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## ACCOUNTING, CORPORATE GOVERNANCE & BUSINESS ETHICS | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Consumers' responses to CSR in a cross-cultural setting

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**Abstract:** The paper aims to clarify the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and consumer behaviour in an international setting. Consumers' responses to CSR activities and the impact on the purchase decision are limited discourses. CSR-based studies in the fashion and apparel industry are also scarce. Therefore, this study attempts to enlighten the subject of how consumers from different countries respond to CSR adopted in the fashion and apparel industry. This study is based on an exploratory qualitative research for which focus group interviews, including six group discussions with Spanish and Turkish consumers, have been used. The fundamental dimension for sampling was consumers' interest and knowledge of CSR-related issues. The data were examined by constant comparison analysis. The paper provides empirical insights that suggest that these consumers, regardless of their country of origin, perceive CSR actions as part of companies' marketing strategies, while overall consumer awareness to CSR is low. Moreover, the criteria, which determine the purchase decision is to be governed by self-interest. A difference between participants from both countries has been found with regard to their demand for more regulation towards CSR. An identified research need in international marketing discipline, is fulfilled in this study.



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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hakan Karaosman is a research assistant and sustainability management professional with international experience in sustainability reporting, business process improvement and sustainability strategy in various industries. Previously, he worked as a consultant to companies in various industries for their Carbon Disclosure Project, and corporate social responsibility reports by assisting clients to identify, measure, manage and communicate their performance in sustainability management. He holds BSc in Environmental Engineering; MBA and MSc in Management in Engineering of Energy and Environment; a joint master degree funded by the EU, and hosted by KTH (Sweden), EMN (France) and UPM (Spain). He is currently pursuing his PhD studies in European Doctorate in Industrial Management, a double-degree programme funded by the EU, and hosted by KTH (Sweden), POLIMI (Italy) and UPM (Spain). His specific focus is on sustainability management in the fashion industry.

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Sustainability was developed to respect people, preserve the planet, and generate profits without mishandling societal and environmental conditions. In this vein, corporate social responsibility (CSR) focuses on the social aspects to leverage responsibilities while making profit. The global fashion industry experiences an exceptional growth, and is expected to account for €1,512 billion by 2018. The fashion and apparel industry appears to have a high social impact due to multinational sourcing, and labour conditions. Marketing literature also stresses that CSR is a dynamic process, which involves interrelated market variables. Considering the high impact of fashion industry, and changing consumer behaviour; this paper explores how consumers from Spain and Turkey perceive CSR, how CSR awareness is influenced by cultural values, how actual purchase behaviour is influenced by CSR, and how CSR communication is received by the end-consumers in these highly growing fashion markets.

**Subjects: Consumer Behaviour; Corporate Social Responsibility & Business Ethics; Marketing; Marketing Management; Marketing Research; Relationship Marketing; Sustainable Development**

**Keywords: corporate social responsibility; consumer behaviour; qualitative research; fashion industry; cultural differences**

## 1. Introduction

Sustainability was developed to respect *people*; preserve the *planet*; and generate *profits* without mishandling societal and environmental conditions (Joy, Sherry, Venkatesh, Wang, & Chan, 2012). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) specifically focuses on the social aspects to leverage responsibilities while making profit. CSR has become highly critical in many consumer goods industries, and researchers as well as practitioners pay a significant attention to the topic since the balance must be reached between social needs and corporate objectives. The fashion and apparel industry emerges as a significant industry with a high impact, considering vertical disintegration of production networks, physically distributed business environment and growing consumerism (Ageron, Gunasekaran, & Spalanzani, 2012; McKinnon & Edwards, 2014). Hence, it could be stated that social impact is highly critical in the fashion and apparel industry due to multinational sourcing, and labour conditions (Perry, Fernie, & Wood, 2014).

