). Moreover, in the year 2010, H&M's sustainability journey began when the first *Conscious Collection* was launched. However, this backfired, as the brand received a lot of criticism in terms of treating this as just a trend, following the rise of environmentally aware consumers instead of a long-term sustainability behavior (Alexa et al., 2021, p.266; Kaner, 2021, p.211). In fact, the company received much criticism for offering one small sustainable collection, whereas the rest of their products follow the business model of fast fashion, hence reflecting greenwashing (Alexa et al., 2021, p.266; Kaner, 2021, p.211). In response to this, H&M launched new and additional sustainable initiatives, such as using alternative materials and starting to publish sustainability reports for consumers to see, intending to increase their transparency. Nevertheless, these additional sustainable initiatives also resulted in criticism. For instance, many researchers and consumers believe that the new alternative materials that H&M uses still contain plastic-based additives, and the company still lacks details and transparency, especially in its textile recycling program. This program is one of H&M's initiatives to recycle fashion waste and textiles and transform these into new materials; however, it remains unclear whether or not this is put into action.

Furthermore, Alexa et al. (2021) argues that due to the fact that H&M aligns with the fast fashion business model, it will be very challenging for such a company to be completely environmentally and socially friendly (p.266). However, some scholars and consumers believe in H&M's sustainability initiatives and consider them genuine. For instance, Pastore et al. (2022) strongly believe in H&M, more specifically, that they are succeeding in fulfilling their

sustainability goals (p.159). In their research, the authors state that H&M has gained a competitive advantage in the fast fashion industry through their sustainability initiatives (Pastore et al., 2022, p. 159). This being said, some consumers still have some doubts concerning H&M, particularly in regard to their eco-friendly materials and utilization of renewable energy in their supply chains. (Pastore et al., 2022, p. 159).

Moreover, greenwashing does not offer long-term benefits for a company. In fact, taking H&M as an example, its greenwashing allegations highlight how, when products fail to meet sustainability claims, consumers and the media quickly expose the truth. This impacts the brand's reputation and image, its profitability, and consumer trust in a great way. Since the aggravation of environmental issues, consumers are careful with their purchases, leading companies to greenwash, gathering the attention of many scholars and becoming an extensive debate in society (Becker-Olsen & Potucek, 2013; de Freitas Netto et al., 2020).

#### *2.4 Framing of Fast Fashion & Environmental Issues*

The issue of greenwashing has been frequently discussed in the media, playing a significant role in shaping public perception of corporate sustainability practices (Stöckl & Molnar, 2017, p.2). However, the same event can be viewed and addressed through many different approaches and perspectives. According to Entman (1993), "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text" (p.51). Additionally, Entman (1993) identifies four core functions of framing: problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation (p.52).

Framing theory has been used by scholars for many years, as it enables an analysis of how the media can communicate news concerning a specific topic or situation by selecting certain aspects and leaving others out. Media framing refers to the notion that the way an issue is presented in news articles or other media content can influence how audiences perceive it. Previous research indicates that media framing can influence the perception of the causes and severity of a crisis, as well as impact the emotions of the public (Kepplinger et al., 2012, p.3). According to Hansen (2011), research on framing theory provides a crucial theoretical and methodological approach when investigating certain factors that may influence movements, political actors, and leaders, as well as the shaping of news coverage, patterns of media attention, and public perception (p.14).

In the study of media framing, it is important to distinguish between emphasis framing and

valence framing effects, as media frames can be operationalized in various ways (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p.114). On one hand, emphasis framing can be characterized as depicting specific aspects, themes, and subtopics of a specific issue (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p.114). On the other hand, the valence effect occurs when different, yet logically similar, phrases lead individuals to change their personal preferences (Tversky & Kahneman, 1987, as cited in Chong & Druckman, 2007, p.114). For example, in a news outlet, alternative descriptions will be used, such as “90% employment” versus “10% unemployment”. Media frames are not considered to be static entities; on the contrary, they are very dynamic and evolve in real time as events and issues develop over time. Thus, this paper will focus on the emphasis frame as its guiding framework, as it allows a clear understanding of how society views and tries to shape public discourse by establishing predominant labels.

To continue with, previous research showcases that when individuals try to make sense of issues, they commonly use as resources the frames that are available to them in the media, alongside the integration of their mental frames created through their personal experiences and conversations with others (Nisbet & Newman, 2015, p.362). Additionally, according to Nisbet and Newman (2015), environmental frames can both clearly communicate complex issues and also persuade individuals (p.362). As a strategy for both effective communication and persuasion, the media often highlight particular aspects of complex environmental issues, thereby assigning greater importance to certain characteristics over others. These framing decisions shape how individuals understand environmental issues depending on their existing beliefs, values, and ways of thinking. Because of this, frames can reinforce particular attitudes or opinions (p. 364).

Lunenberg et al. (2016) further highlight how the media observes and reports on corporate behavior and emphasize how the media acts as a bridge between companies and the public through reflecting and influencing public concerns around CSR (p. 944). In shaping how CSR is discussed publicly, there are two essential journalistic tools that are used: firstly tone, which conveys the media’s evaluative stance, whether positive, negative, or neutral, and secondly, framing, which involves the selective highlighting of certain aspects of an issue to influence interpretation (Lunenberg et al., 2016, p.944). Generally, past research states that the tone of media framing impacts an individual’s perception of the topic of interest (Lunenberg et al., 2016, p.944). Additionally, research showcases that when environmental issues are framed as humanitarian or social justice issues, it positions the problem as a collective action amongst the readers (Doyle,

2016, p.6). However, when neoliberal and consumerist perspectives frame this, thereby emphasizing individual lifestyle changes, the response tends to focus on superficial adjustments rather than systemic transformation (Doyle, 2016, p. 6). As a consequence, debates about climate change shape what people understand and what actions are considered legitimate or necessary. Furthermore, research reveals that when environmental issues are framed in terms of public health risks, such as heatstroke or asthma, it makes them more personal and therefore individuals feel more involved in the issue (Nisbet and Newman, 2015, p. 367). This type of framing makes individuals feel guilty as it brings the issue to a more personal level.

Regarding the fast fashion industry, there is a dominant theme in the media that highlights consumer responsibility through a gendered lens (Horton et al., 2022, p.124). More often than not, fashion is associated with women, and this leads to the assumption that females are the primary agents responsible for the environmental issues that are associated with fast fashion (Horton et al., 2022, p.124). Therefore, women are often framed as the cause of these environmental problems. The authors of this study argue for a more critical and inclusive approach that questions, rather than assumes, the gendered nature of fashion consumption (Horton et al., 2022, p.124).

Furthermore, the framing of fast fashion brands during a crisis has been previously researched (Chowdhury, 2017, p.1). On April 24th, 2013, in Bangladesh, the Rana Plaza building collapsed, killing 1135 workers and injuring around 2600 others (Chowdhury, 2017, p.1). This building housed five garment factories that were producing clothes for 31 Western multinational corporations. Despite visible cracks in the building's infrastructure, factory workers were forced to return on 24 April 2013, when the building collapsed, trapping thousands inside (Chowdhury, 2017, p.1). This disaster highlighted the extreme human cost of the fast fashion industry and its demand for low-cost, high-speed production, often produced in low regulated factories. In response, research, for instance, Williamson's and Lutz's (2019) work investigated how global news organizations framed corporate responses to the Rana Plaza disaster (p. 1). This research showcased how media framing not only shaped public awareness but also influenced their perceptions of corporate images. The study by Williamson and Lutz (2019) found that U.S. media coverage of the Rana Plaza disaster framed the event as a tragic accident caused by the high local corruption and low regulations, rather than blaming the corporate negligence. By doing so, the media minimized the faults of Western fast fashion brands. Importantly, none of the articles analyzed in this study used terms such as "corporate crime" to describe the disaster (Williamson

& Lutz, 2019, p.21). However, a study by Chowdhury (2017) explains that it depended on the fast fashion company; for instance, H&M was consistently framed in a more positive light, as proactive and transparent, while Walmart was portrayed negatively, associated with secrecy and inaction (Chowdhury, 2017, p.14).

Furthermore, Lee (2024) examined how different media frames affect sustainability behavior and, consequently, how consumer perceptions have changed regarding their willingness to engage in more sustainable behavior (p. 5705). Several frames have emerged, with various perspectives concerning the impact of greenwashing on the environment which are commonly discussed alongside the H&M greenwashing allegations: Social progress where nature is seen as a resource for human benefit; Beauty, where nature is an aesthetic; Identity Symbol connecting nature to cultural identity; Economic Development and Competitiveness, viewing nature for economic growth; Citizen Rights, viewing nature as a public good; Public accountability, highlighting public accountability to protect nature; Ecosystem Value, depicts scientific arguments to preserve ecosystems; Science as a Solution and Conflict/Strategy uses of metaphors to showcase opposing views (p.5707). The results from the study indicate that different frames do not have equal persuasiveness. To continue with, Wolsko et al. (2016) argue that morally framed environmental messages, especially in regard to fairness or purity, for both nature and humankind, can potentially influence consumers, especially amongst ideologically diverse audiences (p.9). Additionally, the authors discuss how different moral frames may influence an individual's engagement with environmental issues (Wolsko et al., 2016, p.17). This research showcases how linking environmental issues to moral foundations attracts attention and could potentially influence certain behaviors.

