

**Promoting Sustainability and Transparency: A Case Study of
Fashion Revolution's Initiatives in the Fashion Industry**

By

Jocelyn Gabrielle Suryaputri

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DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

This senior paper was presented

by

Jocelyn Gabrielle Suryaputri

It was defended on

November 16, 2024

and approved by

Reviewer 1: 李宇軒 Yu-Hsuan Lee, Assistant Professor, Department of International Affairs

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Reviewer 2: 謝仁和 Ren-Her Hsieh, Associate Professor, Department of International Affairs

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Advisor: 林建宏 Daniel Lin, Associate Professor, Department of International Affairs

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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Jocelyn Gabrielle Suryaputri

Wenzao Ursuline University of Language, 2025

Abstract

The fashion industry has often been criticized for its harmful social and environmental practices. Fashion Revolution, through its initiative, the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI), has aimed to push the industry toward greater transparency and sustainability by evaluating fashion brands worldwide. This research examines the FTI from 2016 to 2023 to assess whether fashion brands have made meaningful progress in their transparency and sustainability efforts, and how Fashion Revolution's actions have influenced these changes. A qualitative content analysis examined FTI reports from 2016 to 2023 to identify trends and shifts. Additionally, Fashion Revolution's campaign and annual impact reports were analyzed to provide a comprehensive view of the industry's developments in transparency and sustainability practices. The research identifies three key trends between 2016 and 2023: increased attention to human rights and labor conditions, a stronger focus on environmental sustainability, and improved supply chain transparency. The fashion industry is gradually becoming more sustainable and transparent, but the progress has been slow. The study also shows that public pressure and advocacy campaigns by organizations have the potential to help the industry reduce overproduction and overconsumption, ultimately fostering better sustainability practices in the future.

Keywords: fashion industry, transparency, sustainability, Fashion Revolution

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INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry has faced criticism for neglecting and not being transparent about social and environmental issues. The industry is a major consumer of both human and natural resources leading to significant disruptions in both areas. Especially when fast fashion became a trend in recent years, according to Brewer's article about fast fashion, although fast fashion has made the style more accessible by offering affordable versions of high-end designs, it has also increased the industry's carbon footprint and encouraged a culture of waste.¹ Many fast fashion brands prioritize rapid production and low costs, leading to more disruption in labor practices and environmental sustainability. Some brands or companies may not be fully transparent about their human rights practices, environmental sustainability and supply chain to maintain brand images. According to the Fashion Revolution in their Fashion Transparency Index 2023, they believed that transparency is a critical first step toward achieving a sustainable, accountable, and fair industry by shedding light on opaque areas of the value chain where exploitation persists.² This means that transparency of fashion brands or companies in social and environmental issues is essential for systemic positive change in the fashion industry.

The fashion industry contributed to the disruption in environmental degradation. Textile production, a crucial part of fashion, demands significant resources and impacts the environment annually. According to Niinimäki's journal, the fashion industry emits 8-10% of global CO₂ emissions annually (around 4-5 billion tons), consumes about 79 trillion liters of water annually, and contributes

¹ Mark K Brewer, "Slow Fashion in a Fast Fashion World: Promoting Sustainability and Responsibility," *Laws* (2019), <https://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/laws8040024>. Page 3

² Fashion Revolution, *Fashion Transparency Index 2023* (2023).

significantly to industrial and oceanic microplastic pollution.³ The journal also stated that the industry generates millions of tons of textile waste annually, much of which is disposed of in landfills or incinerated, including unsold products.

Many dangerous materials are used in textile production causing environmental degradation. Cotton and synthetic fibers, the most used materials in production, have contributed to social and environmental degradation. According to La Rosa and Grammatikos' article in 2019, cotton farming contributes to soil degradation because of pesticides, water pollution, and chemical poisoning due to high levels of chemical inputs.⁴ Making just one cotton t-shirt requires a considerable amount of pesticide. Textile factories also consume large amounts of water. Synthetic fibers also contain many chemicals that might be dangerous for workers. Gupta and Gentry's research explained that synthetic fibers, like polyester production, involve hazardous chemicals that harm workers and the environment.⁵ When these chemicals enter waterways, they pollute water, endangering ecosystems and making it unsafe for consumption.

The fashion industry also contributed to human rights and labor practices concerns. The most impactful accident from these social consequences is The Rana Plaza accident in Bangladesh. The collapse of Rana Plaza in Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh, was devastating due to several violations and negligence. The building was converted from commercial to industrial use, further violating regulations. Despite cracks developing and warnings from the industrial police, the building owner

³ Kirsi Niinimäki et al., "The Environmental Price of Fast Fashion," *Nature Reviews Earth & Environment* 1, no. 4 (2020).

⁴ Angela Daniela La Rosa, and Sotirios A. Grammatikos, "Comparative Life Cycle Assessment of Cotton and Other Natural Fibers for Textile Applications," *Fibers* (2019), <https://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/fib7120101>.

⁵ Shipra Gupta, and J Gentry, "Evaluating Fast Fashion: Fast Fashion and Consumer Behaviour," *Eco-friendly and Fair* (2018).

and factory management ignored safety concerns and forced workers to continue working. According to Barua, Wiersma, and Ansary, the collapse on April 24, 2013, resulted in 1,134 deaths and over 2,500 injuries, and most of the victims were garment workers, who were young women.⁶ The tragedy underscored compliance and safety issues in Bangladesh's garment industry, attracting global attention. The incident raised significant questions about the safety and well-being of workers in the garment sector. It drew global attention to the unsafe working conditions and lack of labor rights in Bangladesh's garment industry, which produces clothing for many international brands.

As awareness of fast fashion's environmental and social impacts grows, consumers are increasingly demanding ethics and sustainability in brands. Fashion activism movement organizations, such as Fashion Revolution, founded in 2015, are at the forefront of advocating for transparency and sustainability in the industry. Its mission focuses on promoting transparency as essential for achieving a sustainable, accountable fashion sector. The Fashion Revolution seeks to drive policy, cultural, and industry changes. It advocates for legal reforms while raising public awareness of the fashion industry's social and environmental challenges. By researching the industry's impacts, Fashion Revolution leverages brands' competitive tendencies to make change. As their concrete initiative in pushing transparency among fashion brands, Fashion Revolution has an initiative called the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI). The FTI evaluates brands' public disclosure on human rights and environmental issues. The FTI focus on the biggest and most profitable brands and retailers because they have the biggest negative impacts on workers and the environment.

⁶ Uttama Barua, JWF Wiersma, and Mehedi Ahmed Ansary, "Can Rana Plaza Happen Again in Bangladesh?," *Safety science* 135 (2021).

Research Motivation

In recent years, there have been growing public concerns about how fashion brands handle issues like sustainability and transparency. Social-movement activism organizations like the Fashion Revolution have played an important role in pushing for changes in the fashion industry through their initiatives, including the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI). The FTI is a key tool that evaluates and ranks fashion brands based on their level of public disclosure in these areas. By analyzing this index from 2016 to 2023, this research was motivated by a desire to examine whether fashion companies have made real progress in their sustainability and transparency practices, and to explore how Fashion Revolution's initiatives, particularly the FTI, have influenced these changes.

Research Purpose

The primary purpose of this research was to examine the trends in sustainability and transparency practices within the fashion industry from 2016 to 2023, as reflected in the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI). This study also aimed to identify and analyze any improvements the FTI have made to pressure fashion brands to disclose sustainability and transparency efforts over this period. Additionally, this research seeks to explore how Fashion Revolution's initiatives, particularly the FTI, have influenced these changes and contributed to a shift toward greater accountability in the fashion industry. By investigating these aspects, this research will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the FTI as a tool for promoting transparency and sustainability in a sector often criticized for its unsustainable practices.

Research Questions

This research will focus on some research questions based on the topic:

- (1) What trends in transparency and sustainability practices have emerged in the fashion industry based on the Fashion Transparency Index from 2016 to 2023?
- (2) How have the assessment criteria in the Fashion Transparency Index evolved between 2016 and 2023, particularly in addressing environmental and social sustainability?
- (3) How has the Fashion Transparency Index influenced the fashion industry's transparency between 2016 and 2023?

Contribution

This research contributes to the understanding of transparency and sustainability practices in the fashion industry by examining the modest improvements observed from 2016 to 2023. While the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) indicates some progress, significant challenges remain in achieving meaningful change. This study highlights the critical role of collective action and the advocacy power initiated by the Fashion Revolution in promoting better transparency and sustainability among fashion brands. By analyzing the FTI, this research documents the slow pace of improvement and emphasizes the ongoing need for accountability and reform within the industry. Furthermore, this study aims to raise awareness about the pressing issue of overconsumption in fashion, encouraging consumers and stakeholders to rethink their purchasing habits. The findings will provide valuable insights for policymakers, fashion brands, NGOs, and consumers, fostering a dialogue around the necessity of responsible practices in creating a more sustainable fashion industry.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. Firstly, it did not analyze all the fashion brands and companies evaluated by the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI), which includes over 200 brands. Instead, the research focused on highlighting specific information and key findings that are relevant to the central research questions regarding transparency and sustainability practices. This selective approach may limit the comprehensiveness of the findings. Additionally, while the study examined trends in transparency and sustainability, it recognized that external factors influencing the fashion industry may not be fully captured, potentially affecting the interpretation of results.

Delimitations

This study focused on the journey of the Fashion Revolution's initiatives in promoting sustainability and transparency in the fashion industry, specifically through the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI). While other organizations play significant roles, this research emphasizes the Fashion Revolution's impact on brand accountability. It primarily evaluated the FTI's assessment criteria and methodologies for measuring sustainability claims, allowing for an in-depth analysis of how these criteria have evolved and influenced transparency in the sector. Although consumer awareness is acknowledged, the study did not explore consumer psychology or behavior change theories in depth. Additionally, the research was conducted within the contemporary context of the fashion industry, with limited exploration of historical or future trends.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of the Fashion Industry

Historical Evolution and Global Impact

Since its rapid expansion, the fashion industry has had significant social and environmental implications. Understanding its history and economic impact is crucial to grasp its importance fully.

Brief History of the Fashion Industry

The fashion industry has a history deeply connected with the rise of slop shops during Britain's Industrial Revolution. According to an analysis by Linden, during Britain's Industrial Revolution, an increase in slop shops that specialized in selling ready-made clothing in urban areas.⁷ The rise of slop shops significantly changed people's attitudes towards clothing. They began to seek ready-made clothing due to its easy accessibility, affordability, and convenience. The introduction of sewing machines also contributed to producing fabrics and garments on a larger scale and at a faster pace. The increased availability of cotton textiles further fueled the cultural shift. As detailed in Becker's book "Empire of Cotton," cotton played a crucial role in the evolution of the textile industry.⁸ The invention of the process of separating cotton fibers from the seeds increased the efficiency of cotton processing, making cotton cheaper and more widely available. People began to purchase mass-produced clothes according to their preferences, but this consumer-driven approach has led to overconsumption.

⁷ Annie Radner Linden, "An Analysis of the Fast Fashion Industry," (2016).

⁸ Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (Vintage, 2015).

Economic Significance Globally

The fashion industry can stimulate economic growth through various channels. The fashion industry drives growth in the textile industry by meeting consumer demand for affordable and trendy clothing, resulting in increased sales, profits for retailers, job creation across manufacturing and retail sectors, transportation, advertising, and logistics. Fashion has entered the online shopping era in recent years. According to Latifah's journal, researched that expansion into online markets can lead to increased sales, innovations in supply chain management, and new business models.⁹ Ultimately, contributing to economic growth by generating more job opportunities and stimulating overall economic activity.

The fashion industry is a worldwide business. The business model involves the trading of products and materials across countries. According to the Journal of Asian Economics, several nations, such as China, India, Indonesia, Italy, and many more, depend on fashion exports as a foreign exchange income and economic advancement.¹⁰ Exports of textiles, clothing, and fashion accessories help maintain trade balances and promote economic growth in exporting nations.

⁹ Asfi Lathifah et al., "Strategi Pemasaran Digital Dalam Industri Fashion Online: Sebuah Analisis Sistematis," *Nusantara Entrepreneurship and Management Review* (2024), <https://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.55732/nemr.v1i2.1177>.

¹⁰ Donatella Baiardi, Carluccio Bianchi, and Eleonora Lorenzini, "The Price and Income Elasticities of the Top Clothing Exporters: Evidence from a Panel Data Analysis," *Journal of Asian Economics* 38 (2015).

Challenges Facing the Fashion Industry

The fashion industry's rapid growth has raised concerns about its environmental impact. Despite its economic success, the industry faces environmental degradation and social impact challenges.

Environmental Impact

The negative impact of the environmental problem started from the production process. It is caused by the high volume of clothing produced, which leads to excessive resource consumption such as water, carbon emissions, and energy footprint, which is crucial for growing cotton and dyeing fabrics. Manufacturing emits significant carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, contributing to climate change. According to Conca's Forbes article in 2015, the fashion industry has harmful effects on water resources as the global fashion industry contributes 10% of the world's carbon emissions, driven largely by production and supply chain activities.¹¹ In addition, according to Nikimaki's journal, the fast fashion industry's manufacturing processes depend heavily on chemicals harmful to the environment, factory workers, and consumers.¹² These chemicals are used in dyeing, printing, and finishing textiles, resulting in water pollution when untreated wastewater is discharged into the environment.