In addition to operations, CSR is also closely linked to marketing. Consumer attitude can be influenced and this could lead to purchase behaviour. Marketing literature further stresses that CSR is a dynamic process, which involves interrelated market variables (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, & Hill, 2006). Consumers' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes are influenced by many factors such as corporation identification, product attributes, brand reputation and social records. In this vein, there are some other important parameters to take into account. For instance, cultural differences and political, economical and legal factors must be carefully incorporated to examine consumer responses to CSR (Beckmann, 2007). Therefore, an international setting in marketing literature is needed to understand how consumers from different countries pose to CSR adopted by multinational fashion brands across the world.

The fashion and apparel industry is devoted to production, distribution, sales and promotion of apparels worldwide. The fashion industry has been experiencing an exceptional growth in recent years, and is expected to account for €1,512 billion by 2018 (MarketLine, 2014). Although the fashion and apparel industry receives attention (Ageron et al., 2012; Azevedo, Carvalho, Duarte, & Cruz-Machado, 2012; Bray, Johns, & Kilburn, 2010; Caniato, Caridi, Crippa, & Moretto, 2012), few contributions analysed the relevance in social or environmental responsibility (Achabou & Dekhili, 2013; Caniato, Caridi, Castelli, & Golini, 2011; Joy et al., 2012; Nagurney & Yu, 2012). Thus far, the majority of the organizational theory literature has analysed CSR by focusing on its financial aspects. Some studies investigated the impact of CSR on marketing (Caniëls, Gehrsitz, & Semeijn, 2013), and firms' economic performance (Gualandris, Golini, & Kalchschmidt, 2014); however, consumer perspective and the perception of CSR demonstrated by an empirical evidence is scarce. Regular monitoring of the relationship between society and corporate strategies is thus required.

Surprisingly, less often, studies tend to point out what consumers from different countries think about CSR. "What are the consumers' perceptions of CSR", and "how can these perceptions affect consumers' behavioural responses?" are limited discourses that need to be further explored in cross-cultural settings (Abreu, Castro, Soares, & Silva Filho, 2012). Particularly, even though CSR is a fast-growing trend worldwide, very few studies have been conducted specifically for the fashion and apparel industry. On the whole, despite the growing CSR trend in academia, the literature indicates that a majority of studies focus on domestic markets or consumer outcomes in local settings. This finding suggests that CSR disclosure in international marketing is highly needed. This paper thus aims to present the results of a qualitative research conducted with real consumers from two different countries, namely Spain and Turkey, and more precisely, on their cities Madrid and Istanbul. It is

essential to emphasize the motive behind this selection. Both Madrid and Istanbul are significant given their high growth rate in the fashion and apparel market. Istanbul emerges as a metropolitan city where global fashion brands have numerous displays just to attract highly growing and equally trend-driven society, while Madrid has been the capital of some significant mainstream brands that rule the street style. Given both cities' inevitable influence on street style, utilizing consumers from these markets would make a significant contribution to the course where corporate behaviours of these fashion brands are questioned. Another important reason could be highlighted from a rather regulatory perspective. CSR emerges as an essential topic at the European Level. "Europe 2020" is the European Union's growth strategy (European Commission, 2011), and within this strategy, not only member states but also candidate countries are asked to comply with laws, reach sustainability based objectives, and integrate social and environmental concerns into their agendas. Spain is a member country, and with Turkey is a candidate; so that focusing on these cities could bring valuable contributions to check how end-consumers perceive, understand and react to CSR strategies.

This paper is thus set to explore (1) how consumers from both Spain and Turkey perceive CSR, (2) how CSR awareness is influenced by cultural values, (3) how attitude and actual purchase behaviour are influenced by CSR and (4) how CSR communication is received by the end-consumers in these highly growing fashion markets.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a theoretical background of the topics under study. In Section 3, the research framework, gaps and research questions are presented. Then, the methodological approach is described in Section 4. In Section 5, the results obtained are presented and discussed. Lastly, conclusions of the study are provided in Section 6.