In addition, in literature, fashion magazines and the press have been defined as soft news or lifestyle journalism. According to Hanusch (2017), this refers to the transmission of information through entertaining ways, as well as being seen as entangled with consumerism (p.3). Hanusch (2017) argues that “a range of literature in the recent past has demonstrated the relevance of various types of lifestyle media content for societal processes” (p. 3). Due to the fact that fashion magazines not only focus on fashion trends, but also engage in various social and environmental issues that surround fashion topics like greenwashing, consumer perception may be influenced, depending on how H&M is portrayed. In fact, since H&M’s lawsuit went public, the company risks a lot of damage, and the way fashion magazines frame it has a huge impact, too. This may

lead to a loss of trust of consumers and increase their skepticism, besides ruining H&M's reputation. As a consequence, the negative portrayals of fashion magazines could also lead to financial losses for the firm, regulatory oversight, and legal problems. However, if fashion magazines frame H&M as the leader in sustainable fashion, the brand could greatly benefit from this. This will increase consumer loyalty, lead H&M to be at a competitive advantage, and they will be recognized as one of the only fast fashion brands in the market to be recognized for this and improve their overall public image. Ultimately, fashion magazines hold significant power in shaping public discourse and could potentially influence consumer behavior through the way they frame the issue.

However, it should be taken into account that some fashion magazines depend on brand-name-oriented revenue and promotion (Feng et al., 2022, p.318). Therefore, some magazines' editorial stance towards H&M could be influenced by this, as there may be a connection between the magazine's close ties with major fashion brands and its reliance on their advertising revenue (Feng et al., 2022, p.318).

### **3. Methodology**

This section examines the research design and methodology used in this study. First, it provides a comprehensive overview of the methodology employed. Then, it discusses the method of analysis, data collection, operationalization, and data analysis to examine how the media framed H&M's greenwashing allegation. Finally, the section addresses the validity, reliability, and credibility of the research.

#### *3.1 Qualitative approach*

Qualitative research allows researchers to have an in-depth exploration of how media text constructs and conveys meaning and can explore complex phenomena and real-world issues, leading to an in-depth understanding (Brennen, 2017, p. 3). Therefore, the methodological approach this study will employ is qualitative research. According to Brennen (2017), qualitative research helps to understand many interpretations of different phenomena through meaning-making processes and in-depth exploration (p. 4). Additionally, this research approach is based on the idea that data texts help shape social reality rather than just reflecting it (Schreier, 2014, p. 374). According to Brennen (2017), the key component of qualitative research is the meaning-making process, which helps to understand different interpretations regarding a specific phenomenon (p. 4). Due to the fact that qualitative research provides a deep understanding of complex issues, it is the most suitable approach for this study, especially to investigate how H&M's greenwashing allegations are framed in the media. This approach allows researchers to explore the contextual factors that play a role in shaping media representations. Additionally, this paper investigates certain overlooked aspects of the portrayal of H&M's greenwashing practices in the media.

#### *3.2 Method of Analysis: Thematic Analysis*

Moreover, thematic analysis was selected as the primary method of analysis for this research due to its flexibility in the establishment of common themes and the formulation of a conclusion to this paper's research question. To be more specific, thematic analysis is used "for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). It is important to note that thematic analysis is not merely a summarization of the qualitative data

but rather a method to identify and interpret key features of the data in order to formulate an answer to the research question (Clarke & Braun, 2017, pp. 297–298). This specific method of analysis was chosen for this research due to its capacity to work with large amounts of data, aligning with the density of the news articles. Additionally, as previously stated, thematic analysis allows flexibility, allowing the conclusion to the research question to be shaped by the evolution of the coding process and the emergence of established themes. In particular, specific codes may develop into themes when supported by the appropriate data. Furthermore, it is crucial to note that themes do not represent one single piece of information within one unique source, such as a news article. On the contrary, themes can capture recurring patterns that extend across the entire dataset.

This being said, thematic analysis can occur in an inductive or deductive manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.84). In this study, a mixed approach was adopted through an inductive and deductive analysis. There was a stage of open coding as well as codes derived from the literature review, which were applied to the data. It is important to note that this study will mainly rely on inductive and, to a lesser extent, deductive methods.

### *3.3 Data Collection*

The unit of analysis for this research is 45 news articles. Around 10 articles have been selected from 5 different international fashion magazines. These are the following: *Vogue*, *The Business of Fashion*, *Fashion United*, *Sourcing Journal*, and *Good on You*. These magazines are some of the most influential fashion magazines but were also found through ‘Lexis Nexis’. When searching for certain keywords such as “H&M Greenwashing”, the articles of these fashion outlets were the most frequent ones to appear in the search results. With some articles having several editions, the data for this study were drawn from various national editions of these fashion magazines. The most common ones were from the United States or the United Kingdom. Framing theory will be applied to the 5 selected international fashion magazines. These international fashion magazines can be considered some of the most influential and famous fashion magazines, and all fall under the category of ‘lifestyle journalism’ (Hanusch, 2017, p.3). This wide selection of fashion magazines allowed this research to include key platforms that shape public discourse around the fashion industry from different perspectives, as each fashion magazine has a different editorial stance.

Moreover, to find relevant insights into the topic of H&M’s greenwashing allegations,

purposive sampling was used. According to Campbell et al. (2020), purposive sampling, also known as selective or subjective sampling, can be described as the non-probability sampling method in which the units of analysis are selected based on their characteristics (p. 654). Therefore, the specific characteristics or traits that the researcher investigates with the data set are taken into consideration throughout the sampling procedure. According to Campbell et al. (2020), purposive sampling, also known as selective or subjective sampling, can be described as the non-probability sampling method in which the units of analysis are selected based on their characteristics (p. 654). Therefore, the specific characteristics or traits that the researcher investigates with the data set are taken into consideration throughout the sampling procedure. For this research, specific keywords were used in the search bars of the five fashion magazines so that it was possible to explore their archives and find relevant news articles between the years 2020 and 2025, the time frame in which H&M has been accused of greenwashing. Keywords such as “H&M”, “Greenwashing”, and “Lawsuit” were used, which were drawn from the previously conducted theoretical framework and relevant literature. Each keyword had an approximate number of 25 news articles per fashion magazine outlet. Additionally, at least 25% of the content in each selected article refers to H&M. Lastly, the news articles were all above 300 words, with an average of 1500 words per article.

### *3.4 Operationalization*

According to the research question, ‘*How do international fashion magazines frame H&M’s greenwashing allegations?*’, the main concept for this study is greenwashing. Specifically in this research, greenwashing refers to the intersection of two firm behaviors: poor environmental performance and positive communication about environmental performance (Netto et al., 2020, p.2). The research operationalizes greenwashing through content analysis of the occurrence of specific words and phrases, e.g., “greenwashing,” “misleading,” “false claims,” or references to legal action, in the selected articles. The theoretical framework served as a reference point when coding the dataset deductively. Drawing on the critical discourse surrounding corporate sustainability claims, it was anticipated that the majority of the articles that use greenwashing terminology would be critical in tone and take a negative stance concerning this issue.

Additionally, this paper draws on Entman’s (1993) definition of emphasis framing: “Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote

a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” (p.52). Throughout the coding process, each article was analyzed for dominant frames, but also based on Entman’s definition, which was previously stated. For instance, articles were analyzed based on how greenwashing was defined, who or what was identified as the cause of this problem, whether there was any moral judgement present, and lastly, whether there were solutions or responses from the company. Additionally, this study operationalizes framing theory by identifying aspects of H&M’s greenwashing allegations, which were selected and highlighted by international fashion magazines, and through the identification of dominant frames. For instance, whether they were focusing on the environmental damage the company causes or on consumer deception. Moreover, identifying and analyzing frames is important in the interpretation of articles and their underlying textual meaning. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of framing helps differentiate the influence and significance of certain statements, rather than treating them as equally impactful (Entman, 1993, p. 56). Furthermore, integrating framing theory into the analysis of articles facilitates the examination of both empirical and normative debates, particularly due to its emphasis on the power of the text in shaping interpretation (Entman, 1993, p. 55).