The rapid change of fashion trends leads consumers to discard clothes quickly. According to Marianne Bau's thesis, the availability of cheap, disposable clothing encourages a culture of overconsumption, which influences consumers to discard garments after only a few wears, further the fashion industry's environmental

¹¹ James Conca, "Making Climate Change Fashionable - the Garment Industry Takes on Global Warming," *Forbes*, 2015, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesconca/2015/12/03/making-climate-change-fashionable-the-garment-industry-takes-on-global-warming/#18725edb79e4>.

¹² Niinimäki et al.

footprint.¹³ This behavior causes a big pile of textile waste in landfills, contributing to ecological degradation. Disposed clothing in landfills, where synthetic fibers can take centuries to decompose.

Ethical Concerns and Labor Practices

There have been growing concerns over the negative social impact of the fashion industry's supply chain. Social impacts that people are usually concerned with fashion supply chains include poor working conditions, worker exploitation, and human rights abuses. According to Hong Ngoc Nguyen's journal, in 2023, worker exploitation in the fast fashion industry will be widespread, driven by companies' relentless pursuit of cost-saving measures.¹⁴ One of the most pressing ethical concerns in the fast fashion industry is the incident of the famous Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh in 2013. Claimed over a thousand lives and served as a wake-up call regarding the poor working conditions faced by garment workers.

¹³ Marianne Bau, "Fast Fashion and Disposable Item Culture: The Drivers and the Effects on End Consumers and Environment," (2017).

¹⁴ Hong Ngoc Nguyen, "Fast Fashion & Greenwashing: The Worst Combination for Sustainability" (UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MESSINA, 2023), https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ngoc-Nguyen-456/publication/373632703_Fast_Fashion_Greenwashing_The_Worst_Combination_for_Sustainability/links/64f453f8827074313ff598ad/Fast-Fashion-Greenwashing-The-Worst-Combination-for-Sustainability.pdf.

Social and Environmentally Sustainable Initiatives

Effectiveness of Sustainability Initiatives

The effectiveness of sustainability initiatives in the fashion industry is a critical concern. This section focuses on the successful implementations of some previous initiatives, consumer perception and market responses.

Successful Initiatives with Policymakers

Several non-governmental organizations focus on promoting sustainability and transparency in the fashion industry. One such organization is Fashion Revolution, which has successfully implemented initiatives to improve working conditions, minimize environmental impacts, and promote corporate accountability.

The Fashion Revolution's success in making EU legislation proposes a ban on products made with forced labor. Fashion Revolution's advocacy extends to addressing forced labor issues, particularly those linked to the fashion industry in the Uyghur region. According to Fashion Revolution Impact Report 2021/2022, through lobbying efforts directed at G7 leaders, Fashion Revolution has raised awareness and prompted action on this critical forced labor issue.¹⁵ As a result, the European Union has proposed legislation banning products made with forced labor from its market. This comprehensive proposal covers all domestically produced or imported products and empowers Member States to assess and address forced labor risks through due diligence mechanisms. By championing this proposal, Fashion Revolution contributes to the global effort to combat forced labor and uphold human rights in supply chains.

¹⁵ Fashion Revolution, *Fashion Revolution Impact Report 2021/2022* (2022), https://issuu.com/fashionrevolution/docs/fr_impactreport_2022_final.

Consumer Perception and Market Response

Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of environmental and ethical issues in the fashion industry. As a result, they desire more sustainable options. This is based on the article by Hur and Faragher-Siddall, who examined consumer perceptions and market responses to sustainable fashion consumption, focusing on young consumers in the UK.¹⁶ However, there is a difference between consumer perception and market responses, especially concerning the effectiveness of current eco-labelling and the transparency of sustainability claims. According to Neumann and Martinez's journal article, this indirectly points to the market response that needs to be improved in fully addressing consumers' concerns regarding sustainability in the fashion industry.¹⁷ This inadequacy has resulted in the need for more eco-literacy among consumers and distrust in the fashion industry's sustainability claims. This, in turn, hinders the consumer's ability to make informed, sustainable fashion choices.

¹⁶ Eunsuk Hur, and Eleanor Faragher- Siddall, "Young Consumer Perspectives on Government Policy Interventions for Sustainable Fashion Consumption in the Uk," *Fashion Practice* 14 (2022).

¹⁷ Luisa M Martinez Hannah L. Neumann, Luis F. Martinez, "Sustainability Efforts in the Fast Fashion Industry: Consumer Perception, Trust and Purchase Intention," *Sustainability Accounting Management and Policy Journal* (2021), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1108/SAMPJ-11-2019-0405>.

Transparency Efforts and Challenges

Transparency in the fashion industry is vital for ensuring ethical practices and worker rights. Transparency challenges, including inconsistent regulations and low consumer awareness, still need to be addressed.

Transparency Reporting Efforts

Supply chain transparency in fashion is crucial for upholding workers' rights and fostering ethical practices. An initiative called Transparency Pledge was initiated by a coalition of civil society groups such as the Clean Clothes Campaign, Human Rights Watch, IndustriALL Global Union, Fashion Revolution, Worker Rights Consortium, and International Labor Rights Forum, advocating for transparency in the garment industry. Aims to establish a common standard for supply chain disclosures or transparency in the fashion industry.

The Transparency Pledge report analyzed the transparency of many fashion brands. Their methodology involves collecting data from participating companies on their manufacturing sites, analyzing it against set criteria, evaluating disclosure practices, and categorizing companies by compliance level. According to their 'FOLLOW THE TREND' transparency report in 2017, companies must publish detailed factory information, such as manufacturing sites, including names, addresses, parent companies, product type, and worker numbers.¹⁸ The 2017 Transparency Pledge assessment found that only 17 of 72 fashion brands fully complied by disclosing their supply chains. Meanwhile, 29 brands are improving, 9 responded without committing to future disclosure, and 17 have yet to respond to the transparency call.

¹⁸ Transparency Pledge, *Follow the Thread: The Need for Supply Chain Transparency in the Garment and Footwear Industry* (2017), https://transparencypledge.org/follow_the_thread_april_2017.pdf.

The Transparency Pledges still face some challenges. Although some progress has been made, with 17 companies fully complying with the pledge and demonstrating good transparency in their supply chain disclosures, there still needs to be a significant gap in transparency efforts. Many fashion companies are still improving their disclosure practices, indicating a positive trend toward increased transparency. However, nine companies have responded without committing to further transparency initiatives, and 17 have yet to respond, highlighting the need for continued advocacy and pressure for greater transparency and accountability in the garment industry.

Barriers to Achieving Full Transparency

The fast fashion industry faces several challenges to achieving full transparency. The main challenge is consistent and comprehensive regulations across all countries. Without strict guidelines and enforcement, companies may prioritize profits over ethical practices and transparency and have little incentive to disclose information about their manufacturing processes, including sourcing practices, labor conditions, and environmental impact. According to a sustainability article by Fraser and Van der Ven, sustainability scandals alone are insufficient to motivate firms to increase transparency in their supply chain; transparency is only likely to increase when companies align with domestic regulations on appropriate corporate conduct.¹⁹ In the absence of oversight, companies may prioritize their profits over the well-being of workers in their supply chain.

¹⁹ Hamish van der Ven Eve Fraser, "Increasing Transparency in Global Supply Chains: The Case of the Fast Fashion Industry," *Sustainability* (2022).

Critiques and Controversies

The fast fashion industry receives many critiques from consumers and societal groups, mainly about its production process causing environmental degradation and social workers' exploitation.

"Greenwashing" Accusations

Greenwashing involves companies making exaggerated or misleading claims about the environmental benefits of their products or practices. A 2021 European Commission press release highlighted many fashion brands and retailers engage in greenwashing by overstating their sustainability credentials without providing evidence.²⁰ To tackle this issue, the EU developed two legislative initiatives to prevent greenwashing and ensure the credibility of sustainability claims. This problem is not limited to the EU; similar issues have been observed in the UK, the Netherlands, and the United States. Many brands claim their materials' environmental friendliness without sufficient evidence. For instance, around 40% of sustainability claims on 500 websites across various sectors in the UK were found to be potentially misleading to consumers, according to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) in Fashion Transparency Index 2022.²¹ The CMA responded by publishing the Green Claims Code guidance for businesses. Similarly, the Norwegian Consumer Authority (NCA) warned clothing retailers about economic sanctions for making "misleading" environmental claims. These efforts, along with initiatives like Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition and Substantiating Green Claims, aim to combat greenwashing and false sustainability claims in the textile industry.

²⁰ European Commission, *Screening of Websites for 'Greenwashing': Half of Green Claims Lack Evidence* (Brussels: European Commission and National Consumer Authorities, 2021).

²¹ Fashion Revolution, *Fashion Transparency Index 2022* (2022), https://issuu.com/fashionrevolution/docs/fti_2022.

Economic Feasibility and Scalability Concerns

Economic feasibility and scalability are significant concerns when addressing greenwashing and implementing sustainability initiatives. According to Oracle magazine's article about sustainability challenges, companies may face challenges in adopting sustainable practices due to potential increases in production costs associated with environmentally friendly materials, processes, or certifications.²² These additional costs can impact profit margins and competitiveness, especially for smaller businesses or those operating in price-sensitive markets.

Scalability refers to the ability of sustainable practices to be implemented and expanded across the entire supply chain or industry. While some companies may successfully adopt sustainable practices on a significant scale, replicating these practices across more extensive operations or entire industries presents challenges. Technological limitations, resource availability, regulatory requirements, and consumer demand variations can hinder the scalability of sustainable solutions.

²² Amber Biela-Weyenberg, "Sustainability Challenges in the Fashion Industry," *Oracle.com*, 2023, <https://www.oracle.com/retail/fashion/sustainability-challenges-fashion/#:~:text=The%20factors%20complicating%20the%20industry's%20move%20toward,waste%20properly%2C%20and%20using%20environmentally%20friendly%20materials.>

Foundation and Mission of Fashion Revolution

Establishment and Core Objectives

In 2013, the tragic collapse of the Rana Plaza building, a garment factory in Bangladesh, acted as a starting point for change within the global fashion industry. This devastating event exposed the lousy working conditions and lack of safety protocols prevalent in the industry, leading to the establishment of the Fashion Revolution movement. The organization was born to address and reform the issues of exploitation, environmental degradation, and the absence of transparency in the fashion sector.²³

The Fashion Revolution organization has since advocated for a systemic overhaul of how clothes are produced, purchased, and disposed of. Their core objective is to ensure that fashion production respects people and the planet by prioritizing transparency, sustainability, and ethical practices. It also encourages consumers to question where their clothes come from and under what conditions they were made. Through various campaigns, educational programs, and collaborative projects, the Fashion Revolution has made significant efforts to raise awareness about the importance of worker rights and environmental standards. It has successfully mobilized a global community of designers, workers, retailers, and consumers who are united in their demand for a fairer, safer, and more transparent fashion industry. By pushing for legislative changes and promoting ethical practices, the Fashion Revolution continues to drive forward a more sustainable and just fashion future.

²³ Fashion Revolution, *Fashion Revolution 2019 Impact Report* (2019), https://issuu.com/fashionrevolution/docs/fashionrevolution_impactreport_2019_highres.

Educational Programs and Policy Development

Fashion Revolution promotes sustainability within the global fashion industry, focusing on education, advocacy, and collaboration. The Fashion Revolution has been actively involved in policy development, per the 2021/2022 Fashion Revolution Impact Report. They have lobbied leaders of the G7 to take concrete measures to combat forced labor in the Uyghur region, urged the British government to ban the sale of washing machines without fitted microfiber filters, and written to the European Commissioner for Internal Markets to call for the development of measures to break the vicious cycle of cheap, synthetic material reliance in the EU.²⁴ Finally, the Fashion Revolution has petitioned for world leaders at COP26 to recognize fashion's impact on reaching net zero and climate.²⁵

The Fashion Revolution encourages shared knowledge and collective action toward a more responsible fashion ecosystem. As part of their efforts, the Fashion Revolution has co-led an initiative with the Fair Trade Advocacy Office to create a broad coalition of more than 65 civil society organizations across Europe that was formed to respond to the publication of the EU Textile Strategy. They also contributed to workshops organized by the European Commission on the social aspects of the European Green Deal and green transition. Lastly, they have contributed to working groups that aim to influence the UNFCCC Fashion Industry Charter on Climate Action trajectory and the UNECE Traceability & Transparency standards. Their efforts have significantly influenced consumers and promoted transparency, sustainability, and a shift towards circular economy principles, making a lasting

²⁴ Fashion Revolution, *Fashion Revolution Impact Report 2021/2022*.

²⁵ Fashion Revolution, *Fashion Revolution Impact Report 2021/2022*.

impact on the fashion industry towards a more ethical and environmentally conscious future.

Fashion Revolution Initiatives

Fashion Revolution annually release a global campaign called Fashion Revolution Week. In 2024, this global campaign was held on April 15-24, 2024. It's a week of action intended to educate and inspire new Fashion Revolutionaries worldwide through events, interactive workshops, and a unique Mend In Public Day on April 20, 2024. Fashion Revolution's objectives during this week focus on promoting industry-wide transparency and sustainability. They aim to address pressing issues such as human rights abuses, environmental degradation, and overproduction within the fashion supply chain.