## 2. Theoretical background

The past decades have witnessed an increased flow of academic research in the area of CSR. However, considering the aforementioned theoretical gaps, this study was conducted to contribute to the understanding of CSR and its effects on consumers' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours in the international marketing. Hence, theoretical background encompasses four main areas: (1) The concept of CSR, (2) The influence of cultural values on CSR, (3) CSR impact on consumer behaviour and (4) CSR in the fashion and apparel industry.

### 2.1. The concept of CSR

United Nations defined sustainability as a development to meet the needs of present without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own (United Nations, 1987). The principle of sustainable development is an unavoidable association among economical, environmental and social dynamics (Karaosman, Mermod, & Yuksel, 2015). CSR, in particular, implies doing business right by respecting societal needs. Due to a widespread attention that has been paid to CSR, the formal acceptance of CSR practices and strategies has become roughly universal (Oh, Park, & Ghauri, 2013). Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) have found that corporations have a significant impact on society and the environment. In order to reduce these impacts for a sustainable future, not only are corporations required to have a greater sensitivity to today's changing values, but they are also required to incorporate CSR standpoints into strategic decisions (Werther & Chandler, 2005). Over decades, the definitions and the phases of social responsibility have evolved. In the 1950s, the definition of CSR in corporate policy was associated with management ethics. During the 1960s and early 1970s, CSR was showcased as responsiveness. According to the "Iron Law of Responsibility" theory from the early 1960s, corporations that had big social power also had big social responsibilities (Mercer, 2003). During the 1970s, Friedman's theory was discussed. He argued that a corporation's sole responsibility was to make profit for its shareholders (Wang & Juslin, 2009). However, starting from the 1980s, stakeholder groups (i.e. consumers, local communities and employees) were also introduced in the CSR concept. That decade fostered an ethical culture in corporations, when a code of ethics became an important aspect in corporate culture and various levels of stakeholders were recognized within

common CSR principles. From the 1990s onward, CSR has been associated with Corporate Citizenship, which is formed by economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic constituents (Beckmann, 2007; Oh et al., 2013).

More recently, CSR has emerged as a fundamental topic at the European Level. “Europe 2020” is the European Union’s growth strategy (European Commission, 2011). Within this strategy, five fundamental objectives have been set for 2020. Areas list employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy. Each of these categories has been adopted for member states (Europe 2020, 2011). In 2006, the European Commission defined CSR as a concept whereby corporations voluntarily integrate social and environmental concerns into their business operations and into their interaction with their stakeholders. As mentioned, until now CSR actions taken by corporations have been strictly on a voluntary basis. There is an increasing pressure and demand in the EU to develop legislation that will make CSR activities mandatory. The European Commission has been working on redefining CSR to emphasize this necessity. “Should” has been added to the definition in order to shift away from the voluntary approach (Kaufmann & Olaru, 2012). However, since each corporation has its own corporate culture, set of values, industrial challenges and various stakeholder groups, it is almost impossible to generate one general standard or ethical code. Given these industrial diversities, CSR should be utilized as a guideline to generate a corporate language to assess specific actions and improve social conditions. According to Porter and Kramer (2006), corporations should incorporate social responsibility into their business strategy instead of having it done as a separate project. Podnar and Golob (2007) also suggested that ethical and philanthropic responsibilities could lead to a competitive advantage based on desired consumer response. So as to reach this, a right balance among strategy, brand management and CSR should be established. Short-term and transactional outcomes were investigated in earlier research in past decades. Nevertheless, recent academic attempts have mostly been grounded in long-term and relational outcomes (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). Researchers seek further demonstrations to channel sector-specific relational outcomes such as loyalty, trust and brand ambassador type of behaviours.