### *3.5 Data Analysis*

As mentioned, this study adopted a combination of inductive and deductive coding approaches to structure and guide this thematic analysis. This enabled drawing on principles from grounded theory. While the deductive approach moves from general principles and ideas to specific instances in a data set, the inductive approach follows the opposite direction and is often employed to explore phenomena that have limited prior research and, thus, lack established concepts and principles. In fact, inductive reasoning involves interpreting raw data and identifying emerging themes and patterns (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2017, p. 374). This method requires continuous comparison and classification of data into new emerging categories. Therefore, this study adopted a combination of both approaches, but to a lesser extent, deductive methods. The phenomenon of greenwashing has been previously researched, suggesting the presence of core themes and patterns within the dataset. However, it is equally important to remain open to new patterns that may emerge through deeper analysis. Given that greenwashing is a newly evolving and expanding concept, and more commonly utilized by brands, this research

initially draws upon existing studies to develop preliminary codes while also allowing themes and patterns to emerge organically from the data, due to the lack of data concerning the framing of greenwashing in the media.

This being said, the application of the thematic analysis can be outlined in four steps. The first step consisted of familiarizing oneself with the data. In this case, reading through every selected article and observing any meaning and possible ways to resemble patterns. The second step revolved around an initial coding process, in which open codes were created. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), as cited in Bryman (2016), open coding involves breaking down, analyzing, conceptualizing, and grouping data, which results in the development of concepts that are later arranged into categories (pp. 572-584). This process was extremely iterative, fluctuating between coding and reflecting phases that led to many modifications. In this step, the grounded theory was used, which is an interactive process in which textual data are systematically analyzed and compared to build a thematic framework and therefore construct theory from a body of text (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, as cited in Bryman, 2016, pp. 572-584). In qualitative research in the social sciences, grounded theory is widely renowned and utilized as it allows further development and refines some initial theoretical concepts and codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, as cited in Bryman, 2016, pp. 572-584). Therefore, the core categories emerged from the data collected by analyzing raw textual data from news articles, to create the categories and themes.

The second step in the thematic analysis involves axial coding, in which relationships are made with the outcome of open coding by connecting codes to contexts and merging the initial codes into broader categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, as cited in Bryman, 2016, pp. 572-584). In this step, deductive coding was used and was entirely dependent on existing theories, studies, concepts, and literature to analyze a given dataset within a new context (Snyder, 2019, p. 334). This method allowed for the application of established knowledge to assess and interpret data in a structured manner. For instance, as previously outlined in the theoretical framework, Lee's (2024) frames regarding the environment will serve as a reference throughout the data analysis, guiding the thematic analysis during the deductive coding phase.

Furthermore, the third step of the thematic analysis includes constantly evolving the patterns and themes, which are going to be reviewed and refined all throughout the analysis. Finally, the last step included selective coding, in which the core category is constructed based

on expanding and finalizing categories. According to Bryman (2016), a core category can be defined as the main theme that integrates all the other categories (p.11). Therefore, the flexibility and adaptability of the grounded theory allow the researchers to adjust and alter the data analysis procedure based on the evolving nature of the research. Given the exploratory nature of this study, the coding process was iterative, requiring the researcher to continuously move back and forth within the sample to identify emerging elements and refine the coding framework accordingly.

### *3.6 Validity, Reliability, Credibility*

To ensure quality, careful consideration was given to the validity, reliability, and credibility of this study. To begin with, reliability refers to “the degree to which the findings of a study are independent of accidental circumstances of their production” (Kirk & Miller, as cited in Silverman, 2011, p. 360). Therefore, there are a few ways to satisfy reliability criteria in qualitative work, specifically for this study. Firstly, by making the research process transparent, which was achieved through the description of the research strategy and the steps of data collection and analysis (Silverman, 2011, p.360). Secondly, theoretical transparency was maintained and achieved through the use of established theoretical frameworks (Silverman, 2011, p.360). Additionally, an extensive number of articles were coded to ensure the reliability of the study’s findings and ensure a representative sample. Furthermore, each step of the open coding was documented, and records were kept of the decision-making process, which enhanced reliability. The codebook can be found in Appendix A.

On the other hand, validity refers to “the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers” (Hammersley, 1990, as cited in Silverman, 2011, p. 367). According to Silverman (2011), there are certain tools available for validating qualitative studies: analytical induction, constant comparison, deviant-case analysis, comprehensive data treatment, and lastly, appropriate tabulation (p.368). These actions helped ensure the validity of this research. Additionally, careful operationalization of the key concepts was also crucial to maintaining validity throughout the study and ensured that it stayed closely aligned with the research question.

Moreover, it is important to keep the credibility of the study in mind. According to Tracy (2010), credibility refers to “the trustworthiness, verisimilitude, and plausibility of the research findings” (p.842). To ensure this, a good understanding of the concepts of ‘greenwashing’ and

'fast fashion' was necessary to avoid misinterpretation of data. Additionally, a thematic analysis is subject to misinterpretation of data. A lack of sufficient understanding of the research leaves room for researchers to misjudge something. Furthermore, thematic analysis is prone to having some theme overlaps between categories; therefore, it was important to be cautious in the initial coding process (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.92). Lastly, as previously mentioned, the sample was collected using a purposive approach to ensure the relevance and validity of the research to answer the research question. Analyzing random or irrelevant posts could compromise the study's findings. Therefore, the posts were deliberately selected based on predefined criteria.

Additionally, due to the fact that this is an unobtrusive study, no harm was caused. The data collected was publicly available; therefore, no ethical concerns, such as harm, privacy, or consent, were necessary for this study.

## 4. Results

This study aimed to investigate how international fashion magazines frame H&M's greenwashing allegations. Thus, this section of the paper will provide an overview of the results derived from the thematic analysis. Throughout the data analysis, the coding process resulted in 34 open codes: doubtful tone, insincere commitment, deliberate deception, calculated messaging, money-driven, broken trust, etc. All the codes can be found in Appendix A. The next step consisted of gathering the 24 codes into subcategories. The following 6 categories were created: greenwashing strategies, media framing of brand credibility, repercussions of greenwashing, the double-edged role of the consumer, use of language, and corporate response. Furthermore, the last step involved grouping the subcategories into 3 overarching themes, which structure the findings of this chapter: Framing Brand Legitimacy, the Framing of Greenwashing Strategies, and lastly, the Accountability Frame (further detail can be found in Appendix A).

### *4.1 Framing Brand Legitimacy*

As discussed in Lunenberg et al.'s (2016) work, there are two essential journalistic tools: tone, which conveys the media's evaluative stance (positive, negative, etc.), and framing, which involves selectively highlighting specific issues to influence the reader's interpretation. The following subsection will be divided into three parts, each based on the fashion magazine's use of tone to frame H&M concerning the greenwashing allegation: first, through positive framing, then negative, and lastly, skeptical framing. A detailed summary of the frames identified throughout the articles can be found in Table 1 (at the end of the subsection).

#### *4.1.1 Positive Framing of H&M*

The findings derived from the thematic analysis revealed that some international fashion magazines selected for this study adopt a positive tone when discussing H&M's sustainability efforts. As highlighted by Hansen (2011), how an issue is framed may affect public perception (p.14). Therefore, by positively framing H&M, fashion magazines diminish the severity of the greenwashing allegations. This is further reflected in Chowdhury's (2017) research, as the author explains that H&M has been consistently framed in a positive light, since the greenwashing

allegation and the horrific Rana Plaza incident (p.14). Regarding the selected fashion magazines, the accusations they have received concerning greenwashing are occasionally overlooked or reframed in a way that positions H&M as a committed and proactive sustainable fast fashion brand. *Vogue* and *The Business of Fashion* were the two international fashion magazines that positively portrayed H&M the most. Specifically, 4 out of 7 articles (57.1%) of *Vogue* and 7 out of 11 (63.6%) of *The Business of Fashion's* articles (view table one at the end of the subsection).

For instance, in an article, *Vogue* mentions, “In an exclusive interview, we speak to Helena Helmersson [former CEO of H&M] about her ambitious sustainability goals, including making the retail group fully circular and having a positive impact on the planet.” By framing H&M’s former CEO as a visionary leader committed to transformative change while completely ignoring the greenwashing allegation that the brand was facing, *Vogue* frames H&M as a sustainable company. This positivity and selective emphasis downplay the serious allegations the brand was facing. Furthermore, another quote from an article in *Vogue* stated:

What’s clear is that Helmersson is determined for H&M to continue being a leader on sustainability within the industry, with the CEO set to make her first major public appearance in her new role during the Copenhagen Fashion Summit — an annual gathering of the industry’s leading figures to discuss sustainability — this month.

