

Bachelor Thesis

Does the content of CSR information matter?

A qualitative study to explore consumers' attitudes towards fast-fashion companies



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Abstract

Background: Fast-fashion companies are famous for manufacturing the products at cheaper prices and consumers are getting aware of that. Due to the widespread environmental and social problems in the world, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has significantly evolved in fast-fashion industries. A lot of fast-fashion companies are involved in CSR communication in order to convey the information to consumers. It is significant for the companies to adapt effective strategies of communicating their CSR activities to consumers.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of CSR content communication on consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion companies.

Method: In this study, the semi-structured interviews as a qualitative method were conducted. The sample size is 12 consisting of 6 men and 6 women. The authors selected individuals who are interested in fashion and preferably have concerns about sustainable fashion brands.

Findings: The findings demonstrated the significance of transparent CSR communication as a consideration for the effect on consumers' attitudes. Visual content attracts consumers' attention and gives sympathetic emotions to consumers wherein directly influence positive attitudes towards the companies. However, the participants did not regard written content as important because of the difficulties of availability and readability. Third party confirmation from the new theory plays an important role in contributing to a positive attitude and it also expands WOM and credibility of the companies.

Conclusion: This study contributes to the knowledge of CSR communication strategies in fast-fashion companies because the findings are closely related to how companies can create effective CSR content to positively influence consumers' attitudes.

Keywords:

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), CSR communication, attitudes, fast-fashion companies

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1. Introduction

In the introduction chapter, the background will present the main topics of the paper, followed by the problem discussion where it is justified the reason why it is worth investigating this research. The purpose and research question of the thesis will also be presented.

1.1 Background

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a term used to describe the ethical and socially responsible behavior of companies that go beyond their legal requirements to benefit society, the environment, and their stakeholders (Jamali and Mirshak, 2006). The concept of CSR has gained significant attention in recent years, as consumers and stakeholders have become more aware of the social and environmental impact of businesses. Companies are increasingly being held accountable for their actions, and many are recognizing the importance of adopting ethical and sustainable practices to maintain their reputation and long-term success (Jamali and Mirshak, 2006).

Due to the widespread adoption of social and environmental problems, consumers are likely to purchase environmental products or services which express transparency. Transparency of CSR supports their information processes so that consumers can understand the additive effect of products or services (Lee and Chen, 2019). Transparent communication is beneficial for companies to encourage consumers' attitudes towards CSR (Lee and Chen, 2019). In the other word, transparency of CSR has a bilateral impact on both companies and consumers, conclusively, better company profits (Kim and Lee, 2018). Therefore, companies need to publish information or reports about environmental products or services (Lee and Chen, 2019).

Specifically, there are two types of content for information disclosure; visual and written. When it comes to visual content, companies can use pictures or videos related to CSR such as natural landscapes, smiling children, and volunteer campaigns on their websites (Chung and Lee, 2017). These visual contents can evoke consumers' emotional feelings (Hultén, B, Broweus, N and Van Dijk, M, 2009). Written information may be employed through CSR reports wherein companies tend to have it on their websites (Gruber, Kaliauer and Schlegelmilch, 2017). By explaining CSR information as texts, companies also can express their transparency simultaneously (Lee and

Chen, 2019) since the CSR reports contain a lot of written content. Additionally, labeling as one of the packaging techniques plays an important role in conveying messages and storytelling (Hultén, B, Broweus, N and Van Dijk, M, 2009). Labels essentially have written information such as manufacturer, materials, and value (Hultén, B, Broweus, N and Van Dijk, M, 2009) wherein companies can highlight their CSR information through visual and written content.

Fast-fashion companies refer to ones that handle trending clothes at lower prices (Hayes, 2022). Fast-fashion industry is in ongoing manufacturing to provide a new assortment in every season (Hayes, 2022). However, fast-fashion brands are facing such social and environmental problems as deficient labor situations, pollution, and dumping of a lot of clothes (Chan et al., 2020). Consumers criticize the issues that fast-fashion companies are causing; thus, the companies need to take into account CSR depending on the different areas (Chan et al., 2020).

However, even if a lot of researchers conducted interviews to see whether consumers know that companies are taking into account social and environmental issues, consumers mostly answered “don’t know” (Alsop, 2005 cited in Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen, 2010). From the evidence, it is obvious that there are not a lot of consumers who are aware of CSR. Moreover, consumers may blame fast-fashion companies who are causing the issues even if they are not aware of CSR. CSR communication as a marketing strategy plays an effective role in helping consumers understand CSR (Chan et al., 2020). The awareness might be improved by the aforementioned content of CSR communication such as transparency, visual, and written content. Giving information about CSR to consumers and increasing their awareness of CSR are the things that are needed as a prior action for companies to obtain consumers’ positive attitudes towards companies (Öberseder, Schlegelmilch, and Murphy, 2013). However, even if the companies provide the information to consumers, it is still a one-way conversation from companies (Chan et al., 2020). The companies need to understand what kind of information consumers hope to know and then create a CSR communication strategy (Chan et al., 2020). Therefore, CSR communication in the fast-fashion industry is one of the important aspects which companies need to take into consideration to increase consumers’ attitudes.

1.2 Problem discussion

One area of research that has significant importance in the fields of marketing and consumer behavior is CSR communication. This term refers to how companies broadcast their social and environmental responsibility initiatives to the public (Kim, 2017). CSR communication can be carried out through different mediums like advertising, PR campaigns, or social media. The reason why studying this type of communication strategy is crucial lies in its ability to shape customers' perceptions of a company and its offerings (Quiles-Soler, Martínez-Sala, and Monserrat-Gauchi, 2022). By analyzing a business's approach toward CSR communication and its impact on consumers' outlooks, marketers can gain valuable insights into the strategies they should adopt while promoting their products (Quiles-Soler, Martínez-Sala, and Monserrat-Gauchi, 2022).

According to (Pedersen and Gwozdz, 2013), CSR communication is directly related to the foundation of CSR itself. Amid growing concerns about the corporate impact on society and the environment, CSR has gained greater significance in recent times. Hence, there is immense pressure on companies to communicate their approach toward CSR clearly and openly. This means that businesses need to be transparent about their initiatives and convey them effectively to their stakeholders such as customers, employees, investors, governments, and communities at large. Showcasing their commitment towards social welfare, ethical practices, sustainability goals, and community development objectives through clear communication channels such as websites, annual reports or social media platforms can enhance the company's reputation while also attracting new customers who prioritize socially responsible organizations (Pedersen and Gwozdz, 2013). The area of CSR communication research that has garnered a lot of attention is focused on the content and how it is communicated by companies. Companies must understand the impact their visual and written content can have on their consumers' attitudes, as they tend to get influenced by these factors (Pimentel Da Silva, 2021; Gruber, Kaliauer and Schlegelmilch, 2017; Yu, 2020). Messages that concentrate on the social benefits of a company's CSR efforts are more effective in influencing consumer behavior than those emphasizing financial gains (Lee, 2016). Therefore, catering to societal welfare can be key in crafting impactful messages that resonate with potential customers. Improved working conditions for employees or any other

socially responsible acts by a company would go a long way in gaining positive word-of-mouth publicity and building a favorable brand reputation (Lee, 2016).

Consumer behavior research has placed a significant emphasis on studying attitudes toward companies and their products. Generally, attitudes refer to the personal opinions or judgments individuals have about a specific object, like a company or product. These views are commonly influenced by various factors such as CSR communication that companies present to customers. This notion of CSR communication is often scrutinized in the context of consumer attitudes because it can impact how consumers perceive a company's operations and offerings. The nature of consumer attitudes toward CSR communication is intricate and multifaceted, requiring extensive examination from researchers within the field. Despite decades of research, there remains considerable disagreement over the effectiveness of CSR communication when shaping consumer opinions about companies (Naatu et al., 2022). The issue of inconsistency in measuring attitudes toward CSR communication has been identified as a significant challenge in the literature. As per (van Doorn et al., 2017), there are various measures used by researchers to evaluate consumer attitudes, and it is not uncommon for different researchers to use different measures. This disparity makes it difficult to compare findings across studies and draw meaningful conclusions about the efficacy of CSR communication. Furthermore, the research domain poses a challenge due to the diversity that exists among consumers themselves (van Doorn et al., 2017). Factors such as age, gender, culture, and personal values can significantly influence consumer attitudes toward CSR communication. Accounting for these factors in research studies can be incredibly challenging, and any findings may not be generalizable beyond specific consumer groups (Naatu et al., 2022).

To achieve success, transparency, and sincerity are two critical elements that must be present in the communication process. Openness and honesty are essential in communicating initiatives to gain stakeholders' trust, especially customers who play a significant role in the company's success. Despite this essentiality, there is still an apparent lack of authenticity and transparency in CSR communication that can have damaging effects on consumer perceptions. The absence of these values can lead to skepticism and distrust from consumers causing them to rethink their support for the company's efforts (Mohr, Webb and Harris, 2001). According to Cho and Taylor

(2019), CSR communication is an essential aspect of modern marketing strategy, but consumers often express doubt and disbelief towards it. The reason behind this widespread skepticism is the increasing awareness among customers about the possibility of greenwashing and other forms of misleading CSR communication. The last few years have witnessed a significant rise in consumer mistrust regarding CSR initiatives and their communication by businesses. This trend has prompted companies to be more cautious while communicating their social responsibility initiatives to their customers. Any miscommunication or false claims can severely damage a company's reputation and lead to irreversible harm to its brand image. Therefore, it becomes imperative for businesses to adopt transparent and truthful means to communicate their CSR efforts with their stakeholders (Cho and Taylor, 2019).

One major issue regarding CSR initiatives is that numerous organizations may engage in such activities, not because of their genuine concern for social or environmental issues, but rather due to their financial benefits. Those who adopt CSR as a mere marketing strategy tend to be insincere and artificial in their implementation of socially responsible practices. As a result, consumers can easily discern the lack of authenticity in such attempts and develop mistrust towards these businesses. Being falsely perceived as insincere and opportunist by the public can ultimately damage a company's reputation and affect its bottom line negatively (Shim and Yang, 2016). CSR initiatives can often be complex or multifaceted, which means that customers may struggle to understand the purpose of these programs. Without a clear understanding of what CSR entails and how it benefits society, customers may become skeptical or confused by communications regarding these efforts. Moreover, if customers believe that a company is insincere in its commitment to CSR values and principles, this could exacerbate negative perceptions toward the company's messaging (Skarmeas and Leonidou, 2013). To overcome these challenges, managers must carefully frame their CSR communication strategies in ways that resonate with consumers and position their initiatives as genuine attempts to give back to society. One useful approach involves presenting CSR as a social obligation rather than simply another aspect of business operations. By spotlighting the company's commitment to social responsibility and emphasizing how it aligns with broader societal values, managers can foster positive attitudes among consumers (Turker and Altuntas, 2014).