To support the objectives of Fashion Revolution Week 2024, they held exhibitions and workshops around the world. On their website, Fashion Revolution shared their activities during this global campaign week. For example,

1. Fashion Revolution Italy hosted a walking tour through Venice to celebrate 10 years of Fashion Revolution,
2. Fashion Revolution New Zealand put on an exhibition showcasing designers reimagining fashion waste,
3. Fashion Revolution South Africa held an interactive film screening of Fashion Reimagined,
4. Fashion Revolution Philippines hosted a clothing swap, saving 183 clothing items from landfill,
5. Fashion Revolution Euskadi set up an interactive installation to show passersby the impact of their clothes,
6. Fashion Revolution Scotland visited the Scottish Parliament to talk to MSPs about ethical fashion,
7. Fashion Revolution India celebrated traditional craft with their Godhadi-making workshop,
8. Fashion Revolution Brazil exhibited to celebrate 10 years of their movement,
9. Fashion Revolution Mexico held a panel discussion discussing gender equality in fashion,

10. Fashion Revolution Kenya hosted a film screening and panel discussion exploring the Kenyan fashion industry.

The ongoing and famous campaign, #WhoMadeMyClothes?, was also launched during Fashion Revolution Week in the initial year. In 2021 they marked 8 years since the Rana Plaza factory collapse tragedy, through this campaign, Fashion Revolution encourages consumers to question the brands about their production processes and materials. They called on citizens everywhere to demand greater transparency from brands by asking #WhoMadeMyFabrics in social media and emails.

Fashion Revolution provides and supports a rating system. The Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) by Fashion Revolution is a rating system that was created to assess brands' transparency in terms of sustainability and ethical practices.²⁶ This index assesses publicly disclosed information about the efforts of major fashion brands regarding human rights and environmental issues. This initiative aims to disclose fashion brands that engage in greenwashing, which can be misleading and harmful to the environment. The Fashion Transparency Index initially evaluated 40-100 fashion brands, however in recent years the Fashion Transparency Index made up of 200-250 of the world's largest fashion brands. The reason for this focus is the Fashion Revolution's argument that these also have the biggest negative effect on workers and the environment, the Fashion Revolution believes they should bear the biggest responsibility to change.²⁷ These brands are then ranked according to their

²⁶ Fashion Revolution, *Fashion Transparency Index 2023*.

²⁷ Fashion Revolution, *Fashion Transparency Index 2023*. Page 5

public disclosure levels on human rights and environmental policies, practices and impacts in their operations and their supply chains.

The Fashion Transparency Index checks what brands know and openly share about their impact on people and the environment throughout their supply chains. Brands need to publicly share important details about their human rights and environmental policies, practices, and progress. This information should be available on the brand's or parent company's website or in other places specified by Fashion Revolution, such as in annual reports. According to the Fashion Transparency Index 2023, the index focuses on public sharing, and transparency, not on the actual impacts, fact-checking the claims, or rating the brand's ethics or sustainability.²⁸ The idea is that if brands are working on these issues, they should be willing to talk openly about it, while brands that don't want to change would likely hide their actions. The index doesn't include information posted on social media or shared in stores, as it only considers publicly available information verified by the brands themselves, with the reason is that Fashion Revolution excludes anything the brands claim to be doing behind the scenes. The research is done via a questionnaire that is sent to the targeted major fashion brands, and the scoring will be done by the Fashion Transparency Index's team while also looking at the publicly available information.

²⁸ Fashion Revolution, *Fashion Transparency Index 2023*. Page 36

Theoretical Foundations of Fashion Revolution's Transparency Goals

The theoretical foundations of Fashion Revolution's initiatives can be seen in how they promote and advocate for transparency. Stakeholder Theory and the concept of Ethical Consumerism to explore how transparency initiatives like the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) impact the fashion industry's approach to sustainability and accountability. Together, these theories provide insight into why transparency is important and how it affects both companies and consumers.

Stakeholder Theory suggests that businesses are not only responsible for making profits but also for considering the interests of all groups affected by their actions, known as stakeholders. According to Brin and Nehme's journal in 2019, they explained that these stakeholders include not only shareholders but also employees, suppliers, customers, communities, and the environment.²⁹ This theory challenges businesses to balance their financial goals with their duties toward these groups. In the context of the fashion industry, Stakeholder Theory is especially relevant. Many fashion companies rely on complex supply chains, involving numerous stakeholders at different levels. For instance, workers in garment factories, the communities around production sites, and even the environment itself are directly impacted by a brand's production choices.

The Fashion Revolution initiatives, especially the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) align well with Stakeholder Theory by promoting transparency in how fashion brands operate, especially concerning worker welfare and environmental sustainability. By encouraging brands to disclose their practices, FTI supports the idea

²⁹ Pavlo Brin, and Mohamad Nehme, "Corporate Social Responsibility: Analysis of Theories and Models," *EUREKA: Social and Humanities* (2019), <https://dx.doi.org/10.21303/2504-5571.2019.001007>.

that companies should prioritize their broader responsibilities to all stakeholders, not just profits. This alignment between Stakeholder Theory and FTI's goals makes the theory a useful lens for analyzing how FTI pushes brands toward ethical and transparent practices. Stakeholder Theory suggests that companies adopting transparency not only gain trust from their consumers but also build stronger relationships with their employees, suppliers, and the communities they affect. This broader approach can, over time, lead to more responsible and sustainable business practices across the industry.

On the other hand, Ethical Consumerism is a concept that focuses on the power consumers hold to bring about social change through their purchasing choices. According to Barry and Macdonald's journal, ethical consumerism influences consumers to support companies that align with their values, such as sustainability, fair labor practices, and environmental care.³⁰ By choosing to buy from responsible brands and avoiding those with unethical practices, consumers can encourage companies to adopt better policies.

The Fashion Revolution's Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) plays a key role in enabling ethical consumerism. By providing transparency scores for brands, the FTI gives consumers the information they need to make informed choices. This transparency allows consumers to select brands that openly disclose their impacts on workers and the environment, pushing companies to improve their practices to attract ethical consumers. Ethical consumerism highlights the idea that consumer pressure can influence companies to act more responsibly. The FTI taps into this by making information accessible to the public, creating accountability for brands that are not

³⁰ Christian Barry, and Kate Macdonald, "Ethical Consumerism: A Defense of Market Vigilantism," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (2018).

meeting sustainability standards. Ethical Consumerism and FTI share the same goal: encouraging the fashion industry to prioritize ethical and sustainable practices by making these practices more visible to consumers. With the FTI, consumers become informed advocates who demand higher standards, supporting the idea that market choices can drive social change. This approach adds to the understanding of how consumer actions can lead to a more responsible fashion industry.

The Fashion Revolution's campaign, #WhoMadeMyClothes, also align with the ethical consumerism concept. The campaign empowers consumers to question brands about the origins and ethical standards of their products, pushing for greater transparency in the supply chain. This aligns closely with Ethical Consumerism, which advocates that consumers can drive social change through informed purchasing decisions. #WhoMadeMyClothes brings this concept to life by urging consumers to question brands about the origins of their products. When consumers ask this question, they signal to brands that they value transparency and ethical practices, creating pressure for companies to disclose more about their production processes. This campaign empowers consumers to become advocates for fair labor and sustainable practices by making the conditions of garment workers visible, fostering a sense of connection between consumers and workers. By amplifying consumer voices, #WhoMadeMyClothes aligns with the belief that market choices can promote social justice, transforming purchasing decisions into a powerful tool for demanding accountability and respect for human rights across the fashion industry.

Research Methods

Overview of Related Studies

Academic research on sustainability and transparency in the fast fashion industry has predominantly focused on consumer behaviors and designers' challenges. However, there is a gap in the role of sustainability-focused activist organizations since very little research has been done on them.

General Trends in Research Methodology

The quantitative approach is usually used by many researchers. The survey questionnaire was used to collect consumer awareness, preferences, and purchasing behaviors regarding sustainable fashion practices. For example, a journal article from Zdenka Musova et al. provides valuable data from their survey of 468 respondents in Slovakia on consumer attitudes towards eco-friendly products, and willingness to pay premium prices for sustainability.³¹ Many researchers use a quantitative approach and questionnaire survey to dig deeper into consumers' perspectives. For example, a journal article from Patrizia Gazzola et al. uses a questionnaire of quantitative approach from 2424 respondents to see how younger generations care more about sustainability.³² Their survey shows that the younger generation is aware of sustainability making it key for fashion brands to stay competitive.

Qualitative methods, especially interviews also used by many researchers. For example, a journal article from ACJ Schultz investigates how consumers perceive the legitimacy of fashion brands with varying levels of transparency by interviewing 20

³¹ Zdenka Musova et al., "Consumer Attitudes Towards New Circular Models in the Fashion Industry," *Journal of Competitiveness* 13, no. 3 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.7441/joc.2021.03.07>.

³² Patrizia Gazzola et al., "Trends in the Fashion Industry. The Perception of Sustainability and Circular Economy: A Gender/Generation Quantitative Approach," *Sustainability* 12, no. 7 (2020), <https://www.mdpi.com/680560>.

Dutch consumers to explore their perceptions of legitimacy.³³ Another example from research by Samuelson and Ericsson, use an interview approach to examine how transparency information influences consumers' perceptions of value when buying fashion products.³⁴ So, the qualitative interview approach was used by researchers to gain deeper insights into consumer attitudes, behaviors, and decision-making processes related to transparency and legitimacy in the fashion industry.

Additionally, many researchers also combine quantitative and qualitative research allowing for statistical analysis to identify trends and correlations within large datasets, aiding in formulating evidence-based recommendations for industry stakeholders regarding sustainability. For example, a journal article from Marta Blazquez et al., used this mix-methods approach to identify the correlation between sustainable knowledge and consumer perspectives.³⁵ Their quantitative study examines how sustainable knowledge, both environmental and ethical, affects consumer attitudes, behavioral control, subjective norms, and intentions. Meanwhile, the qualitative study offers deeper insights into these relationships.

³³ ACJ Schultz, "Legitimacy and Transparency in the Fashion Industry-an Empirical Research into the Legitimacy Profiles of More Transparent and Less Transparent Fashion Brands as Perceived by Consumers" (2019), https://studenttheses.uu.nl/bitstream/handle/20.500.12932/35616/Schultz_Legitimacy%20and%20transparency%20in%20the%20fashion%20industry_2019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

³⁴ Alice Samuelsson, and Emma Ericsson, "The Meaning of Transparency: A Qualitative Study of How Transparency Information Contributes to Consumer Value Perceptions in the Purchase of Fashion Products," (2021), https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/handle/2077/69018/gupea_2077_69018_1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

³⁵ Marta Blazquez et al., "Consumers' Knowledge and Intentions Towards Sustainability: A Spanish Fashion Perspective," *Fashion Practice* 12, no. 1 (2020), https://pure.manchester.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/133749879/AAM_Revised_Sustainability_Fashion_Practice.pdf.

Methodology Justification for Current Study

This study will use qualitative content analysis, with a focus on investigating Fashion Revolution's initiatives for enhancing sustainability and transparency in the fashion industry. Content analysis allows for a systematic examination of the organization's evaluation strategies and campaign effectiveness.

Selection and Adaptation of Methods

Content analysis is an ideal method for this research because it allows for a deep exploration of the trends and patterns in the fashion industry's transparency and sustainability efforts. Focusing on the context and meaning within the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) reports and related materials, helps uncover the underlying themes and progress made by brands toward achieving sustainability and transparency over time. According to Roller's article, the content analysis method is adaptable to various content types, such as text and visuals.³⁶ So, this method is essential since this study draws from diverse sources, including the Fashion Revolution's FTI, annual impact reports, campaign materials, and documentation. Additionally, content analysis ensures that the research remains rigorous and reliable by emphasizing quality principles like scope, sampling, and reflexivity.³⁷ Overall, it offers the flexibility to explore the complexities of the industry's evolution, while still providing a clear and structured approach to understanding these changes.

³⁶ Margaret R Roller, *A Quality Approach to Qualitative Content Analysis: Similarities and Differences Compared to Other Qualitative Methods*, vol. 20, *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (2019).

³⁷ Roller.

Conclusion and Implications

This study builds on insights from previous research to explore Fashion Revolution's sustainability and transparency efforts in fast fashion. While quantitative methods reveal consumer behaviors, content analysis of organizational communications enhances understanding of the initiatives to drive changes in the fashion industry. Future research should focus on qualitative studies of activist organizations and communication strategy exploration to address industry challenges comprehensively.

Summary of Methodological Insights

The literature review reveals key methodological insights that inform the current study on Fashion Revolution's initiatives for sustainability and transparency in the fast fashion industry. Previous research has predominantly utilized quantitative methods like surveys to understand consumer behaviors and preferences related to sustainable fashion practices. These studies offer valuable insights into consumer attitudes, willingness to pay for sustainability, and the impact of marketing strategies. Additionally, qualitative research, mainly through content analysis of publicly available materials has further complemented qualitative findings by uncovering recurring themes and messaging strategies employed by sustainability-focused organizations like Fashion Revolution. Overall, the literature underscores the importance of using a mixed-methods approach to understand sustainability initiatives in the fast fashion industry comprehensively.