## **2.2. The influence of cultural values on CSR**

Since the scope of present study is to shed light on the CSR perception of consumers from different international settings, reference must be given to the expected cultural values of individuals from different cultural origins. When mentioning cultural values across different countries, the cultural dimensions of Geert Hofstede are an inevitable reference and source of information. His study was based on a sample of IBM employees across different countries, obtained between 1967 and 1973 from more than 117,000 respondents. The findings of his research were four statistically independent dimensions that explained the cross-country cultural variations. Later on, he added a fifth dimension, which has been recently substituted by two new dimensions, obtained with more recent data. Regarding the setting of the four original dimensions, Hofstede admits that using data from a single organization can limit the generalization of the data (Hofstede, Pedersen, & Hofstede, 2002). This is the most common criticism received from his results, as stated by Schwartz (1994, p. 91), “highly educated well-paid IBM employees’ ability to represent the general population likely differs from country to country, with the discrepancy probably being greater, for example, in the Third World nations ... than in industrialized Western nations”. In spite of the criticism received, Hofstede’s results proved their validity in a wide range of organizational and national issues (Taras, Steel, & Kirkman, 2012).

The six cultural dimensions gathered by Hofstede by the time of writing this paper are (1) power distance (PDI), (2) individualism (IDV), (3) masculinity (MAS), (4) uncertainty avoidance (UAI), (5) pragmatism (PRA) and (6) indulgence (IND) (Hofstede, 2014). The Power Distance dimension can be defined as the extent to which the less powerful individuals in a society consider normal the unequal distribution of power. In the second dimension, Individualism describes the degree to which people look preferably after themselves and their closest relatives, while Collectivism stands for societies where belonging to a group is believed to be of great importance. The Masculinity–Femininity dimension juxtaposes some masculine values such as competitiveness and success against so-called feminine values by Hofstede, like maintaining quality of life or solidarity. The fourth classical dimension is the

Uncertainty Avoidance index, which rates the level of anxiety that unpredictable, risky situations cause people. Pragmatic versus Normative is the dimension that expresses if the individual requires concrete explanations for the complexity of life. A pragmatic orientation in life allows for adaptation to a variety of situations and a propensity to save money for the future, while normative cultures give great importance to social traditions and the feeling of saving for the future is much smaller. Last, the Indulgence versus Restraint dimension terms a culture indulgent if control of leisure and one's own life is given a certain importance, and if freedom of expression is valued.

The marketing literature highlighted the role of national culture, cultural distance and similarity between the countries. It was argued that a firm's competitive performance within world markets is influenced by a variety of home country factors (Rugman, Oh, & Kim, 2011). Therefore, it could be stressed that country and national environment have a noteworthy effect on consumer behaviour and marketing. Particularly, the extent to which a society can be considered collectivist or individualist determines the moral behaviour of its individuals. In collectivist cultures, individuals tend to behave as expected by the group, even when these individuals disagree with the group norm (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). That is, an inconsistency appears between personal belief and behaviour. On the contrary, in individualist cultures, decisions are driven by the personal thoughts of the people (Radhakrishnan & Chan, 1997), avoiding the mentioned inconsistency, as the people are more likely to behave according to their moral decisions. While several researchers found that CSR adoption is positively linked with collectivism, power distance has a negative correlation. Matten and Moon (2008) articulated that individualistic cultures tend to value "explicit CSR" by which corporations address social issues through their CSR actions. Contrarily, collectivist cultures tend to adopt and value "implicit CSR" by which corporations address social issues through some other voluntary actions in a much wider scope. In summary, CSR reflects societies' expectations. Cultural values and tendencies shape a country's identity and its people's behaviour. Therefore, cultural movements, values and attributes are extremely important when examining consumers' responses to CSR. Even though CSR studies have previously incorporated the cultural effect, a limited number of studies were conducted to compare different countries and their priorities in response to CSR.

### **2.3. CSR impact on consumer behaviour**

CSR is a multifaceted topic to be interpreted from various standpoints. In stakeholder theory, Freeman, Velamuri, and Moriarty (2006) indicates that corporations are part of a bigger society, and possessing responsibilities for different groups of people (Beckmann, 2007; Freeman et al., 2006). In this vein, marketing concept could also be defined as a distinct organizational culture to meet demands of numerous actors. Corporate marketing is a fundamental shared set of beliefs and values that put the consumer in the centre of the corporation's strategies and operations (Cadogan, Souchon, & Procter, 2008).