It cannot be denied that the obstacles faced in comprehending how CSR communication affects consumer attitudes are immense. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize the significance of studying this topic. With society's mounting concerns regarding social and environmental matters, companies are compelled to be more candid and efficient in their CSR communication efforts. Therefore, further investigation must be undertaken to gain a better grasp of how such communication influences consumer attitudes and perceptions. This will allow companies to adapt their strategies accordingly and implement effective methods of communicating their CSR activities transparently to consumers.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to explore the impact of CSR content communication on consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion companies.

1.4 Research question

How does the content of CSR communication influence consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion companies?

2. Theoretical framework

This chapter presents the theoretical foundations of different concepts, including CSR communication, transparent content, visual content, written content, attitudes, and the ABC model. These theories will help to present the conceptual model provided in 2.3.

2.1 CSR communication

CSR communication is not only valuable but indispensable for a company in building lasting relationships with consumers and earning their preference and loyalty toward the company (Moreno and Kang, 2020). This can be done through transparency and reporting on sustainability or ethical initiatives, as well as providing clear information about product labeling and certifications (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst, 2010).

CSR communication can be defined as the process by which companies convey information about their social and environmental activities to stakeholders, including consumers (Matten and Moon, 2008). It can take many forms, including public relations campaigns, sustainability reports, and labeling (Zhang, Zhang, and Zhou, 2021). Tingchi Liu et al. (2014) found that consumers are more likely to have a positive attitude toward a company's CSR activities when they perceive the company to be socially responsible. Similarly, Choi and La (2013) found that consumers in Korea were more likely to purchase products from companies that engaged in CSR activities, suggesting that CSR can have a positive effect on consumer behavior.

However, consumers are likely to put more weight on the quality of a product or service, and customer support than a company's CSR (Schmeltz, 2012). Consumers may feel skepticism towards companies who engage in CSR since consumers cannot understand the advantages of CSR (Schmeltz, 2012). Consumers regard the companies as only for increasing profit and improving the corporate image (Schmeltz, 2012). Therefore, even if companies are involved in CSR, companies cannot improve consumers' attitudes towards companies. To increase consumers' attitudes toward companies, CSR communication plays an important role in influencing (Du et al., 2010). Specifically, companies have to tell consumers concrete information about problems and solutions related to CSR and its importance (Schmeltz, 2021). A study conducted by Overton et al., (2021) supports the aforementioned finding since they argue that when attributions based on greater value can be detected by consumers through CSR communication, consumers' attitudes towards companies can be improved.

2.1.1 Transparent content

One fundamental aspect of establishing positive relationships between consumers and corporations is transparency, which can be achieved through the communication of CSR efforts (Reynolds and Yuthas, 2008 cited in Kang and Hustvedt, 2014). Transparency is about sharing positive and negative information (Farrell, 2016). According to The *Business Dictionary* (cited in Farrell, 2016), transparency is defined as communicating full of information without hidden agendas and conditions to facilitate collaboration, cooperation, and collective decision-making.

Transparency within CSR communication is characterized by the openness of revealing both good and bad aspects of CSR information (Kim and Ferguson, 2016). Kim and Lee (2018) found that communicating a CSR message in a highly transparent manner allowed the company to gain stronger trust. Additionally, individuals demonstrated greater trust for the organization that provided a high level of transparency in its CSR messages than those with low transparency. This indicates that how transparent messages for CSR initiatives are conveyed has a significant impact on how the public perceives an organization's CSR initiative as trustworthy (Kim and Lee, 2018). A study by Kang and Hustvedt (2014) showed that trust and general attitude toward a company were greatly influenced by transparency. Furthermore, transparency and social responsibility had significant indirect effects on word-of-mouth intention and purchase intention. It was clear that communicating transparently about a company's CSR efforts can lead to building trust and positive attitudes between the company and the consumer, which in turn can be associated with the consumer's intention to purchase from the company and share a positive opinion with others (Kang and Hustvedt, 2014). This can be explained by a study conducted by Kim and Lee (2018) showing that participants who were exposed to highly transparent CSR messages were more likely to advocate for the organization than those who received low-transparent messages.

2.1.2 Visual content

Visual information, especially through context wherein retailers and consumers do not interact such as advertisements and online purchases, plays an important role in offering clear judgment of products to consumers (Kim and Lennon, 2008). According to Kim and Lennon, (2008), visual information contains still images and clips which express the information of products. Consumers are more likely to look for visual information than rhetorical information (Kim and Lennon, 2008).

Visual contents of CSR can be regarded as images or pictures and videos wherein consumers can obtain CSR information through their sight sense (Rämö, 2011). To effectively communicate CSR, fast fashion companies must consider how to convey visual messages, and the target audience (Pimentel Da Silva, 2021). According to the research Wang (2011), there is a positive relationship between visual information on CSR and consumers' attitude toward companies. That

means consumers who are exposed to visual information are likely to take a favorable attitude toward companies (Wang, 2011). Moreover, visual information plays an important role in helping consumers treat appropriate judgment of the information (Wang, 2011). For example, (Pimentel Da Silva, 2021) suggests that labeling can be an effective way to communicate CSR to consumers, as it is a simple and easily understandable form of communication. However, the content of the label must be accurate and relevant to the target audience to be effective (Pimentel Da Silva, 2021).

Interestingly, a study conducted by Chung and Lee (2017) argues that attitudes toward companies can be improved by negative visual information that companies are trying to deal with so that consumers can understand the difference between the present issues and the planned objective. On the other hand, the study found that positive visual disclosure does not increase attitudes toward companies because it may be difficult for consumers to perceive the gap between problems and goals (Chung and Lee, 2017). The more consumers see negative information related to CSR, the more likely the emotional influence increases not only for consumers but also gradually at a societal level (Chung and Lee, 2017). In addition to the significance of visual information (Wang, 2011), companies need to take into consideration choosing the appropriate visual CSR information to improve consumers' attitudes towards companies (Chung and Lee, 2017).

2.1.3 Written content

According to Kim and Lennon (2008), written content refers to text information that has a description of products or brands. CSR information can also be formed as written content such as documents wherein consumers have to read and understand the texts (Pencle and Mălăescu, 2016). Companies need to take into consideration how to provide written information about CSR to consumers (Gruber, Kaliauer and Schlegelmilch, 2017). First of all, companies' websites should include CSR information with richness and in-depth. Furthermore, CSR reports also are necessary to describe the importance of CSR so that consumers can access and read (Gruber, Kaliauer and Schlegelmilch, 2017). Commercial, social, and environmental information should be employed in the report. CSR reports do not only mean offering CSR information but also creating a positive attitude toward companies as a way of communication technique (Yu, 2020).

The use of such terms which highlight the performance of companies' CSR as "govern", "manage", "policy" and "strategy" establish a positive attitude toward companies because those terms may correlate with consumers' expectations to some extent (Yu, 2020). In addition to that, to build trust between consumers and companies, companies have to use terms that express protection; for instance, "protect", "conserve", and "preserve". These terms help consumers process the information wherein companies protect the environment from an existence of danger (Yu, 2020).

2.2 Attitudes

Consumer attitudes play an important role in the success of CSR. Consumer's attitude toward a company's CSR can affect their purchasing decisions, brand loyalty, and overall perception of the company. Therefore, it is critical for companies engaging in such activities to understand how to effectively communicate CSR to consumers and influence their attitudes (Solomon, 2016).

Studies have shown that consumer attitudes toward CSR are influenced by a variety of factors (Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen, 2010). One of the most important factors is people's sincerity in a company's CSR efforts. Consumers are more likely to view CSR positively when they perceive companies as genuinely committed to social and environmental responsibility, rather than simply engaging in CSR for marketing or financial reasons (Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen, 2010). Another factor that affects consumers' attitudes toward CSR is their level of involvement in the issue. Consumers who are more engaged in social and environmental issues are more likely to have positive attitudes toward CSR (Carrington, Neville, and Whitwell, 2014).

In addition, the nature of CSR can also have an impact on consumer attitudes, initiatives that align closely with a company's core values and mission are more likely to receive positive reviews from consumers (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). Furthermore, CSR which is perceived as addressing pressing social issues or benefiting disadvantaged groups is more likely to be favored by consumers (Ellen, 2006). It is also important to consider the role of communication in shaping consumer attitudes toward CSR. Effective communication can help businesses increase

consumers' perception of the sincerity of their CSR efforts and increase their awareness and understanding of initiatives (Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen, 2010).

However, failure to communicate CSR activities effectively can have negative consequences on consumer attitudes toward fast fashion companies. Tingchi Liu et al. (2014) found that companies that do not engage in CSR or communicate effectively may face negative consumer attitudes and reduced sales. They also found that failure to communicate CSR effectively can lead to skepticism and mistrust among consumers, who may question the sincerity and authenticity of a company's CSR efforts.

2.2.1 The ABC model

The ABC model proposes that attitudes are made up of three parts: affective, behavioral, and cognitive (Solomon, 2016). The emotional side of an attitude, or how a person feels about a specific thing or idea, is referred to by the term the affective component. The cognitive component refers to a person's views and thoughts about a certain thing or idea, whereas the behavioral component refers to how a person acts toward the object or idea. The emotional aspect frequently has the most influence on how people feel. For instance, someone may have a positive view of a specific brand because it inspires them to feel good or joyful. But the cognitive aspect can also be very important, particularly when a person is making a more logical choice. In this instance, a person's attitudes regarding a specific product or brand might get influenced by their beliefs and views about it. The behavioral element is equally crucial since it shows how a person's attitude manifests itself in their conduct. For instance, someone who is sympathetic to environmental concerns could recycle more frequently or take the bus or train rather than drive. The connections between the elements of attitudes are further emphasized by the ABC model. For instance, a person's actions may have an impact on their attitudes. An individual's attitude regarding a certain brand may improve if they act positively toward it. Similarly to this, someone's cognitive beliefs can also affect how they act. A person can be inclined to act in a way that supports their beliefs if they think a certain product or brand is environmentally friendly (Solomon, 2016).

The ABC model claims that attitudes are dynamic and subject to change throughout time. Several mechanisms, such as persuasion, social influence, cognitive dissonance, and learning, can lead to an attitude shift. For instance, a person may alter their opinion of a certain brand after viewing a persuasive advertisement or after hearing favorable remarks from friends or relatives (Ho, Lado, and Rivera-Torres, 2017). According to the ABC model, attitudes are linked together, and modifications to one component may have an impact on the other components. In this case, a person's behavior can affect how they feel about a certain object or topic, but a person's ideas or thoughts can change how they feel and behave (Ho, Lado, and Rivera-Torres, 2017).

