

Trends and Forms of Greenwashing in the Fashion Industry: A Systematic Review

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Introduction and Study Purpose. The fashion industry is an international, multibillion-dollar business sector focused on the design, production, and retail sale of clothing (S. Major & Steele, 2023). The industry has been criticized for creating fashion waste, polluting the environment, and lacking sustainability. According to Burns (2019), sustainability is “the ability to maintain or improve standards of living without damaging or depleting natural resources for present and future generations” (p. 3). Given how closely fashion is linked to consumer perceptions, the industry is rushing to get ahead to remain sustainable, fearing a potential backlash from environmentally conscious consumers (SCHAART, 2019). Environmentalist Jay Westervelt first popularized Greenwashing in 1986 (Guo et al., 2018; Wolniak & Habek, 2015) and used the term to criticize the hotel industry's misleading marketing for promoting towel reuse as environmentally friendly (Munir & Mohan, 2022). Greenwashing allegations have been leveled against H&M when the company claimed that some of its apparel is made from organic cotton and recyclable materials. H&M's entire business model is based on rapid production, sale, and disposal (Majláth, 2017). According to Lyon and Montgomery (2015), greenwashing cannot be precisely defined due to its multidimensional nature. Furthermore, greenwashing has been found in various incarnations, making it difficult for customers to detect the phenomenon (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020). Different fashion brands employ “greenwashing,” using sustainability's guise to attract environment-conscious customers. The fashion industry has a particular inclination and tendency to use greenwashing to handle environmental and sustainability challenges. However, a lack of evident research focuses exclusively on greenwashing in the fashion industry. Considering the above aspects, this study intends to examine trends and forms of greenwashing in the fashion industry through a systematic review.

Methodology. This research has acted upon the proceedings of a systematic literature review based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). PRISMA aims to assist authors in reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses more effectively (PRISMA, 2018). According to Moher et al. (2015), the predetermined qualifying criteria and methodical approach are specified in the protocol, which guarantees uniformity by the review team, responsibility, research ethics, and openness. Databases chosen for searching relevant literature reviews include Web of Science, Science Direct, Springer Link, SAGE Journals, Wiley Online Library, and Taylor & Francis Online. The search keywords are “Sustainability issues AND fashion industry, Greenwashing AND fashion industry,

Greenwashing AND fashion brand, Greenwashing AND green advertising, Greenwashing AND circularity, Greenwashing AND fashion brand transparency, Greenwashing AND eco-friendly label, Greenwashing AND fast fashion, Greenwashing AND fashion brand supply chain, Greenwashing AND social media.” Figure 1 shows the process of data collection and screening results. Finally, one hundred and three (n=103) articles from fifty-nine (n=59) different journals were included for systematic analysis.

Results & Discussions. Our study's results indicate no trends in greenwashing. Instead, varied types, methods, and traits common to the fashion sector can occur at the product, service, and firm levels. Based on our research content area, we provide a framework (figure 2) to identify greenwashing in the fashion industry. This framework demonstrates how many definition dimensions relate to unfavorable criticisms in each content area and, ultimately, define greenwashing in the fashion business. Furthermore, the reason for these various incarnations is that sustainability has no distinct definitions and depends on context. As a result, the fashion brand has the scope to define sustainability in their terms.

Conclusions & Future Research. Due to the implementation of different strategies causing varieties of the incarnation of greenwashing in the fashion industry, it will be considered one of the complex phenomena. A research agenda for future research scope is provided for further research on greenwashing in the fashion industry.