Implications for Future Research

The findings from this review have several implications for future research, particularly regarding methodology and study design. More qualitative research is needed to focus better on activist organizations like Fashion Revolution and understand their strategies, processes, and collaborations. Future studies could explore the effectiveness of different advocacy approaches and the impact of activist campaigns on industry practices. This could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of sustainability interventions and the evolving nature of consumer preferences. Content analysis of organizational communications presents opportunities to assess the efficacy of sustainability messaging and its impact on stakeholder perceptions. Future research could delve deeper into the role of communication strategies in driving behavior change and promoting sustainability initiatives. Overall, this review highlights the importance of adopting a multidisciplinary approach to research in sustainable fashion, integrating insights from consumer behavior studies, organizational analysis, and communication studies to address the industry's complex challenges.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The literature review in the previous chapter highlighted the possible use of quantitative and qualitative methods. To ensure a comprehensive analysis of Fashion Revolution's initiatives in promoting sustainability and transparency, this research used qualitative methods, such as content analysis. This section outlines the research methodology used to analyze the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) evolution between 2016 and 2023, particularly how it has impacted the fashion industry's environmental and social sustainability practices. The research focused on understanding changes in transparency criteria, trends in sustainability, and industry responses to these pressures.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative content analysis methodology. The primary focus is to analyze publicly available reports from the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) and supplementary documents from Fashion Revolution's annual impact report. A content analysis approach allows for a detailed examination of the evolving assessment criteria used in the FTI, providing a structured framework to identify trends and shifts in brand transparency and sustainability practices over the seven years. The choice of this design is justified by the research aim, which is to track changes over time in FTI's criteria and their influence on fashion brands. This approach provided a consistent and replicable method to systematically analyze the data, particularly focusing on themes such as transparency and sustainability.

Explanation of The Design Addresses the Research Questions

The selected research design effectively addressed each research question. In the first research question, this study explored what trends in transparency and sustainability practices have emerged in the fashion industry based on the Fashion Transparency Index from 2016 to 2023, content analysis of the Fashion Revolution's Transparency Index reports and annual impact report will provide additional context and examples of these criteria and methodologies in practice.

In the second research question, this study evaluated how the assessment criteria in the Fashion Transparency Index have evolved or changed between 2016 and 2023. Content analysis was used to assess the broader Fashion Transparency Index assessment criteria evolution or changes from 2016 to 2023 implementing fashion industry concerns in human rights, environmental sustainability and supply chain transparency.

The third research question addressed how the Fashion Transparency Index influenced the fashion industry's transparency between 2016 and 2023. Content analysis was used to reveal how the brands or companies might increase their transparency and sustainability over the years, presented in the FTI 2016 to 2023 and also the annual impact report.

Sources of Data

The data collection was conducted through publicly available online reports and documents from the Fashion Revolution website, making it accessible globally. The Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) reports between 2016 and 2023 were the primary sources, along with annual impact reports and campaign materials. These documents provided insights into transparency, sustainability, and public engagement within the fashion industry.

This study looked at a selection of global fashion brands assessed by the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI). Data was collected by reviewing FTI reports and related materials mentioned above. Thematic coding was used to identify trends in important areas like Policy & Commitments, Governance, Traceability, Know, Show & Fix, and Spotlight Issues. This method allows for targeted analysis of transparency and sustainability practices that relate directly to the research questions.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

This study's primary data collection instrument was content analysis. The data were sourced from publicly available Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) reports between 2016 and 2023, alongside supporting documents such as Fashion Revolution's annual impact reports and campaign materials. The content analysis systematically examined these reports to understand the evolution of transparency and sustainability practices in the fashion industry. To facilitate the analysis, a coding scheme was developed to categorize the data into key themes such as Policy & Commitments, Governance, Traceability, Know, Show & Fix, and Spotlight Issues. These categories align with FTI's main criteria for evaluating fashion brands'

transparency and sustainability efforts. This method ensured consistency in examining changes over time and allowed for a detailed investigation of how FTI's assessment criteria have evolved.

To ensure the reliability of the content analysis, a systematic coding process was implemented using a predefined framework based on the FTI's assessment categories. The coding scheme was piloted on the first criteria which is Policy and Commitments from FTI reports to verify its clarity and relevance in capturing the key themes. Feedback from this process led to refinements in the coding scheme, ensuring that it accurately reflects the focus areas of the FTI's methodology. Triangulation was also used by cross-referencing the FTI data with impact reports and campaign materials, providing a well-rounded validation of the findings.

Procedures For Data Collection

The data collection procedure involved retrieving all FTI reports from Fashion Revolution's website, covering the years 2016 to 2023. The data were extracted based on the five key criteria used by the FTI to assess transparency, Policy & Commitments, Governance, Traceability, Know, Show & Fix, and Spotlight Issues. The reports were chronologically analyzed to identify trends and shifts in the FTI's criteria and their impact on the fashion industry. Additionally, annual impact reports and campaign materials were collected to provide contextual depth and to examine how external pressures, such as public campaigns and regulatory changes, influenced the evolution of the FTI's criteria.

Tools for Data Analysis

The primary tool for analyzing the data in this study was content analysis. This study systematically reviewed the publicly available Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) reports from 2016 to 2023. A thematic coding scheme was developed to categorize the data based on FTI's assessment criteria: Policy & Commitments, Governance, Traceability, Know, Show & Fix, and Spotlight Issues. This method allowed for identifying trends and shifts in fashion brand transparency and sustainability efforts. To make the data analysis process easier and more systematic, Microsoft Excel was used for categorizing and analyzing data. This method was chosen because of its ability to handle large volumes of data from FTI reports, facilitating an organized and structured approach to identifying recurring themes and patterns.

Explanation of the Chosen Data Analysis Techniques

Research Question 1 (What trends in transparency and sustainability practices have emerged in the fashion industry based on the Fashion Transparency Index from 2016 to 2023?), Content analysis was applied to identify key trends or progress in how brands disclose their sustainability and transparency efforts. FTI reports were systematically reviewed to track changes and progress in disclosure.

Research Question 2 (How have the assessment criteria in the Fashion Transparency Index evolved between 2016 and 2023, particularly in addressing environmental and social sustainability?) An analysis of FTI assessment criteria was conducted to track modifications across the years. Specific changes in criteria such as environmental sustainability, labor rights, and governance were identified to illustrate how the FTI adapted to emerging industry challenges.

Research Question 3 (How has the Fashion Transparency Index influenced the fashion industry's transparency between 2016 and 2023?) The analysis involved comparing FTI reports with annual impact documents to assess the effectiveness of the FTI in promoting transparency. This analysis helped reveal how brands responded to the FTI's evolving criteria and the broader influence of external factors such as public campaigns and regulatory pressures.

DATA ANALYSIS

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze how the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI), from 2016 to 2023, has driven changes in transparency and sustainability practices within the fashion industry. The FTI evaluates fashion brands based on their transparency across various operational aspects. It pushes for greater environmental and social responsibility. This study tracked how the assessment criteria in the FTI have evolved and the extent to which this has shaped industry practices. This research showed how the focus on environmental and social responsibility has grown in the industry. The study also explored how the FTI has helped improve transparency in fashion supply chains and pushed for more sustainable practices. In the end, this research explained how transparency in the fashion industry has developed over time, showing key trends and actions that promote responsibility and sustainability. The study addressed three research questions:

1. What trends in transparency and sustainability practices have emerged in the fashion industry based on the Fashion Transparency Index from 2016 to 2023?
2. How have the assessment criteria in the Fashion Transparency Index evolved between 2016 and 2023, particularly in addressing environmental and social sustainability?
3. How has the Fashion Transparency Index influenced the fashion industry's transparency between 2016 and 2023?

Data Collection Process

The data for this study was collected through content analysis of publicly available resources from the Fashion Revolution website. Initially, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders were planned, but due to a lack of response, the research relied solely on available content. The primary sources were Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) reports from 2016 to 2023, along with annual impact reports and campaign documents. These sources provided a comprehensive, objective basis for analysis, focusing on themes related to transparency, sustainability, and public engagement in the fashion industry.

The data was systematically reviewed and categorized across five key criteria: Policy and Commitments, Governance, Traceability, Know, Show, Fix, and Spotlight Issues. Thematic coding was applied to group similar data points, focusing on how brands disclosed sustainability efforts, labor rights, and supply chain management, and how these efforts evolved to drive positive changes in the fashion industry. The consistency and breadth of information in these reports ensured a robust data source for trend analysis, while cross-referencing FTI data with annual impact reports provided additional insights into the effectiveness of the FTI in encouraging industry-wide change.

The analysis covers the FTI reports, which evaluated over 200 global fashion brands annually, using five key criteria to assess brand transparency and accountability. These criteria include Policy and Commitments, Governance, Traceability, Know, Show, Fix, and Spotlight Issues, comprehensively evaluating a brand's efforts in managing its supply chain, labor rights, and sustainability practices. The Policy and Commitments criterion examines whether brands have publicly available policies addressing critical areas like labor rights, environmental impact, and

ethical supply chain management. Governance evaluates how transparent brands are about their governance structures, including board-level accountability for social and environmental performance, as well as whether executive compensation is tied to sustainability goals. Traceability focuses on how well brands disclose supply chain details, from raw material sourcing to manufacturing. The Know, Show, Fix criterion assesses how brands monitor their supply chains, report issues, and take corrective actions to address human rights violations and environmental concerns. Spotlight Issues, which change annually, highlight the most pressing challenges in the industry, such as living wages, forced labor, climate action, and gender equality, encouraging brands to improve transparency and accountability in these areas.

The review process was conducted over several weeks in the summer of 2024, allowing for an in-depth analysis of each year's FTI report. An Excel file was used to organize data based on trends in human rights, environmental sustainability, and supply chain transparency, while a Word document captured evolving focus areas for each criterion, such as labor rights, environmental aspects, and governance practices. This method allowed for a detailed examination of the evolution of FTI assessment criteria and their impact on brand practices.

ChatGPT played a key role in streamlining the data collection process by efficiently summarizing, identifying, and coding the data from the FTI reports. After gathering the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) reports from 2016 to 2023 and the Annual Impact Report of Fashion Revolution, the process began by extracting key information from each report. This involved focusing on the assessment criteria and evaluation results for different brands across five key categories: Policy and Commitments, Governance, Traceability, Know, Show, Fix, and Spotlight Issues. The extraction of key information was done by reading and putting it in a new document

in Word files to make sure all the data was related and set aside all the data that was not related. After getting all the important data, ChatGPT was used to assist in breaking down and summarizing the large reports. By uploading the previous Word file and providing specific prompts, such as "Summarize the (X) criteria from the FTI (year) report", concise summaries of the relevant sections were generated. This method ensured a consistent approach to summarizing the essential trends and changes across the years.

To address Research Question 1, Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) reports from 2016 to 2023 were downloaded, along with the brands' questionnaires provided by Fashion Revolution. Relevant data were identified and extracted from these reports, focusing on the five main criteria used by FTI: Policy and Commitments, Governance, Traceability, Know-Show-Fix, and Spotlight Issues. Specifically, the highlighted focus areas within each criterion were documented. For instance, under Policy and Commitments, FTI focuses on topics such as mental health, labor hours, child labor, and environmental aspects like carbon footprint and water use. Similar patterns were observed across other criteria. By compiling this information into a Word document, emerging trends centered around human rights and labor practices, environmental sustainability, and supply chain transparency were identified. Additionally, statements were gathered highlighting the influence of external factors, such as campaigns and legislation, on the changes in the fashion industry over time.

For Research Question 2, an Excel file was used to track the evolution of the assessment criteria across the five main criteria from 2016 to 2023. Each year's requirements were categorized by the criterion and further classified into trends: human rights, environmental sustainability, and supply chain transparency. By organizing the data in this way, changes, additions, and refinements in the assessment

requirements over time were observed, providing insights into how Fashion Revolution's evaluation methods have evolved to adapt to emerging issues in the industry.

To answer Research Question 3, the Key Findings sections of each FTI report from 2016 to 2023 were reviewed. Each of the five main criteria was analyzed to determine which showed the most improvement, which continued to lag, and the reasons cited for these trends. Areas of transparency that brands disclosed more readily and those often omitted were also identified. This analysis provided an assessment of the progress made by brands under each criterion, the factors contributing to higher or lower scores, and the broader influence of the FTI on industry practices.

This approach strengthens the credibility of the study by focusing on transparent, verified sources that are accessible to the public and highlights how Fashion Revolution's evolving assessment methods have influenced the fashion industry's commitment to sustainability and transparency. In the following sections, the analysis will explore how these factors have shaped the industry's commitment to environmental and social responsibility, as reflected in both the shifting assessment framework and the broader impact of external pressures such as public campaigns and global initiatives.

Data Analysis Structure

The Data Analysis chapter is structured into four key sections, each addressing one of the research questions. The first section, Trends in Transparency and Sustainability Practices (Research Question 1), explored the major trends in transparency and sustainability practices that have emerged over the seven years covered by the FTI reports, focusing on how transparency practices have evolved in response to increasing demands for social and environmental responsibility. The second section, Evolution of FTI's Assessment Criteria (Research Question 2), focused on the evolution of the FTI's assessment criteria. By examining specific changes in the criteria, this section demonstrates how the FTI has adjusted its framework to address emerging sustainability challenges. Modifications in each category are tracked across the years, noting the influence of external factors like public pressure and regulatory changes. The third section, Influence of the Fashion Transparency Index on Industry Practices (Research Question 3), evaluated how the FTI has influenced the fashion industry's transparency practices, demonstrating the role the index has played in encouraging brands to adopt more transparent, ethical, and sustainable practices. Finally, the fourth section, Summary of Major Findings, provided a concise summary of the key findings from the data analysis, highlighting the most significant trends and changes in transparency practices and synthesizing how the evolution of the FTI's criteria has shaped the fashion industry.