In this case, *Vogue* frames H&M as the leader in sustainable fashion, aligning with the brand’s overall value in terms of environmental sustainability. Additionally, the fashion magazine *The Business of Fashion* also portrays H&M positively, even when discussing its greenwashing allegations. For instance, a quote from one article states, “The Swedish fast fashion giant made plans to issue €500 million (\$607 million) in bonds that will go towards goals ranging from increasing the use of recycled materials to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions by 10 percent.” This quote reinforces H&M’s positive framing in terms of the previous greenwashing allegation, through reporting their sustainable efforts without skepticism or critique, instead in an ambitious and credible manner. By reading such information, readers can potentially view H&M as a legitimate and deeply committed brand in terms of their sustainable efforts.

As it was mentioned before in the theoretical framework, the way an issue is framed within the media influences not only how severe the issue is perceived to be but also the emotions it

evokes in the public (Kepplinger et al., 2012, p.3). Specifically, media, in this case international fashion magazines, play a crucial role in reporting corporate behavior regarding their CSR initiatives and creating discourse surrounding the topic of interest (Lunenberg et al., 2016, p.944). One key aspect of this is the tone of the article. This impacts an individual's perception of the topic that is currently being discussed, in this case, H&M's sustainability efforts and greenwashing allegation (Lunenberg et al., 2016, p.944). Therefore, by incorporating a more positive tone and framing of H&M, *Vogue*, and *The Business of Fashion* contribute to shaping the reader's perception of the brand as transparent and genuinely engaged in addressing environmental challenges and improving their current business model and behavior.

#### 4.1.2 Negative Media Framing of H&M

In contrast to the previously discussed positive framing of H&M, some fashion magazines adopted a more critical and negative framing towards H&M and their greenwashing allegations. The magazines *Good on You* had 5 out of 6 articles (83.3%), *Fashion United* had 4 out of 6 articles (66.6%), and *Sourcing Journal* had 7 out of 13 articles (53.8%) (view Table 1 below at the end of the subsection).

To begin with, this is shown in an article published in September 2024 by *Good on You* with the headline: "How ethical is H&M?". The author analyzed the impact the company has on the environment, animal welfare, and employee labor within the article. "So, just how sustainable and ethical is H&M? Spoiler alert: "Not Good Enough." This quote shows what the magazine thinks of the sustainability efforts of the fast fashion brand as 'not good enough' and a form of green marketing to attract consumers, rather than H&M acting on their claims. Moreover, the article continues by stating "The brand claims to be moving towards more sustainable practices, but our analysts' latest rating review found it's not doing enough to address its fast fashion business model." Through this article, *Good on You* directly questions the authenticity of H&M's sustainability efforts through their own external evaluations. By taking the matter into their own hands, *Good on You* legitimizes the greenwashing allegations by giving proof to their readers. Furthermore, this critique highlights a key dilemma within competing frames. While the company communicates positively about its environmental performance, it fails to reform the fast fashion business model (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020, p.2). As highlighted by Chowdhury (2017), there are

two ways in which fast fashion brands are framed in the media throughout a crisis: either portraying the brand positively or adopting a more critical stance. In this case, *Good on You* is adopting a critical lens that underscores the disconnect between H&M's sustainability claims and their actual actions.

Additionally, the fashion magazine *Fashion United* further criticizes and negatively frames H&M within its articles. Firstly, one of the headlines of the article is "H&M sued for greenwashing claims, again". The author's decision to include the word 'again' suggests to the readers that this is not the first lawsuit against H&M, a recurring pattern for the company, conveying a tone of fatigue towards the company's sustainability messaging. Furthermore, within the article, the following quote was included: "H&M displayed data that gave a totally wrong picture of a garment's impact on the environment. Those errors came about because the retailer's website ignored negative signs in Higg Index scores." Thereby, the fashion magazine blames H&M for displaying wrong numbers in their sustainable reports to deceive their consumers.

Lastly, the fashion magazine *Sourcing Journal* has also adopted a negative stance in framing H&M and their greenwashing allegations. The magazine includes quotes such as "H&M labels the products with a green hangtag that claims that the products are made with 'recycled' and/or 'organic' materials. Contrary to these representations, the products are not made with any 'recycled' and/or 'organic' materials." The products in question are primarily made of recycled polyester, which H&M has heavily marketed as a sustainable and environmentally responsible material. By presenting H&M's sustainability claims as not even questionable and giving the truth to its readers, *Sourcing Journal* seeks to inform its readers on the disparity between poor environmental performance and positive communication about environmental performance (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020, p.2). Additionally, the magazine states: "The lawsuit contends that by selling products marked as "conscious," H&M created a 'massive advantage in terms of sales and profit," which "lies at the heart of its sustainable style focus." Through detailed reporting of what H&M is being accused of regarding the greenwashing allegations, *Sourcing Journal* positions itself as a critical voice, exposing fast fashion and the potential truth behind green claims.

#### *4.1.3 Skeptical Frame: Sustainability Under Scrutiny*

Another prominent way in which H&M was framed was through a skeptical tone. Some fashion magazines highlighted inconsistencies, gaps, or ambiguities in the company's

environmental claims. Both *Good on You*, with 3 out of 6 articles (50%), and *Fashion United*, with 3 out of 6 articles (50%), critically examine H&M's sustainability claims (view Table 1 below). This being said, when fashion magazines frame H&M's sustainability initiatives under scrutiny, usually the authors assess whether the brand's sustainability efforts align with their business practices and whether they can be trusted so they can pass on the information to their readers. This is further highlighted in Paster et al. (2022)'s research, where the authors highlight that consumers remain skeptical regarding the use of renewable energy in parts of H&M's supply chain and its eco-friendly textiles (p. 159).

For instance, the following quote from *Good on You* exemplifies this: "The term 'recycled' makes some consumers imagine that recycled polyester clothing means fibers from old polyester garments are recycled into new ones. But that's rarely the case." This phrase reflects a skeptical stance from the article *Good on You* by highlighting the problem in H&M's language through utilizing the 'The Sin of the Hidden Trade-off' (Zhang et al., 2018, p.740). To be more specific, by challenging the term 'recycled', it explains to the readers how this might confuse them into buying something that does not align with the sustainability claims being made. In fact, the article reveals the truth concerning H&M's sustainable practices, which are far less sustainable than they claim. Therefore, this quote emphasizes the disconnect between corporate messaging and reality, encouraging readers to be aware and careful. Additionally, another quote from *Good on You* states, "For example, H&M says its Conscious items are made from "at least 50% sustainably sourced materials—like organic cotton and recycled polyester—but many Conscious products contain a lot more than that." But what about the other 50%?". Here, the author questions the ambiguity of H&M's sustainability claims by pointing out the absence of information concerning their environmental efforts. Through the use of a rhetorical question, the magazine encourages readers to rethink H&M's sustainability claims even further by highlighting what is considered a common greenwashing strategy: selectively choosing the information disclosed while withholding critical information (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020, p.2). This method is further discussed in Javed et al. (2020)'s work, which reinforces skeptical framing and encourages consumers to critically evaluate before purchasing from fast fashion brands due to the use of ambiguous language (p.11).

Additionally, *Fashion United* also takes a similar stance. For example, "Shopping at H&M may not be as sustainable as the fast fashion retailer would have its customers believe." This short yet direct quote goes straight to the point, reflecting a skeptical framing from *Fashion United*. In

this case, the magazine diminishes the brand's sustainability efforts by highlighting the disconnect between their communications and marketing and their actions (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020, p.2). This further showcase’s how the brand is greenwashing, and readers are invited to critically assess brands in the future in terms of their sustainability claims. Moreover, another quote illustrates skepticism from the magazine:

H&M uses green hangtags to identify and market its “Conscious Choice” products, a labeling tactic that suggests garments are either sustainable or more sustainable than other products, despite being manufactured mostly from polyester or recycled plastics, which the plaintiffs claim is a misrepresentation of products that do not negatively affect the environment.

Here, *Fashion United* is challenging the credibility of H&M’s use of green marketing. By claiming it is a ‘misrepresentation’, the magazine questions its environmental benefits, and also suggests that the Conscious Collection is just as bad as their other ones.

Table 1: Brand Legitimacy Framing in International Fashion Magazines

	Vogue N=7	The Business of Fashion N=11	Fashion United N=6	Good on You N=6	Sourcing Journal N=13	Overall N=43
Positive framing	4 (57.1%)	7 (63.6%)	0	1 (16.6%)	0	12
Negative framing	1 (14.3%)	2 (18.1%)	4 (66.6%)	5 (83.3%)	7 (53.8%)	19
Skeptical framing	1(14.3%)	2 (18.1%)	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	2 (15.4%)	7

#### 4.2 The Framing of Greenwashing Strategies

In addition to framing brand legitimacy regarding their sustainability claims, there was an ongoing pattern throughout the dataset: fashion magazines played a critical role in shaping how

H&M's greenwashing strategies were framed. Instead of simply reporting on the allegations, the fashion magazines interpreted that H&M uses these strategies to portray itself as an environmentally friendly fast-fashion brand. The findings can be divided into three subsections: morality frame, greenwashing as a calculated strategy, and sustainability as a marketing trend. A detailed summary of the frames identified throughout the articles can be found in Table 2 (at the end of the subsection).