2.3 Conceptual model

Based on the above theoretical framework, the authors of this paper created a conceptual model shown below (Figure 1). The dotted line from the fast-fashion industry to CSR communication represents that the model is not closely correlated with the fast-fashion industry. However, the authors have focused on this context and thus they are connected by dotted lines. Solid lines from CSR communication to each subconcept (transparency, visual content, and written content) represent that CSR communication is the core concept of connecting the three subconcepts. As shown in the figure, the three arrows from the subconcepts represent that each of them seems to have a direct influence on consumers' attitudes toward companies.

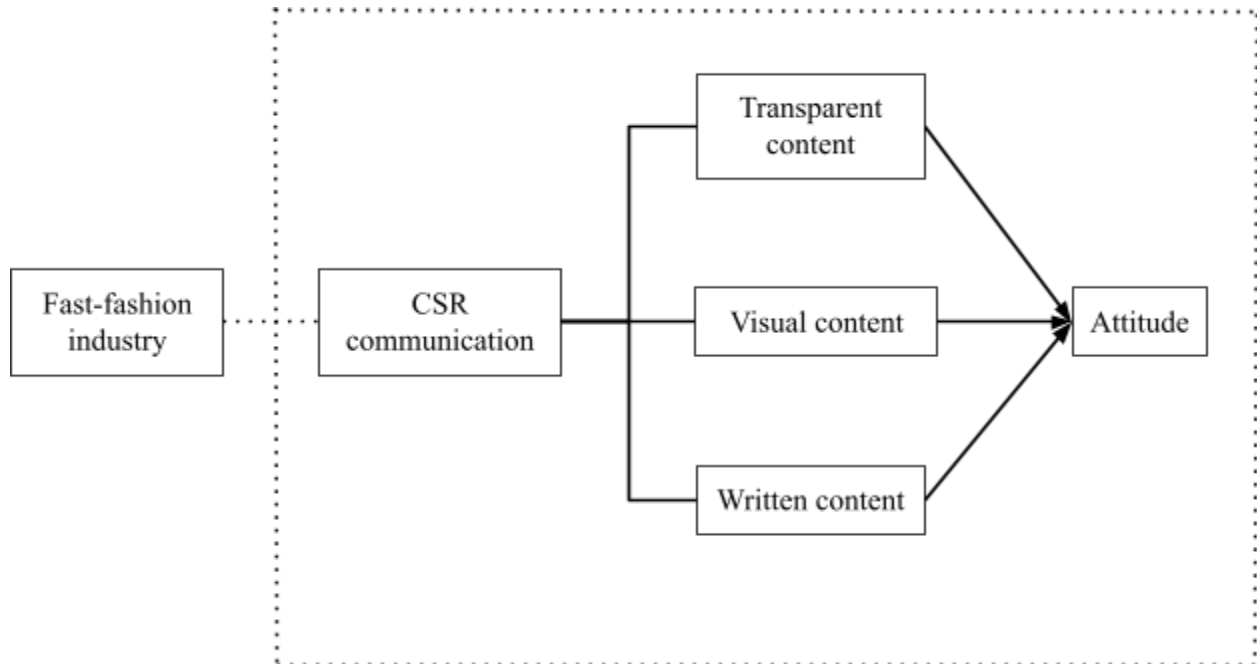


Figure 1: Conceptual model (own, 2023)

3. Method

The method chapter will provide descriptions of the different approaches used in this study as well as explanations of why these approaches are suitable for this research. Furthermore, operationalization and data analysis are introduced, followed by ethical and social considerations. Finally, the research quality of this study is explained.

3.1 Data collection

A qualitative research strategy was conducted in this study. Qualitative research tends to emphasize words instead of quantifying the process of collecting and analyzing data (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). Researchers aim to describe life worlds from the participants' perspective, as it leads to a better understanding of social realities and focuses on processes, meaning patterns, and structural features (Flick, Kandorff, and Steinke, 2004). Qualitative research is often associated with an inductive approach characterized by the relationship between theory and research, with the theory being generated from the data collected in the research process (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019).

Intending to explore the impact of CSR content communication on consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion companies, taking a constructionist ontological stance is justified. This stance, as argued by Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019), asserts that social actors are the essential components to establishing social phenomena and their meanings. This means that social properties are not separated as phenomena 'out there,' rather they emerge as outcomes of interactions among individuals (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). By adopting a constructionist ontological stance, it is acknowledged that the study intends to investigate how consumers' attitudes are shaped through social interactions and the involvement of individuals.

The data being analyzed will be primary data, meaning that the data will be collected and analyzed by the researchers. Its advantage is that the researchers can obtain data that is relevant to their research objectives, even though it can be time-consuming and expensive (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). Primary data will be collected through semi-structured interviews in this study. A semi-structured interview is a form of qualitative research in which the interviewer can change the sequence of questions while having an interview guide (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). Though questions are prepared beforehand, the interviewer also has some flexibility to ask further questions depending on the discussion and the responses given by the respondent (Groenland and Dana, 2019). It allows the interviewer to obtain deep and rich data because semi-structured interviews are mostly structured by open questions and respondents are not bound by fixed answers (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019).

3.2 Research design

Although the cross-sectional design has typically been associated with quantitative research, qualitative research often utilizes it as a part of its methodology. A cross-sectional design is the use of collecting data from a sample of individuals at a single point in time (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). Hence, cross-sectional studies do not measure changes over time because the data gathered typically refers to the time when the data was collected (Kesmodel, 2018). It also identifies patterns of association among variables in a population (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). The cross-sectional research design will be practical for this study because the researchers

do not seek pro-longed research that observes changes in consumers' attitudes over months or years.

3.3 Semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method that enables the researchers to collect in-depth information depending on the answers (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). The method relies on asking questions within a predetermined thematic framework, although the questions are not set in order or phrasing. The semi-structured interviews typically involve a set of open-ended questions that are designed to elicit participants' opinions, experiences, and attitudes. Before the researchers conduct the interview, the researchers need to prepare broad questions for their purpose, and questions may be layered and deepened according to the interviewee's answers. The interviewees may be asked an additional question when the researchers want to understand the answers further. This flexibility allows for a more conversational and natural flow of communication between the interviewer and participant, which can lead to a deeper understanding of the research topic. However, the researchers should have several predetermined questions and follow them to some extent. Additionally, this research method is beneficial especially when the researchers conduct a more definite subject than universal issues as it allows the researchers to deal with the problem flexibly (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019).

This interview method is naturally applied to this paper since the goal is to explore a new area that the researchers cannot observe in a social setting. Moreover, three researchers conducted the interviews in this paper, and the interviews were organized individually. Therefore, the semi-structured interview is favored to avoid the interviewer's variability and ensure the approach and purpose between them (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019).

There are several aspects that the researchers have to be careful of for the interview. First, the researchers should not use jargon so that the interviewees can understand the purpose and questions easily (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). Second, the researchers should not lead the interviewees in a certain direction when the respondents are struggling to answer. Third, such demographic information as age, gender, and occupation should be taken as a memo. Lastly, the

interview should be conducted in a quiet environment to avoid strangers overhearing the conversation. Another advantage of taking place in a quiet setting is that the researchers can use audio-record and transcribe the detailed content of the interview (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019).

3.3.1 Pretest - semi-structured interviews sample method

The authors note that pre-testing the interview questions and the interview process can help to refine the questions and ensure that they are relevant to the research topic. Pretesting is an essential part of the research process, particularly when it comes to conducting interviews. It involves testing the research instruments or tools, such as an interview guide or questionnaire, on a small group of people before using them to collect data from the actual target population. The purpose of pretesting is to identify and address any issues or concerns with the research instruments, which can help improve the quality and reliability of the data collected (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019).

When it comes to conducting interviews, pretesting can help identify potential problems with the interview questions or format. For example, the questions may be ambiguous, unclear, or difficult for participants to understand. Pretesting can help identify these issues and allow researchers to make necessary adjustments to improve the questions' clarity and effectiveness. Pretesting can also help identify any biases that may affect the data collected. For example, interviewers may inadvertently lead participants to provide certain responses by the way they ask questions or provide cues. Pretesting can help identify these biases and allow researchers to adjust the interview guide to reduce their impact on the data collected (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, 2006). Additionally, pretesting can help researchers determine the appropriate length of the interview and the amount of time needed to complete it. This can help ensure that the interview is not too long or too short, which can impact the quality of the data collected. This can help improve the quality and reliability of the data collected through interviews and increase the credibility of the study's findings. By conducting pretesting, researchers can ensure that they are using effective research instruments and collecting high-quality data from the target population (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, 2006).

The authors conducted one pre-test interview with one of the participants. Thus, they became aware of the different difficulties that could occur such as misunderstanding the questions or giving answers that are non-related to the topic. In the pre-test interview, the participant was asked “How important is social and environmental responsibility to you when it comes to purchasing clothing?” The first barrier that occurred here was that the answer was too general and not related to CSR communication by companies or attitudes. Therefore, the question was changed to be more specified and contained words such as ‘emotions’ and ‘feelings.’ The second question was “Have you ever heard of or seen information about fast-fashion companies' CSR commitments?” This was too general, and too early to ask which induced another obstacle. As a result, the answer was “No, I have not heard or seen CSR information that I could remember” which was understandable as the participant was not prepared to understand the connection between CSR information and consumers' attitudes toward it. Thus, the following questions were added instead (Table 1), “How do you emotionally react when fast fashion companies reveal both positive and negative information about their CSR initiatives? Do you experience any particular feelings or emotions in response to this disclosure?”, “How might your behavior towards fast fashion companies change if they openly and honestly communicate their CSR efforts? Would this transparency lead you to establish more positive attitudes towards the brand, and if so, what specific behaviors might this result in?”, “What affective attitudes or emotions do you experience when you encounter terms such as "strategy," "policy," and "management" on websites, reports, or labels related to fast fashion companies? How do these terms make you feel, and do they evoke any specific emotions?”, “What emotions do you encounter when exposed to fast-fashion companies' CSR communication? Have you altered your behavior in response to CSR communication from fast-fashion companies? If so, how has your behavior changed, and what motivated you to do so?” The usage of these phrases and how they were formed will be explained in more depth for each question later, although the order of the questions has been revised in light of the pre-test. The participant provided feedback to the interviewer on ambiguous questions, and an inability to detect emotions. This input assisted researchers in developing follow-up questions and preparing for future interruptions. The pre-test interview improved the interviewing process by allowing more flexibility, and a relaxed atmosphere.