Trends in Transparency and Sustainability Practices

The progress towards transparency and sustainability practices in the fashion industry from 2016 to 2023 shows clear trends toward greater accountability across several key areas. These trends reflect the growing influence of public advocacy, social movements, and global environmental campaigns on the fashion industry's practices. Three major trends can be identified: increasing attention to human rights and labor practices, an expanded focus on environmental sustainability, and growing transparency across supply chains.

Growing Concern for Human Rights and Labor Practices

In 2016 and 2017, the FTI's initial focus was on basic labor rights issues, heavily shaped by labor rights scandals such as the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013. Following the Rana Plaza disaster, public outcry and campaigns like Fashion Revolution's #WhoMadeMyClothes pressured brands to disclose their supply chains and improve working conditions. The assessment criteria initially focus on fundamental labor rights like health, safety, and freedom from forced labor. From 2018 to 2020, the focus broadened to include gender pay gap, worker representation and mental health concerns, including mental health and well-being in 2021. This expanded and broadened assessment highlights a deeper commitment to social justice, influenced by broader social movements. The rise of global gender equality movements like #MeToo mentioned in the FTI 2018 *"Improved reporting on gender-based violence in the garment industry, including monitoring and public reporting by brands, would play a significant role in catalyzing action across the industry."* significantly impacted the FTI's criteria for addressing gender disparities. In response,

many brands began to release more data on gender pay gaps and the inclusion of women, as stated in FTI 2019,

“55% of (200) brands in 2019 compared to 47% of (200) brands in 2018 publish the annual male/female ratio or percentage of women in executive and management positions in the company..., 63% of (200) brands in 2019 compared to 39% of (200) brands in 2018 disclose policies on equal pay at company level — quite significant and positive progress since last year.”

Policy and Commitments criteria are one of the assessment criteria that mostly focus on labor rights. In the Spotlight Issues, the FTI evaluated brands around living wages, gender equality, and purchasing practices. From the Table 1, the progress of acknowledging the trends in labor rights, gender equality and living wages can be seen.

Table 1. Human Rights and Labor Practices Improved Progress

Improved progress	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Publish annual company’s gender pay gap	-	14%	33%	34%	30%	34%	36%
Gender breakdown of job roles in the company	-	-	-	-	55%	59%	60%
Gender breakdown of workers in manufacturing supplier facilities	-	7%	8%	14%	21%	26%	30%
Disclose approach to achieving living wages for supply chain workers	34%	< 3%	18%	23%	27%	27%	28%

From 2017 to 2023, in the Table 1, the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) data reveals significant improvements in brand disclosures related to gender equality and living wages, reflecting growing industry awareness and action. The annual gender pay gap in the company and gender breakdown of workers in the manufacturing facilities evaluation were newly assessed by the FTI in 2018, while the gender breakdown of job roles in the company was assessed in 2021. These improvements were influenced by global movements like #WhoMadeMyClothes and #MeToo, which strengthened public demand for accountability and transparency.

For gender equality, the percentage of brands publishing their annual gender pay gap steadily rose from 14% in 2018 to 36% in 2023, showing increasing acknowledgement of pay differences. Transparency in terms of the gender breakdown of job roles within companies emerged in 2021 at 55%, climbing to 60% by 2023. Similarly, the percentage of brands disclosing the gender breakdown of workers in their manufacturing supplier facilities showed steady progress, from 7% in 2018 to 30% in 2023.

Living wage disclosures for supply chain workers followed a more gradual trajectory. Starting at 34% in 2017, the percentage dropped to under 3% in 2018 but rebounded to 18% in 2019 and continued a steady upward trend, reaching 28% in 2023. This increase reflects the greater brand commitment to addressing wage fairness in supply chains.

Despite the improved progress, there is also lagged progress in terms of human rights and labor practices. The Table 2. below showed trends that still need to be acknowledged by brands and consumers to achieve sustainability and transparency practices.

Table 2. Human Rights and Labor Practices Delayed Progress

Delayed Progress	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Racial equality (ethnicity pay gap)	-	-	-	-	2%	3%	4%
Publish annual progress towards paying living wages.	-	-	4%	5%	6%	6%	2%
Publish the number of workers being paid living wages	-	-	1%	< 1%	1%	4%	1%

While the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) shows some improvements, there are still areas where progress is moving very slowly, especially when it comes to racial equality practices and making sure workers are paid a living wage. FTI assessed if the brands publish annual progress towards paying living wages and the numbers of workers that are being paid according to the living wages policy in 2019. While the ethnicity pay gap started to be assessed in 2021. The Table 2 Highlight a gap between what brands promise and what they do. While some brands are starting to address these issues, it's happening much too slowly.

For racial equality, tracking only started in 2021, with just 2% of brands sharing their ethnicity pay gap. By 2023, this had only increased slightly to 4%. This slow movement shows that racial equity isn't getting the attention it needs in the fashion industry. Living wage transparency is another area where progress has stalled. The percentage of brands sharing updates on their efforts to pay living wages grew from 4% in 2019 to 6% in 2021 and 2022 but then dropped to just 2% in 2023. Even fewer brands report the actual number of workers receiving a living wage, with the figure stuck at 1% for several years and peaking at just 4% in 2022 before falling back.

Expanded Focus on Environmental Sustainability

Initially, the FTI emphasized labor standards with minimal focus on environmental issues such as waste management, water usage and carbon emissions. However, as public concern over climate change grew, criteria expanded to evaluate brands' environmental impact through a restricted substance list starting in 2021. Influenced by global movements and public campaigns like Greenpeace's Detox My Fashion also pushed brands to phase out hazardous chemicals from their supply chains, contributing to the start of committing to ending the release of toxic and hazardous chemicals by 2020. As stated in FTI 2021,

“Greenpeace welcomes the new Transparency Index from Fashion Revolution. It shows that Detoxing fashion is spreading beyond those brands that committed to zero discharges of hazardous chemicals during Greenpeace's Detox My Fashion campaign, which saw 80 companies (30 fashion brands and 50 suppliers) committing to Detox, following its launch in 2011.”

In 2021 only 26% of major brands published a Manufacturing Restricted Substance List (MRSL) while 42% published a Restricted Substances List (RSL), the number increased in 2022 to 47% published RSL and 32% published MRSL. Quoting from a Greenpeace Campaigner,

“The fact that more brands report their use of Manufacturing Restricted Substances Lists (MRSLs) and Restricted Substances List (RSLs) in the 2022 Fashion Revolution Transparency Index shows progress and that on the whole, the momentum begun by the Greenpeace campaign is not only being maintained but is slowly spreading.”

This means that the rise of global climate activism also played a significant role in pushing brands to adopt more stringent environmental practices. FTI's increased scrutiny of environmental impact, coupled with consumer demands for sustainable fashion, led to a noticeable increase in environmental reporting from 2018 onwards.

The Table 3. below shows the improved trends of brands starting to acknowledge environmental sustainability policy and practices.

Table 3. Environment Sustainability Improved Progress

Improved progress	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
List of unused dangerous chemicals (RSL)	-	41%	33%	40%	42%	47%	51%
Recycling solution	-	27%	23.5%	18%	27%	28%	38%
Publish a strategy to start using sustainable materials	-	-	43%	42%	44%	46%	51%
Publish targets to start improving environmental impacts	55%	55%	54%	57%	65%	68%	72%

The Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) shows that brands are gradually improving their efforts. The FTI started to assess the list of dangerous chemicals that brands promised not to use (RSL) and the brand’s recycling solution in 2018. Whether brands start to publish a strategy to use sustainable materials was started to be assessed in 2019. The percentage of brands publishing a list of restricted substances (RSL) rose from 41% in 2018 to 51% in 2023, showing a steady commitment to safer production practices. Recycling solutions, however, have been slower to gain traction. While 27% of brands offered such solutions in 2018, this dipped to 18% in 2020 before climbing back to 38% in 2023. Brands have also made progress in shifting toward sustainable materials. By 2019, 43% of brands published strategies to start using sustainable materials, and this number grew to 51% by 2023. Similarly, the percentage of brands setting specific targets to reduce environmental impacts increased from 55% in 2017 to 72% in 2023, reflecting a stronger focus on measurable environmental goals.

Besides the improved progress, the FTI also recorded the lagged trends in the environmental sustainability area. The Table 4. below shows the gap between the improved policy and what actions the brands disclose.

Table 4. Environmental Sustainability Delayed Progress

Delayed progress	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Publish water waste in raw material manufactures	-	-	4%	4%	5%	4%	3%
Publish the percentage of renewable energy used in the production.	-	-	6%	6%	7%	7%	9%

While there have been improvements in some areas of environmental sustainability, the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) data from 2017 to 2023 shows that progress in other critical areas has been much slower. Both water waste and renewable energy were assessed by FTI in 2019. Very few brands share information about water waste in raw material manufacturing. This figure has remained extremely low, starting at just 4% in 2019 and even declining to 3% by 2023. Similarly, the percentage of brands reporting on renewable energy use in their production processes has been creeping forward at a snail’s pace. It began at 6% in 2019 and only reached 9% in 2023.

These numbers reveal that while brands are making strides in some sustainability efforts, they are falling behind in tackling other pressing issues. While more brands publish their strategy to improve environmental sustainability, they still need to improve their commitment to publishing water waste and renewable energy.

Supply Chain Transparency

Increasing expectations for supply chain transparency have also emerged. In 2016, FTI focused on first-tier suppliers, but by 2018, it significantly expanded its assessment to include second and third-tier suppliers. As stated in the FTI 2023, supply chain transparency started to increase,

“More brands than ever (52%) are disclosing their first-tier manufacturers. Six brands score above 90% in this section, with Gucci scoring highest this year (96%) followed by Calzedonia Group (Calzedonia, Intimissimi, Tezenis), OVS and United Colors of Benetton (93%). These brands publish detailed first-tier factory lists as well as some of their processing facilities and raw materials suppliers further down the chain.”

Public pressure from advocacy groups like Clean Clothes Campaign is a key partner with Fashion Revolution in the Good Clothes Fair Pay campaign, calling on the European Union to adopt specific legislation that requires companies to conduct living wage due diligence in their supply chains, especially garment makers mostly depend on poverty wages, particularly in high-risk countries like Bangladesh as stated in the FTI 2023. The FTI’s growing emphasis on transparency regarding factory safety and working conditions reflected this external influence, and between 2017 and 2023, there was a marked improvement in the willingness of brands to disclose audit results and supply chain details. The introduction of the Transparency Pledge, which mobilized consumers to push for supply chain disclosures, played a crucial role in enhancing labor rights transparency, as stated in FTI 2023,

“...it is encouraging to see more brands than ever disclosing their supplier lists in alignment with our methodology, which is based on the Transparency Pledge, the common minimum standard for supply chain disclosure.”

This growing demand for transparency was largely driven by public campaigns encouraging consumers to inquire about garment origins, resulting in brands beginning to disclose detailed supply chain information. The increasing supply chain transparency can be seen in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Supply Chain Transparency Improved Progress

Improved Progress	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Publish a list of their finishing process manufacturers	32%	37%	35%	40%	47%	48%	52%
Publish a list of their textile-making facilities	14%	18%	19%	24%	27%	32%	36%

Table 5. shows that from 2017 to 2023, the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) shows that brands are gradually becoming more transparent about their supply chains, specifically in the later stages of production. The percentage of brands publishing a list of their finishing process manufacturers (First-tier suppliers) increased from 32% in 2017 to 52% in 2023, indicating steady progress in disclosing this critical stage of the supply chain. Similarly, transparency around textile-making facilities (second-tier suppliers) has improved, with 14% of brands sharing this information in 2017, rising to 36% by 2023.

These improvements suggest that brands are responding to growing demands for more visibility in their supply chains. By making this information public, brands are taking steps toward greater accountability and allowing stakeholders to better assess the social and environmental impacts of their production processes.

While some progress has been made in disclosing first and second-tier suppliers, sharing information about third-tier suppliers, such as those providing cotton, fibers, and leather, has been much slower. The FTI recorded in 2018, only one brand out of 100 disclosed this information. By 2019, this improved to 5% out of 200 brands, and in 2020, 7% of 250 brands shared this data. In 2021, the figure increased to 11%, and by 2022-2023, 12% of brands were disclosing their raw material suppliers. This reflects a gradual increase over the years.

This slow growth highlights that while some brands are becoming more transparent about their supply chains, there is still a significant gap when it comes to raw material transparency. More action is needed to improve visibility and ensure brands are held accountable for the materials used in their products.

Evolution of FTI's Assessment Criteria

The Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) has five main assessment criteria: policy and Commitments, Governance, Traceability, Know-Show-Fix, and Spotlight Issues. Each criterion has its focus on evaluating fashion brands or companies according to trends, human rights and labor practices, environmental sustainability, and supply chain transparency. The evolution of the evaluation criteria is described in the sections below.