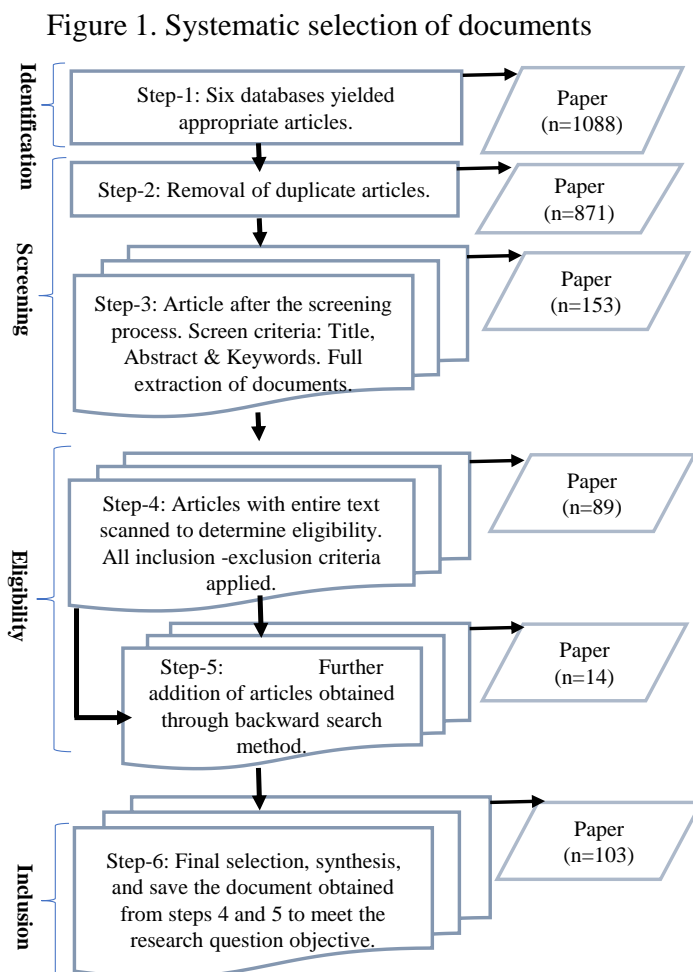
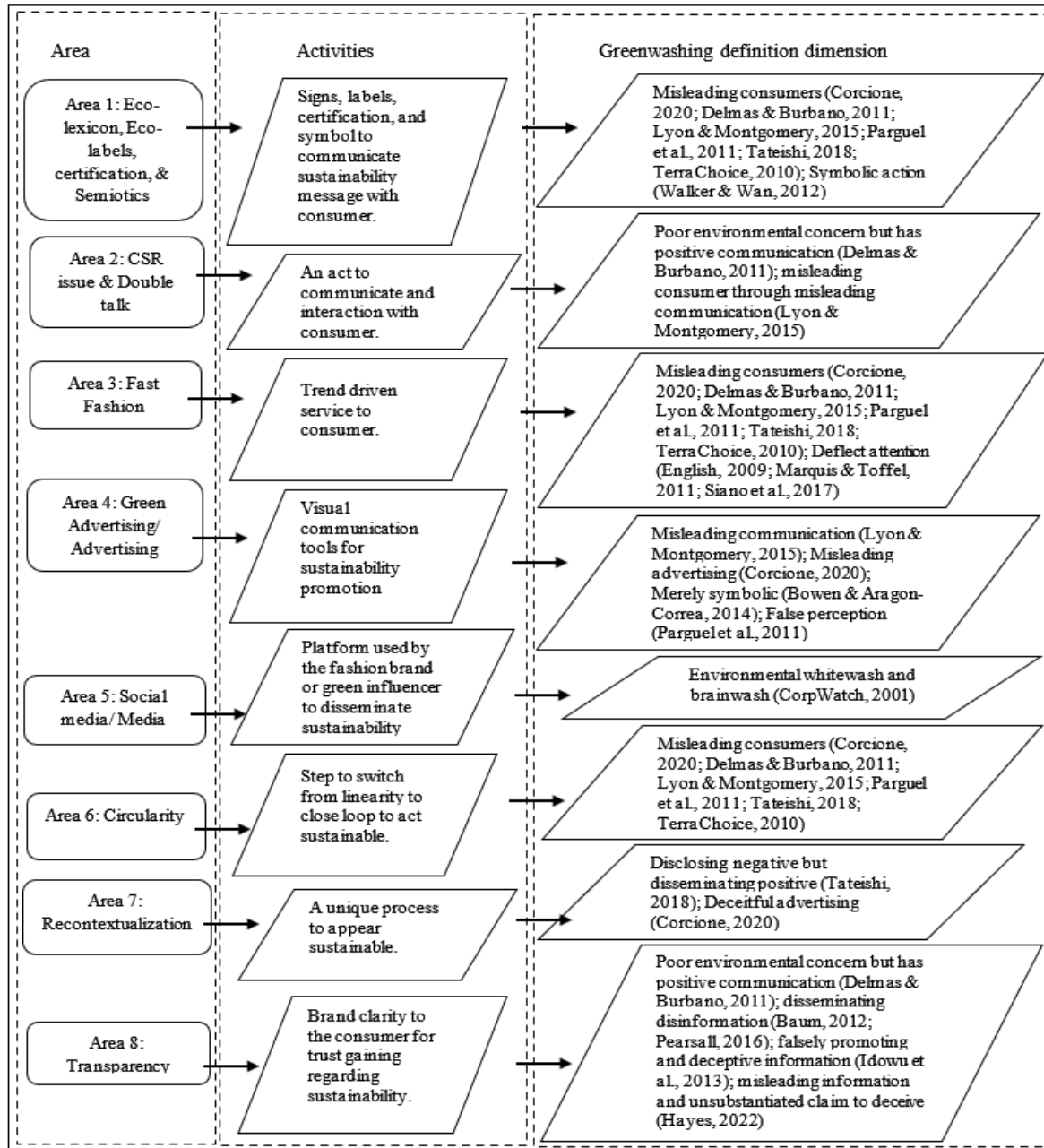


Figure 2. Framework to identify greenwashing in the fashion industry.



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