3.3.2 The matrix of the interview guide

The authors of this paper made the interview guide (Table 1) to ensure consistency in the interview styles. There are primary questions and secondary questions in the matrix of the interview guide (Table 1). The interviewers always followed and started with the primary questions. However, when the interviewees needed additional information about the question or had difficulties understanding the question, the interviewers followed the secondary questions to help the interviewees gain more insights. Therefore, as aforementioned in 3.3 semi-structured interviews, the interviews were conducted flexibly per the interview guide (Table 1).

	ABC model		
Component	Affective attitudes	Behavioral attitudes	Cognitive attitudes
Transparency	How do you emotionally react when fast fashion companies reveal both positive and negative information about their CSR initiatives? Do you experience any particular feelings or emotions in response to this disclosure?	How might your behavior towards fast fashion companies change if they openly and honestly communicate their CSR efforts? Would this transparency lead you to establish more positive attitudes towards the brand, and if so, what specific behaviors might this result in?	How might your cognitive attitudes towards fast fashion companies change if they communicate transparently about their CSR efforts? Would this transparency lead you to perceive fast fashion companies as more trustworthy? Additionally, how important is it for you to receive honest information about the CSR activities of fast fashion companies?
Visual contents	What affective attitudes do you experience when you see positive visual information in fast fashion	How might your behavioral attitude towards fast fashion companies change when you see labels	Do you hold beliefs or thoughts that lead you to believe you can make a

	<p>store?</p> <p>On the other hand, what affective attitudes do you experience when you see negative visual information in fast-fashion stores?</p>	<p>information on their clothes?</p> <p>Specifically, would this labeling lead you to change your overall attitude towards the brand, and if so, what specific behaviors might this result in?</p>	<p>accurate judgment of the information presented in visual content?</p> <p>In other words, do you trust your own ability to interpret and evaluate visual information in a meaningful way?</p>
<p>Written contents</p>	<p>What affective attitudes or emotions do you experience when you encounter terms such as "strategy," "policy," and "management" on websites, reports, or labels related to fast fashion companies? How do these terms make you feel, and do they evoke any specific emotions?</p> <p>What affective attitudes or emotions do you experience when you encounter terms such as "protect," "conserve," and "preserve" on websites, reports, or labels related to fast fashion companies? How do these terms make you feel, and do they evoke any specific emotions?</p>	<p>What is your behavioral attitude towards reading CSR information on fast-fashion companies' websites? Do you actively seek out and read this information, and if so, what specific behaviors motivate you to do so? Conversely, if you do not read CSR information on fast-fashion companies' websites, what factors influence this behavior?</p> <p>What is your behavioral attitude towards reading CSR reports of fast-fashion companies? Do you actively seek out and read these reports, and if so, what specific behaviors motivate you to do so? Conversely, if you do not read CSR reports of fast-fashion companies, what factors influence this behavior?</p>	<p>What views or opinions do you hold regarding the importance of obtaining CSR information from fast-fashion companies' websites? Do you believe that this information is crucial in your decision-making process when it comes to purchasing clothing items, and why? Or do you think that CSR information is irrelevant or not particularly significant, and what cognitive factors contribute to this belief?</p> <p>What views or opinions do you hold regarding the importance of obtaining CSR information from fast-fashion companies' CSR reports? Do you believe that this information is critical in your decision-making process when it comes to purchasing clothing items, and why? Or do you think that CSR information is not particularly significant or not relevant to your decision-making</p>

			<p>process, and what cognitive factors contribute to this belief?</p>
<p>Attitudes</p>	<p>How do you emotionally respond to fast-fashion companies' CSR communication? Do you feel any particular emotions in response to their communication efforts?</p>	<p>Have you altered your behavior in response to CSR communication from fast-fashion companies? If so, how has your behavior changed, and what motivated you to do so?</p>	<p>What views or opinions do you hold regarding fast-fashion companies' CSR initiatives? Do you believe that CSR initiatives are an important consideration when it comes to choosing fast-fashion brands, and why or why not?</p> <p>What cognitive attitudes do you hold regarding what fast-fashion companies should do in terms of CSR initiatives? What specific beliefs or thoughts do you have about the way these companies should approach CSR, and what factors contribute to these attitudes? Do you have a clear idea of what actions fast-fashion companies should take to be more socially responsible, and why do you hold these beliefs?</p> <p>What beliefs or thoughts do you go through to develop your attitudes towards fast-fashion companies' CSR communication? What specific factors do you consider when evaluating these companies' CSR communication?</p>

			<p>Have you always had the same attitudes towards fast-fashion companies' CSR communication, or have they changed over time based on new information or experiences?</p> <p>How do you prioritize the content of CSR communication from fast-fashion companies? What aspects do you consider most important and relevant?</p>
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Table 1: Interview guide (own, 2023)

3.4 Sampling method

Researchers will utilize convenience samples to obtain adequate information from the interviews. It is a non-probability sampling method in that researchers do not seek a sample on a random basis, rather they select based on its availability (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). The reason for using convenience samples is that this is the cost- and time-effective way for the researchers to pursue readily available participants (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). Moreover, the research question for this study is exploratory, meaning it is situated in interpretivism. Therefore, this sampling method will be feasible and thus will be employed.

In this paper, the authors select the participants who are interested in fashion and who frequently purchase clothes from fast fashion companies and preferably those who are concerned about sustainable fashion brands. Furthermore, the paper needs respondents who possess certain knowledge about the related area to effectively achieve its research objectives, as they may provide more insightful and engaging discussion during the interviews than those who have no interest at all. The advantage of convenience sampling is that it is easy and cost-effective to implement, as researchers can quickly obtain a sample without needing to recruit participants from a wider population (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019).

However, convenience sampling also has several limitations, as the samples obtained may not be representative of the wider population, as participants may have certain characteristics that make them more likely to participate in the study. For example, students who are more engaged with their studies or who have more free time may be more likely to participate than those who are not as motivated or have busier schedules. Individuals who are more sociable or outgoing may be more likely to participate than those who are more reserved. Another limitation is that convenience sampling may not provide sufficient variation in the sample to allow for the generalization of findings to the population of interest. This can be a particular concern if the sample is small, as it may not adequately represent the range of views and opinions within the population (Stratton, 2021).

3.4.1 Sample size

In qualitative research, it can be difficult to determine the number of people to be interviewed, as it is impossible to predict how many participants should be included in the research to achieve theoretical saturation (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). Therefore, the determination of sample size is not fixed but rather context-dependent and partially influenced by the underlying scientific paradigm (Boddy, 2016). For example, larger samples are required in positivist qualitative research than in in-depth qualitative research to obtain a representative picture of the population being studied (Boddy, 2016). Besides that, according to Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019), researchers need to gather a larger sample if a study includes several comparisons such as between males and females, different age groups, and different types of research participants in terms of locally relevant factors. On the other hand, if the emphasis of the study is on a particular focus, a fewer sample is likely to be necessary. While some argue that a sample size of 10 in qualitative research may be adequate in cases of a homogeneous population (Sandelowski, 1995 cited in Boddy, 2016), Warren (2002 cited in Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019) suggests that conducting a minimum of 20 to 30 interviews seems to be necessary. Nonetheless, data saturation in qualitative research may occur in samples among a homogeneous population of 12 (Boddy, 2016). Thus, a sample size of 12 should be sufficient for this research to reach data saturation to deeply understand the conducted research.

The table shown below (Table 2) provides the general information of the interview participants, including their frequency of shopping at fast-fashion companies since the selection of participants for this paper specifically focused on individuals who are interested in fashion. The pseudonyms are used in the empirical chapter. This table allows the reader to understand the quotation of participants in the empirical chapter better.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation	Frequency of shopping in fast-fashion companies	Interview duration
Johan	24	Male	Working	Often	37 min 4 seconds
Linda	20	Female	Student	Very often	41 min 55 seconds
Petter	23	Male	Student	Often	35 min 17 seconds
Saga	21	Female	Student	Quite often	33 min 20 seconds
Christine	20	Female	Student	Once a month	1 hour and 12 minutes
Anne	20	Female	Student	Often	32 minutes 30 seconds
Lewis	22	Male	Student	Once a month	38 minutes 4 seconds
Joseph	29	Male	Student	Often	37 minutes 35 seconds
Edvin	23	Male	Working	Once in two months	31 minutes 32 seconds
Sara	22	Female	Student	Once a month	36 minutes 42 seconds
Anton	27	Male	Working	Often	40 minutes 50 seconds
Victoria	22	Female	Working	One a month	38 minutes 28 seconds

Table 2: Interview participants' general information (own, 2023)

3.5 Operationalization

Concept	Component	Operational definition	Reference	Questions
CSR Communication	Transparency	Sharing positive and negative information	Farrell (2016)	How do you feel when fast fashion companies disclose good and bad information about their CSR activities?
		Communicating full information without hidden agendas	The Business Dictionary cited in Farrell (2016)	<p>Would you trust fast fashion companies that communicate transparently about their CSR efforts?</p> <p>Would you perceive the fast fashion industries as trustworthy if they communicate in a highly transparent manner?</p> <p>How important for you to get honest information about the CSR activities of fast fashion companies?</p>
		Open to exposing highly transparent CSR messages	Kim and Lee (2018)	Would you support fast fashion companies if they transparently communicate their CSR efforts? If so, why?
	Visual contents	Visual information on CSR (Positive and negative)	<p>Wang (2011) Chung and Lee (2017)</p> <p>Pimentel Da Silva (2021)</p>	<p>How do you feel when you see positive visual information in fast-fashion stores?</p> <p>How do you feel when you see negative visual information in fast-fashion stores?</p>

				Would you believe that you can make an appropriate judgment of the information in the visual content?
		Labeling on clothes	Pimentel Da Silva (2021)	Would you change your attitude towards fast fashion companies when you see label information on their clothes?
	Written contents	CSR information on websites	Gruber, Kaliauer, and Schlegelmilch (2017)	Do you read CSR information on fast-fashion companies' websites? And why? How important is it for you to get CSR information about fast-fashion companies from their websites?
		Information on CSR reports	Gruber, Kaliauer, and Schlegelmilch (2017) Yu (2020)	Do you read CSR reports of fast-fashion companies? And why? How important is it for you to get CSR information of fast-fashion companies from their CSR reports?
		The use of specific terms (strategy, policy, govern, manage, etc.)	Yu (2020)	How do you feel when you see the terms such as strategy, policy, and management on websites, reports, or labels?
		The use of specific terms (protect, conserve, preserve, etc.)	Yu (2020)	How do you feel when you see the terms such as protect, conserve, and preserve on websites, reports, or labels?
Attitudes	ABC - model	Affective attitudes	Solomon (2016)	How do you feel about fast-fashion companies' CSR communication? Does it evoke any emotions for

				you?
		Behavioral attitudes	Solomon (2016)	Have you changed your behavior as a result of fast-fashion companies' CSR communication?
		Cognitive attitudes	Solomon (2016)	What thoughts or beliefs do you have about fast-fashion companies' CSR initiatives?
		Beliefs	Solomon (2016)	What do you believe fast-fashion companies' should do in terms of CSR initiatives?
		Attitude formation	Solomon (2016)	How do you develop your attitudes towards fast-fashion companies' CSR communication?