Policy and commitments criteria

The Policy and Commitments criterion in the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) became increasingly specific and detailed. In 2016, the FTI assessment focus was solely on broad standards and general goals for worker rights and environmental protection, with brands encouraged to disclose basic information about these areas. As shown in

Table A *1* in the Appendix, in 2017, the criteria expanded significantly to address specific issues across labor, environmental, and social domains, with detailed categories such as health and safety, living wages, and biodiversity. This shift included introducing 17 specific labor-related criteria, covering areas like child labor, equal pay, and forced labor. Between 2018 and 2019, the FTI maintained these criteria with minor adjustments, further emphasizing working hours and rest breaks, overtime pay and financial benefits. In 2021, new elements such as "Homeworking" and "Mental Health & Wellbeing" were added, recognizing emerging labor issues and worker well-being.

In terms of environmental sustainability, the FTI continued to refine its criteria. As shown in Table A 2 in the Appendix, in 2017 FTI assessed how brands

disclose their animal welfare, biodiversity, emissions and energy, chemical usage, water usage and recycling in the production process and packaging process. Starting from 2018 until 2020, the FTI added an emphasis on how brands disclose water effluents and treatments and their environmental footprint. From 2021 to 2023, the FTI added a new focus on issues such as the Manufacturing Restricted Substances List (MRSL) and clearer guidelines on waste and recycling management.

In terms of supply chain transparency, as shown in the Table A 3 in the Appendix, FTI assessed brands' sub-contracting outsourcing and homeworkers. Sub-contracting means that the FTI assessed how brands disclose their factory that does garment stitching work. Outsourcing means the FTI assessed how brands and retailers often outsource the cut, make, and trim (CMT) part of garment manufacturing and made sure the allocation policy was transparent. The FTI also assesses homeworkers to address the traceability of work done at home and workers in unauthorized subcontracted sites where workers tend to be less visible, in more precarious and informal employment and at higher risk of exploitation.

Each year, the FTI's evolution reflects growing concerns around human rights, labor practices and environmental concerns. This expansion of assessment criteria encourages brands to be more transparent about their commitments. This continuous refinement from 2016 to 2023 has pushed the fashion industry to adopt more comprehensive policies and track their execution, fostering greater awareness and accountability on critical issues affecting workers and the environment.

The inclusion of mental health and well-being recognizing mental health as an important aspect of workers added in 2021 post-COVID-19 period. As stated in the FTI 2021 about the newly added details about mental health,

“This year, we added an indicator asking brands if they disclose policies on mental health and well-being for their employees and fewer than half do (48%), a particularly important topic given most employees will have been forced to work in isolation during the pandemic over the past year.”

The FTI has two key developments in terms of environmental sustainability, which are chemical management and waste reduction. The FTI required brands or companies to increased attention to hazardous substances through MRSL and RSL to inform suppliers what substances are prohibited in their raw material and product manufacturing processes, as stated in FTI 2023,

“Publicly disclosing an MRSL signals brands’ commitment to restricting the use of toxic chemicals, irrespective of whether the end product is made with natural or synthetic fibres, or whether those chemicals end up in the final garment.”

The Policy and Commitments criterion throughout 2016-2023 maintained a broad focus that encompassed human rights, labor practices and environmental sustainability. In 2016-2017, the focus was broad but leaned more heavily towards labor practices and human rights. In 2018-2020, there was a more balanced inclusion of environmental criteria alongside labor issues. "Energy & Carbon Emissions" and "Water waste" gained emphasis, suggesting an expanding focus on environmental sustainability alongside maintaining detailed labor practice assessments. In recent years, 2021-2023, the focus diversified further, adding components related to mental health, chemical restrictions (MRSL), and addressing different aspects of waste management, indicating an increasing emphasis on human rights and labor practices persisted.

Governance criteria

The Governance criterion became more specific and detailed over the years. As shown in Table A 4 in the Appendix, the criteria had expanded significantly, identifying not just the lead person but also detailing their role, contact information, and board-level accountability. The 2016 version of the FTI focused broadly on brands disclosing governance structures and accountability mechanisms, including how boards addressed human rights and environmental issues. In 2017, the scope of governance included specific roles for social and environmental impact, contact details, and board-level accountability. Employee and supplier incentives for achieving sustainability improvements were introduced.

In 2019-2020, the FTI added a focus on direct or open-line communication by requiring brands to publish contact details of those responsible for sustainability. Executive pay linked to sustainability performance was also introduced, expanding accountability to top-level management. Supplier incentives were further specified to include types like long-term contracts and increased orders. In 2021, the FTI introduced new indicators on worker representation on the corporate board of directors and financial investments in sustainability efforts. In 2022-2023, the FTI further expanded to include responsible tax strategy and the percentage of executive pay linked to environmental and social targets, indicating a growing focus on transparency and integrating sustainability with corporate financial practices.

In terms of supply chain transparency, the FTI focused on how brands provide incentives to the suppliers. As shown in Table A 5 in the Appendix, throughout the years, the brands provide a commitment to long-term contracts, increased orders, and price premiums and reduced audits for suppliers with improved social and environmental practices.

The Governance criterion has consistently addressed corporate-level accountability for both social and environmental issues. The focus has evolved, initially, there was a general emphasis on labor practices and internal checks for labor standards. The introduction of specific roles and incentives in 2017 expanded the focus to include environmental responsibilities alongside labor practices. From 2021, the inclusion of worker representation on boards and linking financial investments to sustainability shows an expanded focus on corporate governance that impacts both labor and environmental standards. The addition of responsible tax strategy and executive pay linked to environmental and social targets in 2022-2023 further emphasizes integrating sustainability into core business practices, showing a balanced focus on both human rights and environmental aspects, with an evolving emphasis on top-level governance and financial transparency. The focus on integrating sustainability into various governance aspects, including board-level oversight, worker representation, and financial incentives, demonstrates a more structured approach to ensuring both social and environmental issues are effectively managed within companies.

Traceability criteria

The traceability criteria in the Fashion Transparency Index became significantly more specific and detailed from 2016 to 2023. Initially, in 2016, the focus was generally on whether companies knew their supply chain and what information they shared publicly. By 2017-2018, the criteria specified whether brands published lists of their suppliers, and it began to evaluate the level of detail shared about these suppliers. As shown in Table A 6 in the Appendix, in 2017, these criteria progressively included specific aspects such as facility address, products or services,

worker numbers, gender breakdown, migrant workers, and more. In 2019, additional details such as the presence of trade unions and worker committees. Also, to increase the disclosure of raw material supply chain trace, the FTI requires brands to disclose the traceability of at least one raw material supplier (cotton, leather, wool, etc). By 2020, the criteria further expanded to include the business relationships between the parent company and supply chain level connections. Brands were also required to expand their workers' details in each facility's data such as gender breakdown and percentage of migrant workers. From 2021 to 2023, new details such as certifications, volumes produced by suppliers, worker wage disclosure, and energy and water consumption were included, making the criteria increasingly more exhaustive and quantitative.

The initial focus of traceability criteria was primarily on supply chain transparency. Traceability criteria in 2016 specifically asked what companies knew about their supply chain and what they publicly disclosed. As shown in Table A 7 in the Appendix, in 2017 and 2018, the focus continued to emphasize supply chain transparency but also expanded into labor practices with a detailed breakdown of the workforce (gender and migrant status). In 2019 and 2020, there was a growing emphasis on labor practices, with the introduction of criteria around trade unions, worker committees, and migrant workers. Supply chain transparency remained central, but details around labor conditions started gaining importance. The focus evolved from purely knowing and disclosing the supply chain (2016) to integrating labor rights (2019) and eventually including environmental impacts (2021 onward). This change reflects a shift towards a holistic view of sustainability in the fashion industry.

Know, Show, Fix criteria

There have been improvements and developments in the Know, Show, and Fix criteria over the years. In 2016, the criteria initially named “Audits and Remediation” focused on how the company go about checking its supply chain for compliance with its policies, international standards and local laws, how it deals with its suppliers that fail to meet these obligations and how much information do they make public about these activities. The Know-Show-Fix name started in 2017, “Know” categories were used to assess how brands acknowledge the concerns of human rights, labor practices, environmental sustainability and supply chain transparency. While “Show” categories are used to assess if the brands publish initiatives for the concerns. Lastly, “Fix” categories are used to assess corrective actions or remediation that the brands carry out to address the concerns.

As shown in Table A 8 in the Appendix, in 2017 and 2018, the criteria expanded. Including some extra points for specific details, such as the frequency of assessments, whether audits were surprise visits, and if assessments involved unions or labor rights NGOs. In 2019, FTI added a focus on assessment practices beyond the first tier. An emphasis on managing supplier exits without harming workers was also introduced. As shown in Table A 9 and Table A 10 in the Appendix, in 2020, FTI introduced specific indicators on human rights and environmental due diligence to assess brands' approach to identifying and mitigating risks. By 2021, requirements for indicators on due diligence processes become stricter. Points were awarded only if brands disclosed due diligence covering both human rights and environmental risks. Additionally, the inclusion of trade union representatives during audits became a new indicator. In recent years 2022-2023, the due diligence process was separated for human rights and environmental risks, effectively doubling the points available and

pushing for more robust processes. New indicators included the scope, process, and accreditation of environmental audits, and expanded the disclosure of findings from not just factories but also processing facilities and farms.

The "Know, Show, Fix" criteria initially focused on supply chain transparency regarding compliance and corrective actions in 2016-2018. From 2019 onwards, a stronger emphasis on human rights became evident, as the criteria included managing supplier exits responsibly. In 2020, the criteria expanded to cover environmental sustainability alongside human rights due diligence, marking a significant broadening of scope. The 2022-2023 criteria showed a marked distinction between the processes for assessing human rights and environmental risks, with explicit alignment to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. This shift highlights the increased importance of both human rights and environmental sustainability, without diminishing the transparency aspect. The focus evolved from basic supply chain compliance to a balanced approach addressing both social and environmental sustainability, emphasizing due diligence and stakeholder engagement.

Spotlight Issues

There are improvements and additions to the spotlight issues in FTI every year. In 2016, the criteria were named “Engagement & Collaboration” which looked at whether the brands/company works with multi-stakeholder initiatives, NGOs, unions and civil society to tackle social and environmental issues in its supply chain, and if yes, the Fashion Revolution looked at if their activities or initiatives communicated publicly. As shown in Table A 11 in the Appendix, from 2017 onwards, the criteria changed to Spotlight Issues which has a focus or categories that change every year according to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that fit into the Fashion Revolution’s focus in terms of human rights, environmental sustainability and supply chain transparency.

In 2017, the criteria were refined to highlight specific issues such as living wages, overconsumption, and unionization. In 2018, the criteria were segmented into three distinct issues: gender-based discrimination, living wages, and waste management. This year marked a shift toward integrating the SDGs into the assessment. In 2019, the criteria expanded to cover four SDGs, including Gender Equality (SDG 5), Decent Work (SDG 8), Responsible Production (SDG 12), and Climate Action (SDG 13), providing more real-life concerns of the fashion industry by aligning straight with SDGs. In 2020, the FTI introduced the "4 C's": Conditions, Consumption, Composition, and Climate, which included a range of indicators for assessing brands' practices in detail. In 2021, 2022 and 2023, the criteria have further integrated specific indicators related to COVID-19's impact, racial equality, sustainable sourcing, waste management, and climate change, reflecting an ongoing response to current issues.

Throughout the years, the focus of the Spotlight Issues criteria has shifted. In 2016, the spotlight issues primarily focused on stakeholder engagement and collaboration. In 2017 and 2018, there was a stronger emphasis on human rights, because the spotlight issues in this period concerned living wages and gender equality. In 2019, continued to emphasize human rights, while incorporating more environmental sustainability aspects, especially regarding waste and resource consumption. In 2020, the introduction of the "4 C's" indicated a more balanced approach between human rights and environmental sustainability, emphasizing conditions for workers and environmental impacts. In 2021, 2022, and 2023, the focus expanded to include racial equality and climate change, maintaining a balance between human rights and environmental issues, with specific indicators developed for both. Notably, the 2023 criteria highlighted commitments to degrowth and workforce upskilling. The emphasis has progressively included a balance between human rights, labor practices, and environmental sustainability, adapting to emerging global issues.

Influence of the Fashion Revolution Initiatives on Industry Practices

The Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) has played a pivotal role in influencing the transparency of the fashion industry between 2016 and 2023. FTI reports gradually pushing brands to disclose more information about their operations, policies, and supply chains. The FTI assesses brands across five main categories: Policy & Commitments, Governance, Traceability, Know-Show-Fix, and Spotlight Issues, each year applying pressure to disclose more. From 2016 to 2023, there has been a noticeable improvement in scores across these categories, although progress varied by area.