Hence, it is possible to link CSR with expectation relationship (Podnar & Golob, 2007) to go beyond profit maximization by meeting societal needs and expectations. Consumers, on the other hand, are perceived as the most influential stakeholder group due to their inevitable impact on corporations' financial success. Nevertheless, marketing scholars investigated CSR by focusing on very limited dimensions. Despite its importance, when it comes to consumers' responses to CSR, limited scopes have been taken into account. This leads to the scarcity of comprehensive theoretical frameworks deriving from the marketing discipline (Maignan & Ferrell, 1997). Previous researches declare that while CSR might entail short-term costs, it pays off for the corporation in the long term as a source of competitive advantage (Branco & Rodrigues, 2007; Burke & Logsdon, 1996; Porter & Kramer, 2006). Similarly, Wang and Juslin (2009) addressed the positive and cognitive effect of CSR on consumer behaviour. Besides, Maignan and Ferrell (1997) observed that consumers would engage in positive word of mouth about corporations, which demonstrated devotion to institutional standards. Nevertheless, CSR could also bring negative exposure. In their study, Porter and Kramer (2006) argued that due to social scandals some corporations could be in danger of losing their consumers' trust.

When engaging in a specific social issue, a corporation should clearly acknowledge the mission of its strategy and potential consequences (Maignan & Ferrell, 1997). Öberseder, Schlegelmilch, and Murphy (2013) suggested that proactive communication strategies could affect consumers positively while reactive communication strategies could create a negative effect. This theory was contributed by further arguing that consumers might respond negatively when a corporation was not perceived sincere and honest (Park, Lee, & Kim, 2014). Multinational corporations that target different markets are often accused of utilizing CSR to empower their brand image and increase their profits (Torres, Bijmolt, Tribó, & Verhoef, 2012). Marketing managers thus must choose their multinational strategies and communication tools carefully in order to establish a connection between long-term benefits and short-term outcomes (Cheung, Jiang, & Tan, 2012). Previous studies on CSR demonstrated that many consumers were relatively uninformed regarding responsible corporate behaviour and activities (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000). It could be suggested that low-fit initiatives are likely to diminish overall attitude as well as perceptions of corporate credibility, corporate position and purchase intention (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). It is very important to monitor consumers' perceptions since they affect attitude. Consumer attitude is likewise significant due to its influence on consumers' behavioural intentions. In this sense, intentions have been pointed out as the determinant of the actual behaviour (Bygrave, 1989) and of actual purchasing choice (Keh & Xie, 2009). Consumer identification is an important but slightly underused concept. It could exert influence on purchase behaviours. Previous academic attempts suggested that, based on social identity and organizational identification theories, some of the strongest consumer–corporation relationships occur when consumers identify with the corporations that satisfy their self-interest (Maignan & Ferrell, 1997). A corporation with high consumer identification could benefit through loyalty, willingness to try new products, spreading positive word of mouth and tolerance for negative information. Recent investigations also suggest that organizational misidentification may occur when individuals perceive a conflict between their defining attributes and the attributes characterizing the organization (i.e. strategies and corporate actions). These findings support Boulstridge and Carrigan's (2000) theory in which individualism and self-interest emerged as powerful consumer trends. Furthermore, price and quality have been pointed out as major factors that affect purchase decisions (Rizkallah, 2012). Therefore, corporations in today's multinational competitive environment should maintain their commitment to quality and reasonable prices, while putting CSR into their strategic planning (Castaldo, Perrini, Misani, & Tencati, 2008). On the whole, it can be stressed that self-interest is an important indicator, and consumers are mostly influenced by CSR initiatives when the results benefit them. Price, design and other product attributes go beyond social awareness during the purchase decision-making process, yet it is still important to comprehend how consumers with different cultural mind-sets would conceptualize CSR.