Table 3: Operationalization (own, 2023)

3.6 Data analysis

In this research, it is important to mention that the authors were influenced by a grounded theory throughout the research process. Grounded theory is the data analysis process of developing a set of codes emerging inductively from qualitative interviews (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). This is because of the nature of this study which claims to be qualitative and characterized by an inductive approach.

When conducting data analysis in qualitative research, as explained by Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019), researchers have to consider several key elements, which are transcription, coding, thematic analysis, and data reduction. For a start, the raw data must be managed by carefully examining it for any obvious flows. For example, an interviewer can auto-record or transcribe the interview, and then upload them into a computer software program for managing the data. Once the transcripts are available, researchers can start coding by breaking them into smaller components, which are then assigned labels. This leads to thematic analysis whereby researchers analyze and refine the codes, and then identify patterns or core themes in the data. Researchers then move on to the final stage called data reduction by which the large collection of information will be reduced to make it clear (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019).

The authors thus followed the steps and considerations in coding introduced by Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019) when analyzing the data extracted from the qualitative interviews. After each author conducted an interview, they immediately started transcribing because it is important to note that the authors must have sufficient time and should know how many interviews they can transcribe within the time available (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). When transcribing, they made sure that the written text represents what the interviewees exactly said, word for word. Furthermore, in order to avoid inconsistency with the commitment of qualitative researchers, the authors did neither paraphrase nor summarize the narration of the interviewee to accurately reflect their voice (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). Once the authors are done with transcribing each interview, they started coding as soon as possible at the early stage because it helps to sharpen an understanding of the gathered data and avoids the feeling of being overwhelmed by

the collection of the data (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). This was done by all the authors in a booked room at the university library in Växjö.

Conducted data analysis started by producing hundreds of concepts as the building blocks of theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1988: 101 cited in Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). This process involves breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing the extracted data from the interviews (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 61 cited in Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019), which are then grounded and developed into categories. As noted by Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019), the made concepts were then elaborated into categories, which are representations of real-world phenomena. A category typically includes two or more concepts and they provide a higher level of abstraction than concepts to help organize the data. Properties, on the other hand, represent more specified attributes or aspects of a category. Afterward, the authors constructed a theory composed of a set of well-developed categories based on the empirical data. These categories were systematically interconnected through statements expressing their relationships. This combined structure of categories and connections established a theoretical framework that elucidates social or other phenomena (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 22 cited in Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019).

3.7 Ethical issues

The researchers need to take into account the ethical issues that happened during the research process. For instance, the researchers should not harm participants socially, legally, and psychologically (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). The authors of this paper follow the ethical considerations detailed in the literature of Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019).

First, in this research, the authors have planned to deal with personal information including responses to basic attributes such as name, gender, age, occupation, family structure, and income through the interview. To avoid social and psychological harm, the authors have maintained the participants' data confidential. Their answers and personal information have not been shown to anyone except the authors and the other related parties. Moreover, the authors have made sure that the interviews were taken in a place where there are not many people so that they can avoid situations in which strangers overhear the answers. Furthermore, the situation allowed the

interviewers to maintain the data confidential. Informed consent is also provided to all participants in order to give information about the study and the protection of privacy and confidentiality (*see Appendix 1*). The participants agreed with taking part in the study voluntarily and use of audio-recording during the interviews. However, the authors have informed the participants that they can freely end their participation anytime for any reason. Any deception has been prevented in this paper with open and honest communication of all relevant groups.

3.8 Social issues

This paper is focusing on the effects of fast-fashion companies' CSR communications on consumer attitudes that can have significant implications for broader societal issues related to knowledge generation, distribution, and use. One major implication of this study is the importance of CSR communications in shaping consumer attitudes toward fast-fashion companies. Fast fashion has been a topic of increasing concern in recent years due to its negative impact on the environment and labor practices. As consumers become more aware of these issues, they are increasingly seeking out companies that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and social responsibility.

By examining the impact of CSR communications on consumer attitudes towards fast-fashion companies, this study can provide insights into how companies can effectively communicate their CSR efforts to their target audience. This, in turn, can contribute to more informed and responsible practices within the industry (Lichtenstein, Drumwright, and Braig, 2004).

Another implication of this study is the role of social media in shaping consumer perceptions of fast-fashion companies. In recent years, social media platforms have become a powerful tool for consumers to share information and opinions about companies and their products. This study can shed light on how CSR communications are being received and interpreted by consumers to influence consumers in a positive way (Nan and Heo, 2007).

From a broader societal point of view, the implications of this study extend beyond the realm of marketing and consumer behavior. The fast-fashion industry has a significant impact on the environment and on labor practices in developing countries. By promoting more sustainable and

socially responsible practices within the industry, this study can contribute to broader efforts to address global sustainability and social justice issues. Moreover, this study can also contribute to the ongoing dialogue around the role of corporations in society. As consumers become more socially and environmentally conscious, they are increasingly demanding that companies take responsibility for their impact on society and the environment. By examining the impact of CSR, communications on consumers' attitudes can balance their profit motives with their social and environmental responsibilities.

3.9 Research quality

According to Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019), there is an alternative criterion for evaluating a qualitative study because some address that qualitative researchers should assess their studies based on different criteria from those used in quantitative research. Trustworthiness and authenticity are the ones that are employed as two primary criteria for evaluating a qualitative study. Trustworthiness includes the following criteria; credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility or plausibility of the account that a researcher presented is crucial in determining its acceptability to others. In order to establish the credibility of findings, it is essential to follow good research practices and also to get confirmed by the members of the social world being studied that the researcher had accurately understood the social world. It can be difficult for a qualitative study to make judgments about the possible transferability of findings to other contexts due to its intensive and in-depth study. However, qualitative researchers can provide a thick description, that is rich accounts of the details of a culture, to give others a foundation to assess whether or not the research findings can be applied to other settings. Dependability ensures that complete records of each step in the research process, including problem formulation, selection of research participants, fieldwork notes, interview transcripts, and data analysis decisions, are kept acceptably, known as the 'auditing' approach. Last but not least, confirmability aims to ensure that the researcher has maintained objectivity by not overtly or manifestly allowing personal values or theoretical inclinations to influence the research process and findings. Authenticity in research has significant social and political implications. The researchers have a responsibility to accurately represent different perspectives

within a given social context. This enables participants to better understand their situations and empowers them to alter their circumstances (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019).

4. Empirical investigation

The following chapter provides the findings of the study conducted by the researchers. The chapter includes the responses to questions created based on the given theory, exploring each concept (transparent content, visual content, written content, attitude).

4.1 Transparent content

Drawing on the ABC model introduced by Solomon (2016), the interview questions were created to explore transparency in CSR communication. Concerning affective attitudes and transparency, most participants expressed skepticism regardless of the positivity or negativity of fast fashion companies' transparent CSR communication. For instance, Christine questioned, "I always think like what's the hidden intention behind it." Similarly, Lewis doubted the virtue of their motivations, stating, "I don't think their intention, like their motivations behind it, was pure." Victoria also pointed out "It feels like many companies lie in their marketing to be able to make more money." However, some acknowledged that their attitudes depend on the information revealed. While positive CSR information evokes feelings such as impressive, admiration, trust, connection, and satisfaction, negative CSR information, on the other hand, would lead to disappointment, distrust, and frustration. Anton conveyed a sense of encouragement towards positive CSR communication, stating, "I feel glad and encouraged by the positive aspects of their CSR efforts, such as sustainable sourcing or fair labor practices." He continued, "It gives me hope that they are making progress in addressing social and environmental issues." However, when it comes to negative CSR information, Anne strongly expressed annoyance, stating, "I get annoyed, ticked off." Anton questioned that "It makes me question their sincerity and commitment to responsible business practices."

As to the behavioral attitudes of the ABC model, the majority of participants (8 out of 10 participants) indicated a greater tendency to purchase clothes from companies that openly and honestly communicate their CSR efforts. Lewis emphasized the influence of honesty and transparency on purchase decisions, stating, "If a company is honest and transparent, then I am

more inclined to buy from that company.” Linda also firmly expressed a desire to support such companies, “I want to buy clothes from that company.” Some mentioned that they would establish more trust and loyalty toward the companies. Sara mentioned that “Increased loyalty, trust, and readiness to support the company through purchases are some behaviors that may follow from this.” Joseph further expressed a tendency to remain a client of the company, stating, “I think that my actual behavior is like keep being their client for a while.”

Finally, regarding the cognitive attitudes of the model, most participants highlighted that they would perceive the company as trustworthy and honest. Petter noted that “transparency leads me to perceive the companies as more trustworthy.” Lewis emphasized that “I would view them as being honest.” Furthermore, Sara noted that “it promotes a feeling of legitimacy and trust.” Several participants expressed respect towards the company. Christine stated, “I would respect the company for being honest.” This goes hand in hand with the statement by Anne who mentioned that “They'd have a little bit more respect like I would respect the company more altogether.” Furthermore, the majority of participants emphasized the importance of receiving honest information about the CSR activities of fast fashion companies. Linda emphasized trust deriving from such information, stating, “It is very important because I can trust the company thanks to the information,” while Christine appreciated the absence of deception, stating, “at least the company is not being deceptive.” Anton stressed the significance of honest CSR information, saying, “Honest information about CSR activities is crucial to make informed decisions as a consumer and to support companies that align with my values.”

4.2 Visual content

There were, basically, three broad different questions depending on visual content; positive, negative, and label information. The questions of visual content are also created based on the ABC model (Solomon, 2016).

First of all, from the perspective of positive visual information, the majority of participants claimed that positive visual information makes them feel such positive feelings towards the companies as happiness, excitement, and curiosity. Joseph strongly expressed that “I’m very visual, so if it’s positive information, I would feel like excitement and interested I would say,

very very interested, and I try to know more what they are doing, try to look carefully the details.” Saga also mentioned, “I feel happy because like I can see this company shows the behavior of the company.” In addition to that, Johan emphasized that the positive information leads him to the purchasing decision; “I think it is attractive so I would feel like buying the clothes from the company.” However, Linda and Lewis claimed that positive visual information does not evoke any emotions because Linda explained “I don't really care about it because I go to the stores to buy clothes that I want to wear so even if there is, it does not attract me.” Moreover, Edvin mentioned from the greenwashing perspective; “unfortunately, I know that the information given in these pictures and videos are not always matching with the reality.” This statement corresponds with what Christine said: “I think it’s neat to like kind of let the buyer have as much awareness as possible on the product so that like we are not deceived.”