The Policies & Commitments category consistently had the highest average scores, reflecting brands' willingness to share policies related to human rights and environmental practices. In the Policy and Commitments criteria, the steady improvement in scores, from 49% in 2017 to 53% in 2023. In contrast, categories such as Traceability and Know-Show-Fix saw slower growth, but improvements were still evident as more brands began to publish their supply chain information and outline corrective actions to address social and environmental impacts. Traceability improvement can be seen from the average score in 2017 with only 8% to 23% in 2023. As stated in FTI 2023,

“When we first started this research back in 2016, very few brands published a factory list (5 out of 40 brands, 12.5%), and now 129 out of 250 (52%) of the world’s largest brands disclose supplier lists at the first-tier of manufacturing.”

represent how supplier transparency has increased, showing the significant progress made by the industry. Know-Show-Fix criteria average score also increased from 16% in 2017 to 25% in 2023. While Governance criteria improvement was very little, in 2017 the average score was 34% and reached only 2% to 26% in 2023. As stated in

FTI 2023, *“Brands remain more transparent about their policies and commitments compared to governance information, supply chain traceability and outcome and impact data.”* By 2023, over half of the major brands included in the index disclosed their first-tier supplier lists, up significantly from earlier years when only about one-third did. Despite these advancements, Spotlight Issues, which cover critical areas such as decent work, racial equality, sustainable sourcing, and climate actions, remained consistently low, averaging just 18% in 2023 only slightly improving from 9% in 2017. As stated in FTI 2023, *“Transparency of policies and commitments is foundational, but it is vital that brands embrace meaningful transparency about their impacts and outcomes too.”* This indicates that while brands are increasing transparency in their policies and operations, they are still struggling to provide detailed disclosures about the outcomes of these efforts, particularly regarding social auditing and corrective measures for labor issues.

The FTI has used its public ranking system as an effective tool to push brands to improve transparency. The FTI tried to leverage the impact of public visibility and potential reputational risk. Brands that performed poorly faced criticism, and this acted as a catalyst for many to improve their scores over time. For instance, luxury brands, which traditionally lagged in transparency, began to make significant improvements by 2023, with Gucci and Prada increasing their scores substantially, good news since in 2016 and 2017 luxury fashion brands scored the worst. The desire to avoid negative public attention has influenced many brands to enhance their transparency disclosures year after year.

Moreover, the influence of campaigns has been crucial in driving this trend. Advocacy campaigns like #WhoMadeMyClothes have heightened awareness and placed additional pressure on brands to improve their transparency, turning disclosure

into an industry expectation. According to the Out of Sight report by Fashion Revolution in 2021, the campaign pushed more brands to disclose information beyond the first tier of their supply chain,

“By 2021, 49 out of 63 brands assessed disclosed a selected number of processing facilities (e.g., printing, dyeing, embroidery), while only 29 brands disclosed textile production facilities (e.g., spinning, knitting, weaving)”.

The campaign led to an increase of 13 percentage points in the number of brands disclosing at least some textile production sites since October 2020, demonstrating the campaign’s effectiveness in promoting transparency across different levels of production. The campaign successfully mobilized citizens to demand transparency, with 3,000+ emails sent to brands asking #WhoMadeMyFabric and 7,700+ posts on Instagram under the campaign’s hashtag in 2021. This direct engagement indicates a significant level of public involvement, contributing to greater pressure on brands.

Additionally, growing legislative requirements are also important in influencing the fashion industry. The Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive in the EU, have motivated brands to align their practices with regulatory standards, further contributing to improvements in transparency scores. As stated in FTI 2023,

“More brands than ever are disclosing their approach to due diligence; how affected stakeholders are consulted; salient risks identified; and which steps are taken to address these risks and the outcomes, in both their human rights and environmental due diligence. Upcoming legislation on due diligence, including the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) at the EU level have contributed to this uplift, as have similar efforts in Japan, Germany, the US and more.”

By aligning its methodology with legislative changes, the FTI has effectively incentivized brands to improve disclosure practices, as evidenced by year-on-year increases in scores for brands participating in the index.

However, the FTI has consistently highlighted a gap between transparency and meaningful action. Noting that brands are often more willing to disclose policies than to share concrete results or impacts. Although categories such as Traceability have seen improvements, and brands are increasingly sharing their supplier lists and carbon footprint information, the industry still faces significant challenges in translating this transparency into meaningful action that benefits workers and the environment. In the Know-Show-Fix category, for instance, relatively few brands disclosed detailed corrective measures for identified issues, showing that while transparency is improving, it remains largely at the level of policy commitment rather than actionable outcomes. The average score for Spotlight Issues remained notably low at 18% in 2023, suggesting that brands continue to struggle with issues like ensuring fair wages, responsible purchasing practices, gender equality, and effective environmental actions. Despite the progress, the FTI reports underscore that greater transparency is still not synonymous with comprehensive action or accountability in the areas of human rights, labor practices, environmental sustainability, and supply chain transparency.

In conclusion, the Fashion Revolution has significantly influenced the fashion industry. There were improvements in transparency between 2016 and 2023, especially in areas like Policy & Commitments and Traceability. Nevertheless, the gap between increased transparency and effective implementation of sustainable practices highlights the ongoing challenges within the industry.

Summary of Major Findings

The fashion industry has seen a clear trend toward increasing transparency and accountability, driven by public demand for responsible practices. Initially, the FTI focused on basic labor rights, such as child labor and forced labor, but the criteria expanded over time to include more comprehensive concerns, including environmental sustainability and supply chain transparency. Three key trends emerged in the form of increased concerns for human rights and labor practices, environmental sustainability, and supply chain transparency. In Human rights and labor practices, the FTI began with a focus on labor standards and safety, but expanded to include gender equality, living wages, and mental health concerns by 2021. Increased attention to issues like gender pay gaps and forced labor in supply chains were evident. In Environmental sustainability, early FTI reports had limited focus on environmental issues, but by 2018, the criteria expanded to cover sustainable materials, waste management, and carbon emissions. Brands gradually improved their disclosure of environmental impacts, especially in manufacturing processes and materials used. In Supply chain transparency, initially focused on first-tier suppliers, the FTI's criteria broadened to include second- and third-tier suppliers by 2018. More brands began disclosing detailed information about their supply chains, but transparency around raw material suppliers remained low.

The FTI's assessment criteria evolved significantly from 2016 to 2023, becoming more comprehensive and detailed. Policy and Commitments criteria related to human rights, environmental sustainability, and governance became more detailed, with brands being required to disclose specific policies regarding labor rights and environmental impact. The percentage of brands disclosing policies on mental health, gender equality, and living wages increased steadily. Governance, including

accountability at the board level, was increasingly emphasized, with brands being required to disclose how human rights and environmental responsibilities were integrated into their governance structures. Spotlight Issues, the FTI consistently adapted its spotlight issues to reflect the most pressing concerns in the industry, such as forced labor, gender equality, and climate action. Traceability criteria expanded over time, from only required to disclose the general supplier list, it expanded to requiring brands to disclose first, second and third-tier supplier lists. The Know-Show-Fix criteria consistently focused on how brands monitor, report, and address issues in their supply chains.

The FTI has been a crucial driver of transparency. Brands showed progress in Policy & Commitments and Traceability. However, transparency in raw material suppliers remained low, and brands struggled with issues like living wages and gender equality. While transparency has improved, a gap persists between policy disclosure and meaningful action, as many brands hesitate to provide details on the actual outcomes of their policies.

CONCLUSION

This research analyzed how the Fashion Transparency Index (FTI), as part of Fashion Revolution's initiative from 2016 to 2023, promoted changes in transparency and sustainability within the fashion industry. Data was collected through a qualitative content analysis of the FTI, campaign reports, and annual impact reports. The study examined how the FTI evaluates fashion brands based on key aspects, policy and commitment, governance, traceability, know-show-fix, and spotlight issues, to encourage greater environmental and social responsibility. It highlighted how the industry's focus on human rights, labor practices, environmental sustainability, and supply chain transparency has grown, though the implementation of transparency remains slow and limited despite increased awareness.

Discussion of Key Findings

This study showed the fashion industry's increased responsiveness to labor rights, environmental sustainability, and supply chain transparency. Historically, brands ignored these areas, as highlighted by Reinecke and Donaghey's journal in 2015, who noted that before the 2013 Rana Plaza disaster, labor rights were grossly neglected, with unsafe subcontracted factories exploiting workers.³⁸ The FTI analysis confirms that industry shifts followed public tragedies and campaigns like Fashion Revolution's #WhoMadeMyClothes, which pressured brands for transparency. Between 2016 and 2023, FTI reports reveal a broader focus on human rights and sustainability, indicating that public pressure has driven these improvements.

³⁸ Juliane Reinecke, and Jimmy Donaghey, "After Rana Plaza: Building Coalitional Power for Labour Rights between Unions and (Consumption-Based) Social Movement Organisations," *Organization* 22 (2015).

However, a gap remains between policy acknowledgement and real implementation. The 2023 FTI found that 84% of brands scored below 50% in wage and gender equality disclosures. This aligns with Cerchia and Piccolo's journal in 2019, who argue that many brands prioritize image over ethical commitments.³⁹ FTI data also show Know-Show-Fix scores improving modestly from 16% in 2017 to 25% in 2023, and Governance criteria stagnating at 34% in 2017, down to 26% in 2023. These findings highlight that transparency in policy often does not translate into substantial action.

The FTI's influence is evident in improved scores, especially in Policy & Commitments and Traceability. This aligns with Fashion Revolution's 2021 Out of Sight report, which links advocacy campaigns with increased supply chain disclosures.⁴⁰ Despite progress, the slower growth in Know-Show-Fix and persistently low Spotlight Issues scores suggest that while brands disclose policies, the impact of these policies remains limited because there is a gap between the policy and acknowledgement of the concerns with real corrective action from the brands or companies.

³⁹ Rossella Esther Cerchia, and Katherine Piccolo, "The Ethical Consumer and Codes of Ethics in the Fashion Industry," *Laws* (2019).

⁴⁰ Fashion Revolution, *Out of Sight: A Call for Transparency from Field to Fabric* (Fashion Revolution, 2021).

Addressing the Research Questions

To answer the first research question, this study analyzed the FTI from 2016 to 2023, which revealed trends or progress in transparency and sustainability. Over this period, the FTI has driven fashion brands to acknowledge labor rights, environmental sustainability, and supply chain transparency, driven largely by public pressure and advocacy campaigns such as Fashion Revolution's #WhoMadeMyClothes. Before 2016, many brands were non-transparent and neglected issues like unsafe working conditions and environmental harm, as highlighted by the lack of response to tragedies like the Rana Plaza disaster. However, from 2016 onward, the FTI has shown growing recognition of these issues, particularly with improvements in human rights, gender equality, and environmental sustainability policies.

Despite these advances, the findings indicate a persistent gap between policy disclosure and real-world implementation. For instance, while more brands are committing to fair wages and safe working conditions, a significant portion still fails to deliver concrete actions, as evidenced by low scores in categories like Know-Show-Fix, which reflects most brands are still not providing detailed corrective actions or showing robust accountability in addressing social and environmental issues, also Spotlight Issues which indicates most brands still struggle to provide concrete outcomes and impacts. Furthermore, supply chain transparency, although improving, remains limited, with most brands only offering partial insights into their supply chains.

To address the second research question, this study analyzed whether the FTI had any evolution in its criteria assessment. The Fashion Transparency Index (FTI) has evolved significantly in its assessment criteria between 2016 and 2023. Initially, the FTI focused on basic disclosures such as basic social and environmental policies,

disclosing first-tier suppliers and policy commitments. Over time, it expanded its criteria to include more detailed metrics, such as worker wages, factory locations, and certifications related to environmental practices.

From 2021 until 2023, the FTI policy and commitment criteria introduced stricter requirements. It started covering areas like mental health policies, chemical safety, and MRSLs, reflecting a broader commitment to sustainability. The Know-Show-Fix criteria also evolved, with brands being pushed to not only identify issues in their supply chains but also to demonstrate corrective actions and highlight the ongoing challenge for brands to fully implement corrective measures and ensure accountability. Similarly, the Spotlight Issues criteria, which address urgent topics like environment, gender equality and living wages, showed slow progress, as many brands continued to fall short in labor practices area, particularly in providing tangible actions to back their policy commitments. The Traceability criteria evolved from merely first-tier supplier disclosure to encompass second- and third-tier details, such as raw material sourcing and union presence, underscoring the growing complexity and challenges of supply chain transparency. Additionally, the Governance criteria began linking executive pay and supplier incentives to environmental and social performance, embedding sustainability within corporate governance structures. These changes reflect a shift from reactive, compliance-driven transparency to a more proactive and systemic approach that integrates sustainability into core business practices.

To address the last research question, this study analyzed whether the FTI had any influence on the fashion industry. Turns out, the FTI has played a crucial role in influencing the fashion industry's transparency from 2016 to 2023. By continuously raising the standards for disclosure, the FTI has pressured brands to provide more

detailed information about their operations, supply chains, and sustainability practices. Over this period, transparency scores have improved, particularly in areas like Policy & Commitments and Traceability. These improvements indicate that brands are increasingly responding to the growing demand for transparency, driven not only by public campaigns such as #WhoMadeMyClothes but also by the FTI's evolving criteria.

Despite these advances, the FTI reveals that much of this transparency remains surface-level. Brands continue to prioritize policy disclosures over concrete actions. For example, while many companies now share supplier lists and environmental data, few provide detailed corrective measures, as reflected in the consistently low scores in the Know-Show-Fix category. Furthermore, the slow progress in addressing Spotlight Issues like living wages and gender equality suggests that increased transparency has not yet translated into substantial improvements in ethical practices.