#### 4.2.1 Morality Frame

As stated in the theoretical framework, when environmental issues, in this case, greenwashing, are framed through a moral lens, potentially regarding fairness and purity, this could influence consumers (Wolsko et al., 2016, p.17). According to Becker-Olsen & Potucek (2013), using terms such as "eco-friendly" fails to provide proper information about their product and misleads consumers into purchasing something (p.1318). Specifically, 5 out of 6 articles (83.3%) of *Fashion United* articles accused H&M's sustainability claims of being misleading. *Sourcing Journal* had 8 out of 13 articles (61.5%), and lastly, *Good on You* had 4 out of 6 articles (66.6%) (view Table 2 below). As previously mentioned, *Vogue* and *The Business of Fashion* took a more positive stance regarding H&M's greenwashing allegations and thus did not frame their greenwashing allegations as 'misleading'.

Firstly, *Fashion United* greatly accuses H&M of deliberately misleading its consumers. For instance, one of their articles states the following: "Large corporations such as H&M have enormous marketing prowess and far-reaching messaging, which the plaintiffs, Abraham Lizama and Marc Doten, claim are 'unlawful, unfair, deceptive, and misleading business practices.'" This quote reinforces the notion that H&M's green marketing is not ambiguous or optimistic but deliberately wants to deceive and manipulate consumers into purchasing, which is extremely unfair to them. Therefore, in this quote, environmental issues are morally framed from an unfairness perspective towards consumers (Wolsko et al., 2016, p.17). Rather than being transparent to their consumers, H&M is portrayed as utilizing its marketing to hide the reality of the fast-fashion business model, thus manipulating consumer perception and decision-making based on false information. According to Berrone et al. (2017), there might be some confusion amongst brands between their real environmental commitments and their strategic self-promotion, leading to an increase in greenwashing (p. 369). Moreover, another quote from *Fashion United* states, "An

investigation led by Quartz, a global news resource for purpose-driven professionals, says H&M's environmental scores are 'misleading' and 'outright deceptive'." This quote conveys a moral tone and a deliberate attempt from the brand to mislead its consumers. The magazine supports this belief through an external investigation (conducted by Quartz) and by making use of strong words such as 'outright deceptive'. Aligning with research, according to Kaner (2021), misleading consumers not only harms them but also harms the market demand (p.204). This is because it creates hesitation to purchase any green products. Thus, not only does this harm the company by decreasing brand value and the connection between the company and the consumers, but it also leads to a decrease in consumers' purchasing of green products in general (Kaner, 2021, p.204). Furthermore, the fashion magazine *Sourcing Journal* further enhances this interpretation of H&M's greenwashing allegation as misleading for its consumers. For instance:

The plaintiffs also said that H&M misled consumers on a recycling program it allegedly advertised, noting that, due to the fibers used in the products, recycling solutions either do not exist or are not commercially available for the vast majority of the products.

In this case, this quote specifically highlights a disconnect between what the company is marketing and communicating to consumers, compared to what is feasible for a fast fashion brand. According to Becker-Olsen and Potucek (2013), this showcases a case in which the company fails to provide adequate information regarding their products, which the article does not fail to communicate to the readers, through moral judgement. Additionally, another quote from an article from *Sourcing Journal* states:

Randall Sally filed a class-action lawsuit on Nov. 15 against H&M in the same Missouri federal court that dismissed Lizama and Doten's class action. This case alleges that the Swedish retailer gave consumers "false and misleading impressions" about the sustainability merit of a subset of its products.

This quote further supports the morality frame by showcasing the wrong behavior H&M has undertaken, by communicating false claims. Lastly, *Good on You* further interpreted H&M's greenwashing allegations as misleading. For instance:

Many are making it look as if the fashion industry is starting to take responsibility by spending fantasy amounts on campaigns where they portray themselves as ‘sustainable’, ‘ethical’, ‘green’, ‘climate neutral’, and ‘fair’. But let’s be clear: This is almost never anything but pure greenwashing.

In this case, *Good on You* reinforces the idea that most trademarks lack explicit meaning and are very misleading to consumers, resulting in greenwashing (Becker-Olsen & Potucek, 2013, p.1318). Throughout the dataset, it has become clear that the media highlights a broader issue of corporate accountability in sustainability discourse. Thus, across the different fashion magazines, H&M's sustainability efforts are consistently framed through a lens that showcases uncertainty regarding the morality of the brand and its ethically questionable practices.

#### 4.2.2 Greenwashing as a Calculated Strategy

Another recurring pattern identified within the dataset was the framing of H&M's greenwashing as a calculated strategy. This is a way for the company to attract consumers into buying their products over other brands and to stand out from all the other fast fashion brands. Instead of portraying H&M's environmental efforts as misleading, as in the previously mentioned frame, some fashion magazines framed it as a strategic move for the company to enhance its public image. To be more specific, *Fashion United* had 3 out of 6 articles (50%) framing the greenwashing as a calculated strategy for image gain, and *The Business of Fashion* had 4 out of 11 articles (36.4 %) (view Table 2 at the end of the subsection).

Firstly, the magazine *The Business of Fashion* further amplifies this perspective. To begin with, one of their articles has the following heading: “Fashion Goes Green To Raise Capital”. This headline immediately frames H&M's sustainability efforts as a financial strategy rather than a moral reasoning. The choice of using such a sharp and to-the-point heading insinuates that the fashion magazine believes that the sustainable initiatives shared by the brand may serve as corporate interests more than environmental goals, reinforcing the idea that green marketing is being used to gain revenues, resulting in a superficial approach to CSR (Berrone et al., 2017, p.369). This aligns with the theoretical framework, as highlighted by Pastore et al. (2022), which states that because of their sustainability efforts, H&M has gained a competitive advantage compared to other brands (p. 159). Additionally, another quote from *The Business of Fashion* states, “The likes of Adidas and H&M are landing funds based on potential environmental, social

and governance impact, relying on sustainability targets to secure both public and investor goodwill.” The highlights, as mentioned above how H&M’s (amongst other fashion brands) sustainability efforts are framed as a strategic move to attract investors and to keep up with the consumer’s environmental choices. Through this quote, H&M is prioritizing its business strategy to grow its revenue and market share instead of being committed to making a difference in terms of sustainability. Furthermore, *Fashion United* used quotes such as:

This method of ‘green’ marketing does not address the fundamental issue of perpetuating disposable solutions and over-consumption of natural resources, noted the filing. Indeed, these strategies encourage consumers to buy more clothes or throw away garments sooner, in the belief that they can be recycled in some magic machine.

This quote shows how Fashion United does not see H&M’s greenwashing as a mistake of the company or of their communication, but rather as a manipulation towards consumers so that they alter their perception of the brand. The magazine refers to the sustainability efforts as ‘strategies’, and it seems that there are some doubts about the authenticity of H&M’s environmental messages. As highlighted in Berrone et al.’s (2017) work, for a brand to incorporate green marketing or a green trademark into their company, it does not require them to have a specific environmental quality level (p.369). Companies misuse green marketing to portray themselves as sustainable in the eyes of consumers and simply use it as a strategy to gain revenues, resulting in a superficial approach to CSR, and most importantly, greenwashing and over-consumption.

This being said, these fashion magazines are framing H&M’s sustainability messaging as a way to strengthen their marketing position, gain new consumers, and increase their financial revenue, reinforcing the idea that greenwashing is a business strategy (Berrone et al., 2017, p.369).

#### *4.2.3 Sustainability as a Marketing Trend*

In addition to fashion magazines framing H&M’s greenwashing as misleading or as a strategic move, a third recurring pattern was observed through the dataset. This was the portrayal of H&M’s sustainability efforts and greenwashing as a prevailing marketing trend. With the rise of environmentally aware consumers and public attention on the climate crisis and the huge environmental impact of the business model of fast fashion, H&M felt pressure to adopt more sustainable practices (Niinimäki et al., 2020, p.190). Thus, some fashion magazines frame H&M’s

sustainability simply as a marketing trend because it has become popular. Therefore, H&M has taken advantage of this, resulting in their green marketing/greenwashing. To be more specific, 3 out of 6 articles (50%) of *Fashion United* and 5 out of 11 articles (45,4%) of *The Business of Fashion* framed H&M's sustainability efforts and greenwashing simply as a marketing trend (view table 2 at the end of the subsection). Firstly, a quote from *Fashion United* states:

Shopping at H&M may not be as sustainable as the fast fashion retailer would have its customers believe. In the latest greenwashing case against the Swedish conglomerate, a claim filed in a federal court in Missouri is suing for "illegally, and deceptively" seeking to capitalise on consumer 'green' trends, where H&M customers are led to believe that Conscious Choice products are an environmentally responsible purchase.