Secondly, when it comes to negative visual information, the participants insisted that the negative one evokes a stronger emotion but is different such as sympathetic, worried, and sad than when disclosed positive one. These stronger emotions allow the participants to feel wanting to support the companies. Petter emphasized that “I feel sorry for them and wanna support them, if I see, for example, images of children working. I can know the reality I don't know through positive visual information.” The participants also felt that negative visual information is more attractive than positive one. However, only Johan insisted that positive information is more attractive than negative information; “I think positive one is much better than the negative one because I can understand what they have accomplished, you know?”

Third, when the participants were asked about behavioral attitudes when seeing label information on the clothes, several participants responded that label information plays an important role in purchasing clothes. If it writes CSR information, the participants are likely to have positive attitudes towards the companies; for example, Lewis stated: “If I know that it is sustainable or good work, it was made with without child labor or something and happiness Ohh yeah, I'm more inclined to buy it.” On the other hand, the other participants mentioned that it does not change their behavioral attitudes. Interestingly, Limda, Petter, and Saga do not even see the label. For instance, Petter mentioned with a recommendation that “I don't see labels to be honest like labeling one product alone does not change the attitude. It should be done with all products.”

Additionally, Johan intensely claimed that “It is unnecessary information because it is still paper and they are making a lot of papers for the labels you know...maybe they can make a recycle zone or place in the stores so that people can easily find where sustainable products are.” Label information also can be seen as a tactic of marketing since Cristine stated that “For me personally, I mean I don’t think I would buy more because like it’s still bad for children and the environment and stuff. But, I would feel like “Oh, wow they are a little bit trustworthy.” Therefore, labeling does not give sufficient information for building trust due to the aforementioned answer.

Lastly, more than half of the participants emphasized that they can make an accurate judgment of the information presented in visual content with the help of their own ability. Sara mentioned that “I do believe that, to a certain extent. It is crucial to remember that each person's perception and assessment of visual information will differ from one another and may be impacted by their own prejudices, background knowledge, and life experiences.” The aforementioned statement was supported by what Victoria said: “I believe that I can judge the information I receive from different companies through my experiences and knowledge in that area.” Conversely, the other participants cannot make an accurate judgment only through visual content. Saga mentioned that “I don't trust companies with visual information alone. But it's easier to believe if they put text and specific place names and numbers.” Additionally, Christine and Joseph emphasized the importance of the certification from others. For example, Christine mentioned that “I would need it to be kind of like stamped on or certified by a third party organization that works with CSR and other types of sustainability.” Interestingly, Anne stated that how easily she gets manipulated by the content as a marketing tactic since “I think no matter what they can just shape it however they want. They wanna show you wIft they think you wanna see.”

4.3 Written content

When it comes to written content, the author of this paper created the questions of the use of specific terms and information on websites and CSR reports based on ABC model (Solomon, 2016).

When exposed to such terms as strategy, policy, and management, the majority of participants responded that these terms evoke positive emotions; for example, trustworthy, security, and curiosity. Victoria mentioned that “I get a positive feeling, I get the feeling that the company is doing its job correctly and it gives me a positive image of the company.” However, Lewis mentioned that “I might also be thinking like Ooh I might get tricked again by these marketing people!” even if he feels trustworthy. Petter and Edvin feel skeptical about the companies since Petter mentioned that “I can't trust the information provided by the company alone” which is supported by what Lewis said. Additionally, when the participants encounter terms such as protect, conserve, and preserve, the participants express positive feelings; safe, curiosity, and optimistic. Joseph mentioned that “I would say hope because it's like they are showing to the world like we should all of us contribute to the environment and do really care about the environment.” On the other hand, Linda feels suspicious of the companies because she mentioned that “I would think they are just saying not doing anything...”

With regards to the attitudes towards CSR information on the websites, the majority of participants responded that they do not read the information on the websites. Johan mentioned that “They have a lot of texting. I do not want to spend time reading, you know.” Furthermore, Christine mentioned accessibility of the websites; “Another thing, I think that it's kind of their fault, not mine. You can't easily access the information because if you click on a link and then a link and then a link...” Interestingly, Anne seeks other websites instead of visiting the websites of companies in order to get WOM information; “If I wanna see if how bad a certain company is, I'll go to Reddit and look it up. You can see what people think about it and I just get my opinion off of that.” Conversely, several participants actively look for and read the information on the websites since it is important for them to know where they should spend their money on their clothes. For instance, Sara mentioned that “my desire to connect my beliefs with the brands I support, and my need for confidence that the business is acting responsibly are some of the specific behaviors that drive me to do this.” The information on the websites also influences the decision making process. However, Saga and Victoria prioritize the price which affects their decision making more than the information on the websites.

Finally, as for the attitude towards CSR reports, interestingly, most participants do not read the reports. Indeed, Petter and Joseph mentioned that “I haven’t read the reports.” Joseph continually said that “Because I think when you want to buy something, it’s not a report that you are looking for...” Obviously, the main reasons why the participants do not read the reports are because the reports are long and hassle to read. Joseph also mentioned that “it should be creative, simple and straight to the point. Just the main information... I don’t want to waste so much time on it.” Moreover, CSR reports do not influence the decision making process of the participants since they do not read the reports. However, Linda, Saga and Christine suggested that pictures, videos, and documentaries are likely to be preferred to long texts since the former seems more attractive than the latter. In particular, Linda said, “They should use SNS (Tiktok) for young people to expand the information.” Even though Johan does not read the reports, he mentioned that “I think all companies must have CSR reports. If they don’t, I feel like they are hiding something, you know.” Conversely, The other participants; Linda, Sara, and Anton read the reports and regard them as an important aspect in order to make a purchasing decision. Anton mentioned that “These reports provide in-depth information on the company's strategies, initiatives, and progress, allowing for a more comprehensive evaluation of their CSR efforts.”

4.4 Attitude

The ensuing themes brought to light a range of factors that impact attitude formation such as openness, emotional reactions, the significance of CSR initiatives, their consequent influence on behavior, the call for a comprehensive approach, and changes in attitudes over an extended period.

Influencing attitudes towards CSR communication, transparency has emerged as a crucial determinant. The participants in the study emphasized the importance of fast-fashion brands communicating transparently about their CSR and sustainability activities. Transparency was found to promote trust and have a positive impact on brand perception. For instance, Edvin expressed, "If fast fashion companies had transparent communications about their CSR and sustainability activities, I would have a more positive attitude towards the brand and even buy more from their products." This quote highlights the significance of transparent communication

in fostering positive attitudes and consumer intentions. The affective reactions of participants were found to be a crucial determinant in the formation of their attitudes regarding (CSR) communication. Victoria expressed, "Cognitively, I do believe that CSR initiatives are an important consideration when choosing fast-fashion brands." This quote emphasizes the cognitive significance of CSR initiatives as indicators of a brand's commitment to ethical practices, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility. A diverse range of emotions like curiosity, surprise, satisfaction, optimism, anger, skepticism, doubt, disappointment, and concern was observed. The efficacy and nature of communication tactics utilized by brands had a notable effect on the emotional states of the participants. Sincere and transparent modes of CSR communication were deemed indispensable for eliciting affirmative emotional responses. Anton discussed the emotional responses evoked by CSR communication, stating, "Positive and transparent CSR communication can evoke emotions such as trust, satisfaction, and support." This quote suggests that effective CSR communication can foster positive emotional connections with consumers, enhancing their attitudes toward the brand. The data analysis demonstrates how the written and visual content of CSR communication influences participants' attitudes, encompassing both cognitive and emotional dimensions.

The significance of CSR initiatives in influencing consumer attitudes toward fast-fashion brands is underscored by the study. CSR initiatives were perceived by participants as a sign of a brand's commitment to ethical principles, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility. Genuine CSR efforts were preferred over insincere ones, as supporting such brands was deemed crucial for promoting a more sustainable and responsible fashion industry. It was observed that credible and well-aligned CSR communication could motivate consumers to buy products and recommend them to others. Similarly, Victoria emphasized the importance of specific wording in CSR communication, stating, "Depending on the precise material and wording used in fast-fashion firms' CSR communications, my emotional reaction can change." This quote suggests that the choice of language in CSR messages can evoke various emotional responses, such as doubt, optimism, disappointment, contentment, and trust. Conversely, incongruent or insincere communication could drive consumers away from a brand and towards one with more robust CSR efforts. The study highlights the importance of aligning communication with actual CSR practices in shaping consumer behavior. Participants felt that fast-fashion companies should

take a holistic approach to CSR, encompassing responsible sourcing, fair labor practices, waste reduction, and community initiatives. Transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in CSR efforts were highlighted as vital factors in shaping consumer attitudes. The study also revealed that consumer attitudes towards CSR evolve over time due to new information, experiences, and evolving industry standards. This highlights the need for fast-fashion brands to continually adapt their CSR practices to meet changing consumer expectations for promoting a more sustainable industry holistically. Sara mentioned, "Different scenarios and different examples. So, if they show something like they are not contaminating the ocean, they are not doing something that is really bad, I feel like that can create something that can resonate in my head." This quote highlights the power of visual representations, such as images depicting environmental sustainability, in shaping consumers' perceptions and attitudes.

5. Analysis

Here, the authors answer the research question ‘How does the content of CSR communication influence consumers’ attitudes toward fast fashion companies?’

5.1 Coding table

Following 3.6 Data analysis, the authors of this paper conducted coding depending on each component shown below (Table 4). This table (Table 4) allowed the authors to understand and identify the patterns or themes better which later emerged as the building blocks of theory.