The FTI has undeniably pushed the industry toward greater transparency, but the findings highlight that transparency alone is insufficient. Fashion brands should prioritize implementing tangible actions, especially in areas like living wages and worker rights, rather than stopping at policy disclosures. Strengthening accountability through improved corrective actions under the Know-Show-Fix criteria will help bridge the gap between transparency and real change. Ongoing pressure from external stakeholders and stronger regulatory enforcement are essential to driving deeper industry reforms.

APPENDIX

The following tables provide a detailed record of the evolution and trends in FTI (Fashion Transparency Index) assessment categories. These tables are organized to support the analysis presented in this study. Each table is cross-referenced in the main text to illustrate how the assessment categories have developed and improved. All data are sourced from the Fashion Transparency Index reports 2017–2023.

Table A 1. Policy and Commitments Criteria: Human Rights and Labor Practices

2017	2018-2020	2021-2023
Child Labor	Child Labor	Child Labor
Discrimination	Discrimination	Discrimination
Diversity & Inclusion	Diversity & Inclusion	Diversity & Inclusion
Equal Pay	Equal Pay	Equal Pay
Forced or Bonded Labor	Forced or Bonded Labor	Forced & Bonded Labor
Foreign & Migrant Labor	Foreign & Migrant Labor	Foreign & Migrant Labor
Freedom of Association, Right to Organize & Collective Bargaining	Freedom of Association, Right to Organize & Collective Bargaining	Freedom of Association, Right to Organize & Collective Bargaining
Grievances & Whistleblowing	Harassment & Abuse	Harassment & Violence
Harassment & Abuse	Health & Safety	Health & Safety
Health & Safety	Living Conditions/ Dormitories	Homeworking
Holidays, Sick Leave & Time Off	Maternity Rights/Parental Leave	Living Conditions/ Dormitories
Living Conditions/ Dormitories	Notice Period, Dismissal & Disciplinary Action	Maternity Rights/Parental Leave
Living Wages & Benefits	Overtime Pay	Mental Health & Wellbeing
Maternity Rights/Parental Leave	Wages & Financial Benefits	Overtime Pay
Notice Period, Dismissal & Disciplinary Action	Working Hours & Rest Breaks	Wages & Benefits
Recruitment & Terms of Employment		Working Hours & Rest Breaks
Working Hours		

Table A 2. Policy and Commitments Criteria: Environmental Sustainability

2017	2018-2019	2020	2021-2023
Animal Welfare	Animal Welfare	Animal Welfare	Animal Welfare
Biodiversity	Biodiversity	Biodiversity & Conservation	Biodiversity & Conservation
Effluents	Energy & Carbon Emissions	Energy & Carbon Emissions	Energy & Greenhouse Gas Emissions
Emissions & Energy	Use of Chemicals	Use of Chemicals	Manufacturing Restricted Substances List
Use of Chemicals	Waste & Recycling (Packaging/Paper)	Waste & Recycling (Packaging/Paper)	Restricted Substances List
Waste & Recycling (Packaging/Paper)	Waste & Recycling (Product/Textiles)	Waste & Recycling (Product/Textiles)	Waste & Recycling (Packaging/Office/Retail)
Waste & Recycling (Product/Textiles)	Water Effluents & Treatment	Water Effluents & Treatment	Waste & Recycling (Product/Textiles)
Water Usage	Water Usage	Water Usage & Footprint	Water Effluents & Treatment
	Environmental Footprint		Water Usage & Footprint

Table A 3. Policy and Commitments Criteria: Supply Chain Traceability

2017	2018	2019-2020	2021-2023
Sub-contracting & Outsourcing	Sub-contracting & Outsourcing Homeworkers (added to address traceability of work done at home)	Sub-contracting, Outsourcing & Homeworkers	Sub-contracting & Homeworking

Table A 4. Governance Criteria: Human Rights and Environmental Sustainability

2017-2018	2019-2020	2021	2022-2023
Name and role of the person with lead responsibility in the brand for social and environmental performance.	Direct contact details for a sustainability or ethical trade department in the company.	Worker representation on the corporate board of directors.	Employee representation on the corporate board of directors.
Published direct contact details for this person or relevant department (e.g., sustainability/ CSR team).	Open line of communication between the brand and its customers.	Financial investments in sustainability efforts as a percentage of total budget or revenue.	Responsible tax strategy.
Name of a board member or board committee responsible for social and environmental issues and their oversight.	Incentives linking CEO and executive pay to human rights impacts and environmental management.	Incentives linking CEO and executive pay to human rights impacts and environmental management.	Percentage of executive pay linked to environmental and social targets.
Incentives for employees beyond the sustainability/ CSR team (designers, buyers, sourcing managers, etc.) to improve social and environmental impacts.			Financial investments in sustainability efforts as a percentage of total budget or revenue.
			Incentives linking CEO and executive pay to human rights impacts and environmental management.

Table A 5. Governance Criteria: Supply Chain Traceability

2017-2018	2019-2020	2021-2023
Incentives tied to suppliers' social and environmental improvements (e.g., long-term sourcing commitments).	Supplier incentives linked to human rights and environmental management (Long-term contracts, increased orders, price premiums, and fewer audits) as incentives for suppliers who improve performance.	Supplier incentives (Commitment to long-term contracts and reducing audits for suppliers with improved social and environmental practices)

Table A 6. Traceability Criteria: Human Rights and Environmental Sustainability

2017-2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2023
Supplier demographics: Address, products/services, worker count, gender, migrant/contract worker %	New added Supplier demographics: Union presence and Worker committees	Supplier details: Address parent company, supply chain level connections	Certifications added: Address facility certifications, expanded union detail, disaggregated gender data	Certifications & production volume: supplier production volume coverage, OAR alignment for supplier list
Facilities disclosure across tiers: Includes Tier 1 (cut/sew/finish), processing facilities, and raw materials suppliers	Raw material supply chain trace: Requirement for tracing at least one raw material (cotton, leather, or wool)	New requirements for gender, union, worker committee, and migrant % in each facility's data	Certification & raw material specifics: Details for certification and farm-level data disclosure requirements added.	Production volume and wage disclosure: Required at each tier level. Brands facilities are required to register on the Open Supply Hub and Energy and water usage detailed data at Tier 1 and processing facilities

Table A 7. Traceability Criteria: Supply Chain Traceability

2017-2018	2019-2020	2021	2022
Supplier list publication: Brands are required to disclose supplier lists at all tiers (Tier 1, processing facilities, raw material suppliers), updated annually, searchable and readable format	Machine-readable lists: Data formats like CSV or Excel were introduced for easier analysis. Additional points if 95% of suppliers are disclosed and the list updated. Shows connections between suppliers at different levels; machine-readable format mandatory	Specific certifications & facility names: Facility-level certification information, and raw material suppliers' facility names included.	Open Data Standard: Supplier lists must align with the Open Data Standard for the Apparel Sector. OAR active contributors only get points OS Hub integration: Active registration on the Open Supply Hub, with links on brands' websites, is required for brands to earn transparency points.

Table A 8. Know-Show-Fix Criteria: Human Rights and Labor Practices

	Know	Show	Fix
2017	Brands evaluated on acknowledgement of human rights concerns in supplier processes.	Assessed if brands publish their initiatives for human rights concerns in supplier evaluations.	Assessed if brands disclose remediation steps for human rights violations, and grievance mechanisms.
2018	Acknowledgement of human rights risks through supplier evaluation.	Assessed if brands publish initiatives to address identified human rights concerns.	Focus on grievance mechanisms and corrective actions in supplier facilities.
2019	Expanded to include ethical standards and policies in assessments.	Requirement to publish detailed findings by the factory for human rights issues.	New criteria for exit strategies for non-compliant suppliers to avoid harm to workers.
2020	New due diligence indicators for human rights risks, impacts, and violations.	Evaluated if brands disclose facility-level results for human rights issues.	Evaluated brands' remediation of human rights violations and transparent grievance mechanisms.
2021	Only awarded points if brands address both human rights and environmental concerns.	Points are awarded only if specific findings are published, either as summaries or detailed disclosures at the facility level.	Points are awarded only if supplier exit strategies avoid adverse impacts on workers and specify corrective actions.
2022	Separate due diligence processes are required for human rights and environmental risks. Additional points for engaging workers, unions, and NGOs in due diligence.	Disclosures are required for facility-level findings on human rights, with points covering factories, processing facilities, and farms.	Additional focus on disclosing outcome data on violations and ensuring workers are informed of grievance mechanisms.
2023	Aligned to UN Guiding Principle 17 on Business and Human Rights (acknowledgement of human rights risks, and involve unions)	Detailed human rights disclosures across all facilities, including factories and farms.	Expanded requirements to include detailed grievance and corrective action disclosures.

Table A 9. Know-Show-Fix Criteria: Environmental Sustainability

	Know	Show	Fix
2020	New due diligence indicators for environmental risks, impacts, and violations.	Evaluated facility-level disclosure for environmental initiatives where applicable.	Evaluated if brands publish remediation actions for environmental violations and offer grievance mechanisms.
2021	Tighter requirements: Due diligence disclosures must address both human rights and environmental concerns.	Disclosure of environmental facility findings is encouraged but not specifically required.	Disclosure of environmental exit strategies to ensure no harm to the environment during supplier termination.
2022	Points were awarded for separate environmental due diligence processes and detailed assessments of environmental risks.	Facility-level environmental data is required, with specific points for processing facilities and farms.	Required to publish how brands remediate environmental violations and disclose remedial actions, with outcome data.
2023	Additional points for brands with robust environmental audits that disclose risk identification and management in the supply chain.	Detailed facility-level environmental disclosures are now required for factories, processing facilities, and farms.	Brands must disclose the implementation of environmental remediation initiatives and grievance mechanisms specific to environmental issues.

Table A 10. Know-Show-Fix Criteria: Supply Chain Transparency

	Know	Show	Fix
2017	Brands assessed on supplier evaluation processes	Required brands to publish supplier assessment findings	No focus on corrective actions across the full supply chain.
2018	Supplier evaluation transparency	Required brands to publish supplier assessment findings	Corrective actions were required to publish
2019	Added indicators for multitier assessments to ensure broader supply chain acknowledgement.	Required to disclose factory-level results or specific supplier assessments.	Exit strategy disclosures expanded to show impact across multiple supply chain tiers.
2020	Third-party auditing standards for supply chain evaluations, specifically covering first and second-tier suppliers.	Evaluated if brands disclose assessment findings for second-tier suppliers and beyond.	Corrective actions for second-tier suppliers introduced, tracking full supply chain impact.
2021	Added indicators on union involvement in assessments beyond initial suppliers, expanding visibility across tiers.	Points are awarded if brands publish specific second-tier findings alongside facility-level results.	Added points for transparent supplier exit strategies covering adverse impacts at second-tier suppliers.
2022	Points were awarded for new supplier evaluation criteria and transparency on whether assessments extend beyond first-tier suppliers.	Added requirements for disclosing findings by named facility and detailed results for each supply chain tier.	Remediation actions are required for multitier suppliers at each facility, with additional points for publishing grievance mechanisms beyond the first tier.
2023	Separate supply chain transparency disclosures are required for multitier audits, assessing all supply chain levels.	Points were awarded for transparency in the facility, factory, processing facility, and farm findings, with full supply chain details required.	Points awarded for transparent corrective actions covering second-tier or beyond suppliers, tracking all tiers in supply chain accountability.

Table A 11. Spotlight Issues: Human Rights, Environmental Sustainability, and Transparency

	Human Rights & Labor Practice	Environmental Sustainability	Supply Chain Transparency
2017	Living wages: Brands with commitments, benchmarks (ACT, FLA). Unionization: Worker rights data.	Consumption: Repair, resale, circular resources. Environmental impacts: Impact in finance.	Union data transparency: Worker union participation. Impact mapping: Social/environmental data.
2018	Gender equality: Anti-discrimination, empowerment. Living wages & unionization.	Waste & Circularity: Recycling, circular economy efforts.	Living wages & unionization: Fair wages and worker rights transparency.
2019	Gender equality (SDG 5): Equal pay, violence prevention. Decent work (SDG 8): Living wages, union.	Sustainable materials (SDG 12): Reduced plastics. Climate action (SDG 13): Carbon, renewable energy.	Responsible production: Sustainable materials, virgin plastic reduction
2020	Conditions: Modern slavery, wages, unionization, gender rights. Worker rights: Ethical recruitment.	Consumption: Overproduction, waste, circularity. Composition: Sustainable materials, chemical reduction.	Production transparency: Production volumes, waste reduction.
2021	Decent work: COVID-19 impact, wages, union rights. Gender/racial equality: Pay gaps, equity.	Sustainable sourcing: Sustainable materials, plastic reduction. Waste: Circularity, Take-back, circular recycling, longevity. Climate: Emissions, renewable energy, water.	Ethical purchasing: COVID-19 supplier impacts.
2022	Worker rights: COVID-19 effects, wage transparency, gender/racial equality.	Water risk: Water/ chemical management. Climate: Decarbonization, renewable energy.	Overproduction & Waste: Waste management, circular strategies.
2023	Gender/racial equality: Just transition focus, workforce upskilling.	Degrowth: Reduced environmental impact. Climate impact: Coal reliance, climate risk mitigation.	Circularity & Recycling: Textile recycling, virgin plastic reduction, sustainable fibers.

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