This quote, specifically through the emphasis on 'green' trends, highlights how the brand's sustainability effort might be more of a response to the market pressure and the change in consumer desires to become more sustainable. Therefore, H&M's sustainability efforts might not be as genuine as they say, and they simply aim to fit the new trend concerning consumers through strategic communication. Hereby, this reflects the broader framing of sustainability as a marketing trend, where greenwashing emerges as a consequence of brands failing to respect their green promises. Instead, through their green marketing, they disseminate false or deceptive information regarding an organization's environmental strategies, goals, motivations, and actions (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020, p.2). Another quote from *Fashion United* states, "The filing iterates that in response to consumer desire for more sustainable and environmentally friendly fashion, many companies 'greenwash' their products by deceptively claiming that their clothing is made from more sustainable and environmentally friendly materials". With this quote, Fashion United keeps proposing the idea that H&M's environmental efforts may not be as authentic as the brand communicates, but rather a strategic reaction to the shift in consumer trends concerning fast fashion.

Moreover, the fashion magazine *The Business of Fashion* further enhances this idea of H&M's sustainable efforts purely to follow the trend occurring with the rise of environmentally aware consumers. For instance, one quote states: "H&M's announcement is the latest example of a trend growing across industries as companies seek to tap into appetite for environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) financing." Therefore, the fashion magazine suggests that H&M

follows a broader trend across industries to capitalize on growing consumers rather than wanting to make a difference through their sustainability efforts. Specifically, through the use of ‘appetite for ESG finance’, this article suggests that the brand is motivated by its financial and market demands rather than performing genuine corporate responsibility. Furthermore, another article from *The Business of Fashion* states:

Consumers, especially young ones, consistently rank sustainability as an important factor in purchasing decisions, even if price and cool factor remain bigger drivers. In response, brands have flooded the market with eco-claims and Earth Day capsules, but an absence of regulation has enabled a marketing free-for-all with plenty of space for greenwashing.

This quote showcases how sustainability in fashion is increasingly becoming popular amongst consumers and plays a role in their purchasing decisions. Brands are increasingly utilizing this as a trend to jump on to attract consumers rather than seeing it as an opportunity to become more sustainable. Additionally, the fashion magazine highlights how brands, including H&M, are strategically exploiting sustainability products and communication in order to align with their changing consumer expectations and trends, rather than using this as an opportunity to implement meaningful environmental changes.

**Table 2: The Framing of Greenwashing Strategies in International Fashion Magazines**

	Vogue N=7	The Business of Fashion N=11	Fashion United N=6	Good on You N=6	Sourcing Journal N=13	Overall N=43
Morality	1 (14.3%)	4 (36.4%)	5 (83.3%)	4 (66.6%)	8 (61.5%)	22
Strategic	0	4 (36,4 %)	3 (50%)	2 (33.3%)	2 (15.4%)	11
Trendy	2 (28.6%)	5 (45.4%)	2 (33.3%)	3 (50%)	2 (15.4%)	14

#### 4.3 Accountability Frame

Moreover, the third overarching theme in the dataset is the Accountability Frame. In addition to framing H&M’s sustainability efforts and strategies regarding green marketing, thus

leading to greenwashing, some fashion magazines framed H&M through a notion of responsibility. Through H&M's action of greenwashing, different stakeholders are impacted, such as consumers, the environment, etc. Hereby, it was noticed that fashion magazines highlight the accountability of H&M and the implications of their actions. A detailed summary of the frames identified throughout the articles can be found in Table 3 (at the end of the subsection).

#### 4.3.1 Environmental Consequences

Regarding H&M's accountability, the articles frequently emphasized its environmental impact. Fast Fashion is renowned for being one of the most polluting industries globally (Niinimäki et al., 2020, p.189). Thus, fashion magazines repeatedly highlight how H&M's business model negatively impacts the environment, positioning H&M as a key actor responsible for sustaining bad practices. Specifically, the fashion magazine *Good on You* had 5 out of 6 articles (83.3%), highlighting H&M's impact on the environment, and *Vogue* had 3 out of 7 articles (42.8%) (view Table 3 below).

To begin with, almost every article in the data set from the magazine *Good on You* explicitly mentions the negative impact H&M has on the environment. For instance, the magazine quotes "Organic cotton t-shirts are easy enough to do—but what about looking at wastewater and water use, harmful dyes, and labor rights and conditions?" In this case, the magazine is accusing H&M of making minimal efforts. As the quote states, organic cotton t-shirts are easy to do; however, there is so much more to think about and actions to undertake, which the brand is just not doing. Furthermore, another quote from the fashion magazine states:

Fast fashion's impact on the planet, people, and animals is enormous. The pressure to reduce costs and speed up production time means that environmental corners are cut: cheap dyes that contain harsh chemicals are used, and the system creates an alarming amount of textile waste that often ends up in landfills.

This specific quote relates to Lee's (2019) frame: Economic Development and Competitiveness. Through this frame, the author portrays how the consequences of prioritizing economic growth and market competitiveness impact environmental degradation. H&M places high importance on reducing its production cost and increasing the speed at which it produces products to fit into this competitive industry with other fast fashion brands. This showcases the core of the fast fashion business model, where nature is mistreated and seen as a resource to be

exploited for financial gain. Moreover, according to Doyle (2016), when the environmental issues are shown as humanitarian or social justice issues, it positions the problem in a way that the moral framework drives collective action amongst the readers (p.6). This is the case for this quote by Good on You, as by emphasizing the harm done to animals, people, and the environment, the article frames H&M's impact as a broader humanitarian crisis rather than solely an ecological one.

Furthermore, *Vogue* further emphasizes the negative impact H&M has on the environment, although it had an overall positive portrayal of the company despite its greenwashing lawsuits. For instance, the following quote illustrates this:

One thing that's clear is that things can't go on as they are. The current system involves the production of more than 100bn garments every year, with clothes being worn an average of just seven times before they're thrown away, according to one survey. Clothing production is not only an enormous drain on natural resources, but also hugely polluting, with the fashion industry as a whole contributing up to 10 per cent of global CO2 emissions.

According to Doyle (2016), when environmental issues are framed with a neoliberal and consumerist perspective, individuals will focus on their personal behavior and changes and not on systemic transformations (p.6). This is the case in this quote by *Vogue*, as they highlight consumer habits and state that clothes are worn on average seven times before being thrown away. This implies that individual responsibility is very important to solve the fast fashion environmental issues. This shifts attention to personal consumption practices rather than highlighting systemic issues in fast fashion. Additionally, another quote from *Vogue* states, "What is clear is that fashion production wastes a lot of materials, pollutes water and air, and leaves many workers across the supply chain supremely vulnerable. And after all that, clothes often end up in a landfill." Through this quote, *Vogue* reinforces the environmental consequences of the fast fashion industry, especially throughout the entire supply chain.

Therefore, these fashion magazines systematically frame H&M as a central contributor to environmental degradation. By doing so, the article highlights how serious greenwashing is, in the hope of raising awareness amongst the readers and to be more critical and careful when purchasing fashion products.

#### 4.3.2 Victim Frame

Another recurring pattern throughout the dataset is the emphasis on consumer deception. Many fashion magazines portray consumers as the victims of H&M's greenwashing, due to the company deceiving them into purchasing their products, thinking they are 'green' when they are not. *The Business of Fashion* had 8 out of 11 articles (72.7%) portraying consumers as the victim, whereas *Sourcing Journal* had 8 out of 13 articles (61.5%) (view Table 3 below (at the end of the subsection)).

To begin with, *The Business of Fashion* places significant emphasis on the consumers and how they are deceived into purchasing H&M's products under the impression that they are sustainable when they are in fact not. For instance, one of their headings is "How to Avoid the Greenwashing Trap". This quote can be described as an example of how the fashion magazine is trying to signal and educate its readers on how to avoid getting misled and tricked by H&M. By framing it as a 'trap', the article highlights the deceptive nature of H&M's marketing strategies and frames the consumers as the victims which require guidance. Furthermore, *The Business of Fashion* includes some direct quotes from consumers to portray how they feel:

One Twitter user wrote, "H&M releases [two] 'conscious collections' a year and calls themselves sustainable... how about you make all your clothes sustainable (and properly disclose how they're even sustainable). How about you pay your workers liveable wages and give them good working conditions?"