	ABC model		
OP components	Affective attitudes	Behavioral attitudes	Cognitive attitudes
Transparency	Excitement, connected, impressed, satisfaction, and encouragement. Suspicious, skeptical, fake, unbelievable, sad, disrespect, green washing, marketing tactic, transparency = sales, not emotion.	Sharing information, support, loyalty, trust, plan on changing, WOM, buying intention (positive ↑, negative ↓), positive attitudes. Skeptical.	Trustworthy, respect, information from others, community, third party confirmation, distribution. deceptive, buying clothes = priority.
Visual content	Neat, awareness, excited, appreciation, interested, joy, cool, attractive, optimism, skeptical. Angry, understanding the reality,	Trustworthy, extra benefit, buying intention, consciousness, decision making. Do not care, untrust, unnecessary.	Evidence, certification, 3rd party organization, right decision making, additional information. shabby, untrust, greenwashing,

	sad, sympathy, anxious, attractive.		manipulated, insufficient.
Written content	<p>Serious, support, security, curiosity, trustworthy, hope, Mistrust, tired, do not care.</p> <p>Hope, curiosity, responsible, relief, safe, happiness, suspicious greenwashing, do not care.</p>	<p>Do not read, hassle, bothersome, difficult accessibility, manipulation, do not care, waste of time.</p> <p>Other sources, accessibility, preference for visual information, do not care, long, lots of texts, waste of time, buying clothes = priority.</p>	<p>Availability (feel suspicious if they don't have), source critique, necessary, quality of information, decision making.</p> <p>Less impact, so much effort, and not fun.</p>
Attitudes	<p>Trust, better, curiosity, surprise, awareness, purchase intention, brand recognition, satisfaction, support.</p> <p>Skeptical, greenwashing.</p>	<p>WOM, trustworthy information, Label information, make the right decision, price & design = priority.</p>	<p>Green product zone, Tiktok, Social media, creative, working laws, simple, background of manufacturing, WOM, holistic approach.</p> <p>Straightforward, genuine, honest, actual numbers & place, verification, certification, acknowledgment of the damages, manufacturing process, active absorption, educational realm.</p> <p>1: transparency = honesty, trust 2: visual = impact, attention, tricky 3: written = effort, hassle</p>

Table 4: Open coding of the empirical data (own, 2023)

5.2 Significance of Transparency

The transparency of communication was found to be a significant aspect affecting the attitudes and behaviors of individuals towards fast fashion companies. Despite the fact that the majority of participants felt skeptical towards companies that transparently communicate their CSR, those who participated in the study emphasized that honest CSR communications built trust enhanced their connection to the brand and loyalty, and influenced their purchase intention. This is supported by the study conducted by Kang and Hustvedt (2014) explaining that transparency contributes to fostering a higher level of trust among consumers towards companies. Petter noted that “transparency leads me to perceive the companies as more trustworthy.” Furthermore, as explained in the theory, transparency influences consumers' purchase intention (Kang and Hustvedt, 2014) and consumers' advocacy for the organization (Kim and Lee, 2018). For example, Lewis emphasized, “If a company is honest and transparent, then I am more inclined to buy from that company.” Moreover, Joseph stated that “I think that my actual behavior is like keep being their client for a while.” Participants ultimately ranked transparency as the most important component over visual and written content in CSR communication. For instance, Anton stated that “Honest information about CSR activities is crucial to make informed decisions as a consumer and to support companies that align with my values.” Overall, it demonstrates that companies that provide transparent content in CSR communication is perceived as trustworthy, honest, and respectful by consumers, which in turn positively shapes their attitudes and buying intentions towards the companies.

5.3 Role of visual content

The significance of visual content in shaping people's attitudes toward fast fashion corporations was highlighted by the participants. The participants stated that pictures or images portraying CSR initiatives and sustainability actions had a considerable effect on their emotional reactions and confidence levels with regard to the brands. Moreover, videos through social media and documentaries are preferred among the participants since they are more attractive than written content and influence favorable attitudes toward the companies. However, even if the visual content is more attractive than the written one, it is difficult for customers to make an accurate

judgment only exposed to visual information. Participants feel manipulated and suspicious towards the companies if there is no additional information or evidence such as certification or third-party confirmation which will be discussed in 5.4. Including actual numbers and places in visual content also play an effective role in building trust which later creates a positive attitude; however, they are more involved in written content. This evidence emphasizes that visually appealing and credible representation of CSR initiatives have the most persuasive effect on participants' attitudes and emotional responses.

5.3.1 Attractiveness

The positive visual information and the label information attract customers' positive emotions toward the companies. Specifically, positive visual information influences positive attitudes toward companies (Wang, 2011) from optimistic perspectives such as curiosity, excitement, and pleasure. For instance, Joseph said that "I would feel like excitement and interested I would say, very very interested, and I try to know more what they are doing, try to look carefully at the details." With the disclosure of positive visual information, companies not only can attract consumers but also improve their awareness about CSR. Thus, this affective attitude results in positive attitudes towards the companies. Furthermore, the label information is also positively correlated with consumers' attitudes toward the companies (Pimentel Da Silva, 2021). The label information builds trustworthiness and positive behavioral attitudes toward the companies. Such as what Lewis said; "if I know that it is sustainable or good work, it was made with without child labor or something and be like Ohh yeah, I'm more inclined to buy it." However, there are still potential participants who do not read or care about the label information. Basically, the participants' priority is buying clothes; therefore, they do not read the small label information. In order to attract consumers, placing a sustainable clothes zone in the stores may be an advantageous way since Johan mentioned: "so that people can easily find where sustainable products are."

5.3.2 Sympathy

The negative visual information shapes consumers' sympathy or compassion towards not only the companies but also the issues wherein the companies are trying to improve. The negative visual information has stronger affective attitudes than the disclosure of positive visual

information (Chung and Lee, 2017). For example, the results showed that child labor visual information especially evokes consumers' sympathy and then leads them to support the companies. It is important for companies to give consumers an opportunity to understand the reality outside of the world, as Petter said, "I can know the reality I don't know through positive visual information." Thus, it provides consumers with an educational realm to some extent. Negative visual information plays a different role from positive visual information in influencing affective attitudes towards the companies. The affective attitudes that emerged from negative visual information formed favorable attitudes toward the companies as explained by Chung and Lee (2017). In other words, consumers' sympathy or compassion positively influences the attitudes towards the companies.

5.4 Potential of written content

Even though CSR information on websites and reports has the potential to shape consumer attitudes and influence decision-making, its effectiveness depends on factors such as readability, accessibility, and alignment with consumer expectations. Johan expressed annoyance at reading CSR information on websites, stating, "They have a lot of texting. I do not want to spend time reading, you know." Furthermore, Christine emphasized the difficulty of accessing the information, stating, "Another thing, I think that it's kind of their fault, not mine. You can't easily access the information because if you click on a link and then a link and then a link..." The authors received similar comments for CSR reports as well, as most participants said that they are long and hassle to read. Joseph pointed out that "I think when you want to buy something, it's not a report that you are looking for..." Although most participants would not actively seek for CSR information neither on websites or reports, Johan expressed skepticism, stating, "I think all companies must have CSR reports. If they don't, I feel like they are hiding something, you know."

When participants were exposed to terms such as "strategy," "policy," and "management," these terms led the majority of them to evoke positive emotions; for example, trustworthiness, security, and curiosity. These terms indeed established a positive attitude toward companies (Yu, 2020). Furthermore, participants expressed positive feelings; safe, curiosity, and optimism when

encountering terms such as “protect,” “conserve,” and “preserve.” As Saga answered “I feel that companies have a stance toward CSR. I would like to know more about the company.” Linda expressed herself and answered that the feeling of assurance would get higher because of the usage of these words, “I would feel like the company is responsible. I feel safe, like safer, and kind of buying from the company, more like relief.” However, some feel skeptical about these words since they can be marketing tactics that companies use to attract and convince more consumers. Additionally, most participants placed written content as the least important component out of transparency and visual content in CSR communication, since they need a lot of effort to read.

Balancing the information detail and accessibility of CSR information, using terms that resonate positively with consumers, and exploring alternative formats such as visual content or documentaries could enhance the effectiveness of CSR communication and better engage consumers, which as a result shape their attitudes toward fast fashion companies in a favorable way.

5.5 Third-party confirmation

The endorsement of third parties can augment favorable word-of-mouth commentary pertaining to a company’s CSR initiatives. As an important and trustworthy party corroborates the company’s CSR undertakings, it adds substantiation and legitimacy to the message. According to (Ho, Lado, and Rivera-Torres, 2017), different mechanisms can have an effect on forming consumer attitudes, such as persuasion, learning, and social influence. As participants stated that they could be more trustworthy towards fast fashion companies, in response to new information they gain from relatives and friends, or other word-of-mouth third-party confirmations. For example, this corresponds to what Anne mentioned; “I’ll go to Reddit and look it up. You can see what people think about it and I just get my opinion off of that.” Based on the answers from some of the participants, when consumers become aware of these confirmed CSR efforts, they are more liable to disseminate the encouraging news to their acquaintances, leading to a rise in optimistic word-of-mouth. Third-party validation bolsters the confidence and credibility associated with a firm’s CSR initiatives. This is supported by what Christine mentioned: “I

would need it to be kind of like stamped on or certified by a third party organization that works with CSR and other types of sustainability.” If consumers acquire information about a corporation’s CSR practices from an unbiased third party that they trust, it elevates their faith in its genuineness and reliability. Consequently, this enhances the probability of spreading such information through oral communication amongst their social networks. Third-party authentication serves as verification and attestation for a company’s CSR endeavors. When participants come across news that an independent company has assessed and supported a corporation’s CSR practices, it reinforces their conviction that the company is fully committed to social responsibility. This certification can reinforce customer beliefs in the firm’s CSR assertions, causing them to make positive recommendations through word-of-mouth publicity. Kang and Hustvedt, (2014) illustrate that transparent (CSR) communication could have an effect on the consumer's advocacy and attitude toward a brand, this could be seen in the answers from the participants. As Edvin, 23 responded to the role of transparent information “My motivation to change my attitude towards fast fashion companies is the other sourced information or when I saw other points of views regarding their CSR activities”. When asked about changes in attitudes based on new experiences and information, Edvin answered “I would even engage in word-of-mouth and tips my friends to buy from the company, my attitude would get more positive and I would trust the company even more, which would give me a better feeling when buying from the company”. Confirmation from third parties makes CSR activities more applicable and significant for consumers. When clients discover information regarding a business’ CSR tactics through sources other than itself, they attach fresh importance and interest to the message at hand, which leads to more discussions among them about the matter involved, consequently resulting in constructive word-of-mouth dissemination. Boosting trustworthiness, credibility, accreditation as well as party confirmation strengthens bonds between consumers thereby providing them with dependable data; something that the participants mean that they’re oftentimes inclined to share with others. Thus influencing favorable word-of-mouth comments on companies’ CSR initiatives positively. Consumers can experience good feelings like appreciation, trust, and confidence when they receive a third-party confirmation of a company’s CSR initiatives. As it was stated by participants “When I see that a company's CSR efforts are verified by an independent third party, it gives me a sense of trust and confidence in their claims.". This indicates that third-party confirmation increases the validity and plausibility of

CSR statements, strengthening the emotional bond between customers and the company. Regarding a company's CSR activities, consumers' ideas, opinions, and knowledge make up the cognitive aspect of attitudes. Consumers' cognitive processing is influenced by third-party confirmation since it gives them unbiased proof and details regarding a company's CSR initiatives. As one of the participants mentioned that "I appreciate it when a company provides evidence of its CSR claims because it helps me form a more informed opinion about its commitment to social responsibility.". Consumers view of the company's sincerity, and legitimacy in engaging in CSR is improved by this confirmation, which results in more favorable cognitive judgments.