By incorporating what consumers have to say about H&M's greenwashing, *The Business of Fashion* showcases the growth in public awareness and exasperation concerning H&M's false sustainable efforts. As highlighted in Kaner's (2021) research, H&M's misleading strategies result in damage to their consumers' trust and impact the broader trust in sustainable products. Furthermore, even though small data, the victim frame also takes into consideration the employees of fast fashion. In this specific quote, employees are also portrayed as the victims of the fast fashion highlighting their lack of proper working conditions and low wages, which is not commonly discussed in the media. Another quote taken from one of *The Business of Fashion's* articles is the following: "When you build your reputation on being radically transparent, your customer base really trusts you," said Barenblat. "But when you shatter that trust, it's amazing how quickly the pitchforks come." This quote further emphasizes the damage that misleading its consumers has on

the trust between the company and its consumers. Here, the article blames H&M for making their consumers believe they are fully transparent, but once this trust is broken, this will result in backlash (Kaner, 2021, p.209). To continue with, *Sourcing Journal* also further emphasizes the impact greenwashing strategies have on consumers. For instance, the article quotes:

By falsifying the sustainability profiles and making the sustainability misrepresentations, [the] defendant has misrepresented the nature of its products, at the expense of consumers who pay a price premium in the belief that they are buying truly sustainable and environmentally friendly clothing.

Here, the article emphasizes the fact that consumers are paying a higher price for a product they believe is sustainable when, in fact, it is not. They are being deceived deliberately by the brand, which has been falsifying their sustainability profile. Furthermore, another quote from the *Sourcing Journal* states:

Given the presence of harmful and environmentally damaging materials in the products, the plaintiffs claim that H&M's representation that they are a "conscious choice" is deceptive. By doing so, H&M has taken advantage of consumers' desire for genuinely sustainable materials at the expense of "unwitting consumers and H&M's lawfully acting competitors, over whom H&M maintains an unfair competitive advantage.

Once again, consumers are portrayed as the victims. Here, H&M is portrayed as a brand that has taken advantage of the increase in environmentally aware consumers wanting to purchase more sustainable products.

#### *4.3.3 Consumer as a Driver of Change*

It is important to notice that consumers were not only portrayed as the victims, but some fashion magazines pictured them as drivers of change as their purchasing choices and their role is key in addressing the negative impacts of fast fashion. According to Soboleva and Sánchez (2024), consumers today are not simply passive participants in the fast fashion system, but they can also act as agents of change (p.10). Both *Good on You* and *Fashion United* have 3 out of 6 articles (50%) discussing how consumers can be drivers of change regarding the negative impacts fast fashion has by changing their habits and behaviors.

Firstly, *Good on You* held consumers accountable throughout their articles and generally

gave them some tips to become more sustainable and to avoid buying from brands that are greenwashing. It is important to note that *Good on You* utilizes a very respectful tone when holding consumers accountable for their actions. For instance:

We, as consumers, have a role to play too, which starts with doing everything we can to stop piling more polyester into the landfill. We can buy second-hand, outfit repeat, upcycle, personally resell what we already own, or swap with friends. [...] Because, really, circularity isn't just in the hands of fast fashion. It can start at home, with us, [...] We can each be an enabler of change.

By using terminology such as 'we' and 'each', the magazine invites readers to reflect on their behavior through a respectful and united tone. In this case, consumers are still held accountable for their purchasing habits by showcasing the severity of the situation. Moreover, the consumers are framed as active stakeholders capable of change. Additionally, by giving tips such as buying second-hand clothes, the article is not just blaming consumers but is actively encouraging change by giving some easily changeable habits to undertake. The shared responsibility gives a sense of collective empowerment, encouraging consumers to change.

Finally, *Fashion United* further enhances the idea that consumers can be agents of change. For instance, "For now, the best way consumers can embrace sustainability in fashion is to buy less and buy longer-lasting products." Here, the article is trying to convince consumers to consume fewer clothes and to buy products from different brands that are not part of the fast fashion industry, products that are made to last longer. By educating their readers and consumers on how to change their habits easily, the magazines view concerns as the main agent capable of turning the situation around concerning fast fashion and greenwashing.

Table 3: Accountability Frame in International Fashion Magazines

	Vogue N=7	The Business of Fashion N=11	Fashion United N=6	Good on You N=6	Sourcing Journal N=13	Overall N=43
Envirmental	3 (42.8%)	4 (36.4%)	1 (16.6%)	5 (83.3%)	1 (7.7%)	14
Deception	0	8 (72.7%)	2 (33.3%)	4 (66.6%)	8 (61.5%)	20
Accountable	1 (14.8%)	1 (9.1%)	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	1 (7.7%)	9

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion

This study explored how media frames H&M's greenwashing allegation by answering the following research question: "How do international fashion magazines frame H&M's greenwashing allegations?" This study also included the following sub-questions: "What frames dominate the discussion on this topic?" and "How do dominant frames differ across different international fashion magazines?" By applying inductive and deductive thematic analysis to 43 articles from five different international fashion magazines, several key takeaways emerged, gaining insights into how the company is portrayed through the media due to their greenwashing allegations. Therefore, this section of the paper will summarize and discuss the key findings of this analysis. Additionally, the study's theoretical and societal implications are explored, its limitations are discussed, and some suggestions for future research are provided.

### 5.1 Summary of Findings

The dominant frames that consistently persisted throughout the dataset were the consumer deception frame (present in 20 out of 43 articles) and the negative framing of brand legitimacy (19 out of 43 articles). These findings suggest that the media tends to frame H&M negatively and hold them accountable for their greenwashing strategies while also framing consumers as the victims of their strategic marketing (Berrone et al., 2017, p. 369). H&M is portrayed as a firm that misleads its consumers through its green marketing to manipulate them into buying their products, some of which are bought at a premium price (Polonsky, 2008, p.4). Therefore, these dominant frames present in fashion magazines suggest that repeated emphasis may shape audience perceptions by making these aspects more salient, as aligned with Entman's (1993) framing theory.

To continue with, the study's findings revealed a distinct difference in how H&M is portrayed throughout the different fashion magazines. For instance, both *Vogue* and *The Business of Fashion* took an overall positive stance when showcasing H&M's sustainability efforts. Within the articles selected from these two fashion magazines, the brand was showcased in a positive light as a proactive and transparent company willing to be more sustainable, as adhered to by Chowdhury (2017). Regarding *Vogue*, the credibility of the magazine has been questioned due to its heavy reliance on advertising revenue from brands such as H&M, and its frequent promotion through its articles (Feng et al., 2022, p.318). Therefore, its editorial stance towards H&M should

be viewed critically, since there may be an influence regarding the magazine's close ties with major fashion brands, and its reliance on their advertising revenue (Feng et al., 2022, p.318). Accordingly, when magazines portray H&M positively, readers could potentially be influenced and thus may view the company's sustainable efforts as credible and genuine.

Additionally, another noticeable theme that persisted throughout the dataset was the framing of H&M from a negative perspective. This dominant focus on criticizing H&M suggests that fashion magazines play a key role in holding the company accountable for misusing green marketing and its greenwashing practices. The fashion magazines that portrayed H&M this way was usually *Fashion United*, *Good on You*, and *Sourcing Journal*.

Aligning with Polonsky's (2008) theory of green marketing duality, in which he differentiates green initiatives as either authentic CSR or serving as a strategic business move, the data collected and analyzed revealed that *Fashion United* and *The Business of Fashion* also portrayed H&M's 'green' marketing as a calculated business strategy. On the other hand, another prominent way some fashion magazines presented H&M's greenwashing was to keep up with current trends, driven by the shift in consumer expectations. Aligning with Niinimäki et al.'s (2020) research, with the rise of environmentally aware consumers and public attention on the climate crisis and the huge environmental impact of the business model of fast fashion, H&M felt pressure to adopt more sustainable practices (p.190). Within many articles, H&M was portrayed as a company seeking to capitalize on this growing 'green' trend amongst its consumers. Therefore, this research demonstrated the tendency of H&M to use green marketing as a tool to align with emerging consumer values rather than genuinely making sustainable efforts. To continue with, the findings showed that H&M's greenwashing practices were consistently framed through a moral lens, with several fashion magazines (namely, *Fashion United*, *Good on You*, and *Sourcing Journal*) questioning the brand's integrity and ethical accountability.

Furthermore, in line with previous research, *Vogue*, *The Business of Fashion*, and *Good on You* frequently framed H&M's environmental impact as a consequence of their business model and greenwashing. This observation confirms the previous findings regarding environmental issues being framed through a humanitarian or social justice perspective, thus positioning the problem within a moral framework that potentially drives collective action amongst the readers (Doyle, 2016, p.6). The articles are meant to make readers understand the situation's seriousness and the impact of fast fashion on the environment.