5.6 New conceptual model

Based on the analysis of the building blocks of theory, the authors of this study made a new conceptual model shown below (Figure 2). As aforementioned in the 2.3 Conceptual model, the dotted line represents that the fast-fashion industry was focused on this study as a context but not closely correlated with the theory. Out of the building blocks of theory, Transparency should be in the first palace within CSR communication since all three; visual content, written content, and third-party confirmation also should express transparency. Moreover, most of the participants emphasized that transparency is the most important element within this context. Visual content is divided into attractiveness and sympathy which influence consumers' attitudes through emotions and the sight senses. Written content has two forms; availability and readability, which represent making consumers easily read the content which results in a positive attitude. Third-party confirmation is a new element that emerged from the theory and it has two elements; WOM and credibility. WOM directly influences consumers' positive attitudes. Indeed, third-party confirmation gives consumers the credibility of CSR information at first, and then the credibility influences consumers' positive attitudes.

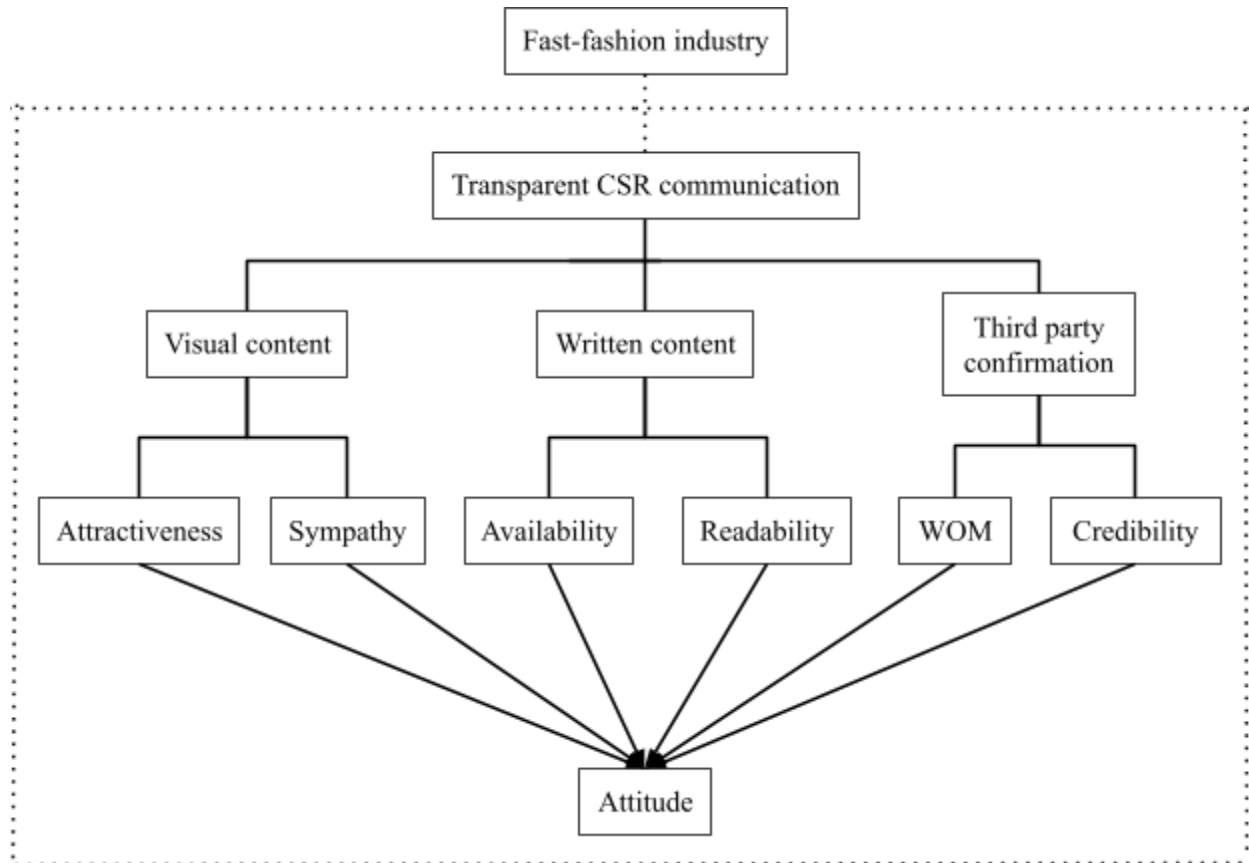


Figure 2: New conceptual model (own, 2023)

6. Conclusion

This chapter will present the conclusion of the study where the purpose of the paper has been answered. Furthermore, theoretical and practical implications of the findings will be provided.

6.1 General conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to explore the impact of CSR content communication on consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion companies. The data gathered in this research shows that transparent content followed by visual content and written content has the most significant impact on consumers' attitudes towards fast fashion companies. The majority of participants get greatly influenced by the level of transparency that companies provide. They emphasized that honest CSR communications built trust, respect, connection to the brand, and loyalty, and influenced their purchase intention. Despite the difficulty of accurately judging CSR information presented by visual content, it is acknowledged that visually appealing and credible representations of CSR

initiatives positively impact participants' attitudes and emotional responses. Both transparent and visual content of CSR communication significantly influenced participants' attitudes towards fast fashion companies. On the other hand, CSR written content given by websites or reports does not attract participants' attention because they are considered a hassle, and inaccessible, and first and foremost, consumers do not pay attention specifically to gathering CSR information when buying clothes from fast fashion companies. Therefore, most participants see written content as least important and thus it does not affect as much on their attitudes. When conducting the research, the importance of third-party confirmation was pointed out by a number of participants. Confirmation by the third-party enhances the credibility of CSR information, which in turn results in increased word-of-mouth intention. Hence, it is considered one of the important factors that have a significant impact on consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion companies.

6.2 Theoretical implications

This study was conducted qualitatively in order to explore what prior studies have found regarding the effects of the CSR communication content that fast fashion brands adopt, in regard to the consumer's attitudes. The results indicate that open and truthful communication has a noteworthy impact on how people view and interact with fast fashion businesses, although a few individuals were doubtful about firms that openly share their CSR efforts, others stressed the value of sincere CSR communication in building confidence, strengthening brand connections, cultivating loyalty, and affecting purchase decisions. Favorable visual details and labeling facts generate positive emotions in consumers such as wonderment, enthusiasm, and contentment which leads to a positive outlook. In contrast, unfavorable visual information inspires compassion or sympathy for both the brand and the concerns it aims to fix. The information on CSR that is made available on websites, and reports can have a significant influence on consumer attitudes and decisions. However, the effectiveness of such information depends upon its readability, acceptability, and conformity to consumer expectations. Third-party confirmation serves to magnify the favorable commentary related to a company's CSR undertakings. When a reputable and trustworthy entity validates a company's CSR initiatives, it contributes to reinforcing the message by providing it with added credibility and legitimacy. Transparency is a critical component of CSR communication within its theoretical framework, as illustrated

through written content, visual content, and third-party confirmation. The study participants also emphasized the importance of transparency in this context. Third-party confirmation, a newly introduced element to the theory, encompasses word-of-mouth and credibility. While word-of-mouth directly influences positive attitudes among consumers, CSR information's credibility plays a pivotal role in shaping such attitudes. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of developing effective CSR communication strategies that are aligned with consumer expectations, provide easily comprehensible information and make use of third-party endorsements to enhance credibility. Potential areas for future research include examining further factors that contribute to favorable customer perceptions and analyzing the influence of CSR communications on consumer attitudes within the fast fashion industry.

6.3 Practical implications

This thesis provides insights that are crucial for fast fashion companies to be aware of. For example, one of the key findings is the impact of transparent CSR communication, which plays a significant role in shaping consumers' attitudes. Following transparent communication, the companies should adopt both visual and written content with credibility representation which also influences consumers' attitudes. By understanding the impact of effective CSR content, companies can attract more consumers and foster positive attitudes among them. Furthermore, due to the widespread awareness of environmental and social issues within fast-fashion companies, consumers are more careful in making purchasing decisions. Thus, this thesis also indicates how companies can adapt their CSR communication strategies that align with consumer expectations in order to maximize the desired effect. From a practical perspective, this thesis ultimately contributes to increased awareness of the comprehensive impact of CSR content communication on consumers' attitudes, providing practical insights for fast fashion companies to guide the competitive landscape and encourage sustainable and responsible practices.

7. Limitations and future recommendations

This chapter will present the limitation of the study and recommendations for further research direction for a more comprehensive understanding of the research.

7.1 Limitations

Several limitations occurred when the authors of this paper were conducting this research. First of all, the participants of this study consisted of individuals who are from different countries such as Europe, the Middle East, Asia, the USA, and South America. Therefore, the answers from the participants may have cultural differences and variability to some extent. In addition to the international participants, several interviews were conducted in other languages (Swedish and Japanese) since the participants do not speak English fluently and one participant needed help with the translation. After conducting the interviews, the authors transcribed the interviews in their languages and then translated them into English; thus, there is variability between the authors due to the process of translation. Another limitation is the generalizability of convenience sampling. 12 participants were selected for this study; however, the findings from their interviews might be insufficient for achieving generalization. Thus, if the authors selected more participants, the findings would be different.

7.2 Future recommendations

The authors of this study have researched the impact of CSR content communication on consumers' attitudes towards fast fashion companies. It is crucial to acknowledge the challenges since they call into question previous research's accuracy and limit our understanding of how best to approach CSR communication effectively. To overcome these limitations, future studies must adopt more standardized approaches while being mindful of diversity among consumers' demographics since this helps to provide a comprehensive understanding of different perspectives. Furthermore, in order to ensure a more focused study, future researchers could specify the particular CSR initiatives that companies communicate through their communication channels which allows them to explore more focalized research. More methodological work including focused groups or observations would be needed in order to robustly capture the impact of CSR content communication on consumers' attitudes, which contributes to gathering more deep and rich insights into the research.

Appendix

Informed consent

Informed consent	
The title of this study:	
Request for informed consent:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I understand that the purpose of this study.• I understand that I participate in this study voluntarily.• I understand that I can quit or leave the interview for any reasons and anytime.• I understand that the data from the interview maintains confidential by the researchers.• I understand that the interview will be held at a quiet place so that strangers cannot overhear the conversation.• I understand that audio-recording will be employed in this study.• I understand that if I withdraw from this study, my data will not be used.	
Signature of participant: _____	Date: _____
Signature of researchers: Daniel Haj Mousa Manaka Oshita Mei Takahashi	Date: April 27, 2023

Image 1: Informed consent (own, 2023)

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