Finally, within the dataset, there was a dual focus on the consumers. To begin with, by many fashion magazines, consumers were further portrayed as agents of change, as reflected in Soboleva and Sánchez's (2024) work, in which the authors discuss that consumers today are not simply passive participants; instead, they are agents of change who can make a difference in the fast fashion business model. Aligning with Kaner's (2021) and de Freitas Netto et al.'s (2020) research, the magazines *Fashion United* and *Good on You* consistently held the readers and the consumers of fast fashion accountable for their actions. By putting emphasis on their purchasing impact and portraying them as drivers of change, these magazines framed consumers as the solution to fast fashion and the greenwashing of brands. On the contrary, some fashion magazines such as *The Business of Fashion*, *Sourcing Journal*, and *Good on You* took an opposite stance and framed consumers as the victims of H&M's greenwashing. Throughout some articles, consumers were framed as being deliberately tricked by the greenwashing strategies of H&M, in some cases spending more money on environmentally friendly products, which are no different than other products that H&M sells.

To conclude, the thematic analysis revealed that H&M's green marketing and sustainability efforts were illustrated as a strategy to enhance their brand image and to attract consumers rather than a genuine commitment to improve their business model. This being said, the recurring patterns identified within the dataset reflect broader framing strategies, revealing the narratives that dominate public discourse surrounding the fast fashion brand H&M.

### *5.3 Theoretical and Societal Implications*

This study aimed to contribute to the existing literature on fast-fashion brands' use of greenwashing. To begin with, Entman's (1993) media framing theory was very useful throughout this study. To be more specific, as mentioned earlier, the author states that framing essentially involves selection and salience, which were applied throughout the research. Moreover, the four core functions of framing identified by Entman's (1993), (problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and suggested remedy) were also applied to the articles. Additionally, the theory developed by Polonsky (2008) concerning the duality of green marketing was present to varying degrees in the articles, as there was a constant debate present in the dataset revolving around whether H&M's CSR and green marketing were genuine or not. To continue with, as expected and in line with the discourse, consumers were often represented as agents of change (Soboleva &

Sánchez, 2024, p.10). Consumers were portrayed as capable of changing the situation regarding the greenwashing of fast fashion brands. However, regarding the theory of Horton et al. (2022) which discusses that fashion is more often than not associated with women, leading to the assumption that females are the primary agents responsible for the environmental issues associated with fast fashion, the results of this thesis could be used as an argument that disproves their idea. When consumers were discussed, no differentiation between genders was made; both are held accountable. Furthermore, while the phenomenon of greenwashing is widely researched (Becker-Olsen & Potucek, 2013; de Freitas Netto et al., 2020), limited research has been conducted on how the media has framed it. Therefore, this study's findings enhance the body of literature regarding this specific topic.

Additionally, fast-fashion companies can use these findings, as they have practical implications. This study provided an understanding of how H&M is perceived in the media. That said, the media do not create the frames themselves; these are formed by society and the discussions surrounding this topic. Furthermore, journalists also interpret these societal perceptions; it is not their personal views but rather a reflection of how society sees fast fashion brands and greenwashing. Therefore, it can be concluded that H&M's operations are under scrutiny, which should cause concern for the management of these fast fashion companies, as H&M is simply one example. However, it is important to keep in mind that it was a small dataset, and the findings should be approached carefully, but it can be perceived as a wake-up call for fast fashion brands to take genuine steps towards sustainability. This is because this study offers a different perspective to companies through which they can evaluate their own environmental messaging and marketing, and showcases the risks linked to greenwashing. Therefore, this research can guide brands to make informed decisions regarding greenwashing and whether this is the correct approach to increase their revenue and attract consumers.

#### *5.4 Limitations and Future Research*

This study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged and considered when interpreting the findings. To begin with, this research has a limited scope as it focuses on a single fast fashion company, which is H&M. Given the wide range of fast fashion brands that have been exposed for greenwashing, it would be interesting to compare how different brands have been

framed in the media. In fact, future research should compare the framing of fast fashion brands by identifying broader trends present within the media.

Furthermore, the study restricted itself to a sample size of 43 articles. This does not allow this study to have a full scope and understanding of the media framing of H&M. This being said, future research could expand the data set to different types of media, such as news outlets, industry reports, mainstream journalism sources, or social media platforms, instead of only focusing on fashion magazines. This would allow the study to have a broader view and understanding of the framing of H&M throughout the media in general.

To continue with, there is another factor that could affect the representation of the study. As previously mentioned, the dataset consisted of five international fashion magazines; however, the scope was limited to English-written articles. This made it difficult to find a substantial number of articles to analyze and restricted itself to analyzing a small number of articles, when there are thousands in different languages. Hereby, future research should include a broader scope of magazines, not restricting itself to the English language.

Additionally, the Victim Frame mainly revolved around consumers as the victim. Employees, as the victims of fast fashion, did not appear within the dataset, except in one quotation from an article. Future studies with larger or different samples could research this further.

Future research could conduct a quantitative content analysis, whether conducted manually or through computer-aided methods, to allow the analysis of large-scale data across multiple news outlets and various brands. H&M was chosen for this research because it serves as a representative case for fast fashion; however, future research could analyze other fast-fashion brands such as Zara. Additionally, another approach could potentially examine societal and consumer discussions concerning fast fashion brands and greenwashing on social media platforms, enabling a different perspective on greenwashing.

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## Appendix A: Thematic Codebook

Categories	Subcategories	Open-Codes	Descriptions	Example
Framing Brand Legitimacy	Positive portrayal	Corporate Response Defense of the Brand Progressive image Visionary Promotional language	Articles use affirming or promotional language to frame H&M as a sustainability leader.	<i>“H&amp;M continues being a leader on sustainability”</i> (Vogue)
	Negative portrayal	Critical tone Frustration with H&M Discrediting sustainability claims Sense of exhaustion	Articles emphasize deception, false information, or failure to meet sustainability claims.	<i>“H&amp;M sued for greenwashing claims, again”</i> (Fashion United)
	Skepticism	Doubtful tone Insincere commitment Confusion	Articles question the credibility of H&M’s sustainability efforts without fully condemning them.	<i>“But what about the other 50%?”</i> (Good on You)

Greenwashing Strategies	Morality Frame	<p>Deliberate deception</p> <p>False sustainability claims</p> <p>Lack of transparency</p> <p>Contradictory actions and claims</p>	H&M is accused of misleading consumers about the sustainability of its products.	<i>“False and misleading impressions”</i> (Sourcing Journal)
	Strategic	<p>Image-driven sustainability</p> <p>Marketing over morals</p> <p>Strategic manipulation</p> <p>Calculated messaging</p> <p>Money driven</p>	H&M is accused of using green marketing for image gain and competitive advantage.	<i>“Fashion Goes Green to Raise Capital”</i> (The Business of Fashion)
	Trendy	<p>Trend-following sustainability</p> <p>Consumer-driven adaptation</p>	Sustainability is framed as a trendy fashionable marketing move to keep up with consumers’ changing	<i>“Seeking to capitalise on green trends”</i> (Fashion United)

			demands rather than a genuine commitment.	
Accountability Frame	Environmental Impact	Resource Waste Misuse of Nature Pollution Awareness Greenwashing Consequences	Articles emphasize the ecological damage caused by fast fashion and H&M's role in it.	<i>"Fast fashion's impact on the planet... is enormous"</i> (Good on You)
	Victim Frame	Broken trust Manipulation Consumer backlash Moral Betrayal	Consumers are shown as the victims or manipulated by H&M's sustainability messaging.	<i>"How to Avoid the Greenwashing Trap"</i> (The Business of Fashion)
	Consumer as a Driver of Change	Consumer responsibility Practical advice Empowering	Consumers are framed as agents who can influence sustainable change through their purchasing behavior.	<i>"We can each be an enabler of change"</i> (Good on You)

## Appendix B: AI Use Declaration

I have enclosed the prompts/logging of the OpenAI's ChatGPT tool that were used throughout this study's process below.

Brainstorming Thesis Title:

OpenAI's ChatGPT was used in this study to improve and refine the thesis title.

Prompt used:

"This is the research question for my thesis: *“How do international fashion magazines frame H&M's greenwashing allegations?”* Can you please give me ideas for a title? This is what I have so far: Greenwashing in the fast fashion industry: The case of H&M.”

Brainstorming and Idea Generation:

Additionally, OpenAI's ChatGPT was used in the early stages of this study in order to brainstorm feasible research ideas and to help me narrow down my ideas before my first supervisor meeting.

Prompt used:

“I have an idea for research. This is a potential research question I would like to work with. Can you help me narrow down/come up with different ideas of research I could do? I would like to focus on one fast fashion company and framing. “How do fast fashion brands like Zara, Shein, H&M, and Mango use Instagram to communicate and frame their sustainability efforts?”

Grammar and Spelling Mistakes:

Grammarly was used for this research in order to fix grammar and spelling mistakes.