CSR has a big influence on marketing, ethics and different groups of consumers worldwide. Despite this importance, CSR in international marketing literature has only recently received significant attention. One of the biggest limitations of current literature is that consumer perspective, (from a cross-cultural point of view) has been neglected. Over the previous decades, it was seen that during the purchase decision-making process, consumers attached importance to product quality, value for money and brand name over social problems. However, recent studies have shown a change in this tendency. Cultural differences and personal values could be variables that alter this consensus. Conversely, despite earlier research attempts, a clear understanding of responses of consumers (from different countries with different backgrounds) still remains inconclusive and mixed. There is a lack of conceptual understanding surrounding what consumers from different corporations expect from a corporation and how this multinational corporation responds based on varying expectations. In summary, this paper seeks to address some of the academic limitations that could be highlighted as follows: (1) business ethics were mostly studied as a single issue rather than a strategy and (2) only a few selected stakeholder groups have widely been investigated. The latter shows that a clear understanding of consumer perception in cross-country settings is lacking (Öberseder et al., 2013), and it is equally important to understand how consumers with different cultural backgrounds perceive and react to CSR endorsed by multinational corporations.

#### 2.4. CSR in the fashion and apparel industry

Fashion encompasses numerous commodities including apparel, footwear, jewellery and cosmetics (Joy et al., 2012). Furthermore, it embodies products in which style is relevant as an essential critical success factor, and product shelf life is relatively short (Choi, 2014; Fionda & Moore, 2009). The fashion and apparel industry is a multinational sector devoted to manufacturing, distribution, sales and promotion of apparels. Buckley and Ghauri (2004) address that globalization is a process driven by economic forces, which encompasses manufacturing, international trade and the integration of financial markets. Especially, manufacturing is an important parameter for globalization (World Economic Forum, 2012). In the fashion and apparel sector, manufacturing processes are divided into multiple partial operations and separate stages that are held in different locations; consequently, the globalization and multinational fashion brands' strategies leave a significant impact on sustainability (Buckley & Ghauri, 2004). In a fast fashion environment, time and cost are the key parameters dominating buyer and manufacturer negotiations (Bruce & Daly, 2006). Thus, fashion and apparel industry incorporates quick yet dynamic response processes to reduce lead time (Caro & Martínez de Albéniz Margalef, 2014). To do so, various activities are coordinated within supply chains, since fashion and apparel industry is transformed from manufacturer-push to the consumer-pull era. Fernie and Sparks (2014) issued that, a fashion company, is indeed responsible for all activities performed in its entire value chain.

Requirements for a successful fashion management include organizational culture, communication strategy, risk management and transparency to meet sustainability needs (Alexander, Walker, & Naim, 2014; Chan, He, & Wang, 2012; Ciliberti, Pontrandolfo, & Scozzi, 2008; Mentzer et al., 2001). Ageron et al. (2012) further highlighted the importance CSR in supply chain management. From this perspective, a need becomes visible to incorporate social sustainability in fashion talks. As challenging as it sounds, sustainability of any fashion brand cannot be achieved without integrating social dimensions into their corporate strategies. This could only be accomplished when companies step beyond own boundaries; hence, supplier and consumer association plays a significant role. Sustainability cannot be accomplished unless consumers are not involved into their corporate strategies (Grimm, Hofstetter, & Sarkis, 2014). A poor sustainability management of any fashion company could jeopardize a high level of consumer loyalty. Statistics show that more than 70% of EU member states' apparel imports come from developing and low labour cost countries to minimize the production and distribution costs (World Bank, 2007). By taking all of these factors into account, it may be concluded that global economy, unequal conditions and interactive dynamics make the fashion and apparel industry an interesting sector to examine through a CSR perspective. Due to globalization and industrial characteristics, the fashion and apparel industry features six aspects linked with CSR (Laudal, 2011; Woo, 2013). Table 1 shows CSR-related characteristics of the industry.

Up until now, business and academic literature have lacked an international analysis of how CSR could influence consumer behaviour in the fashion and apparel industry. Many studies agreed that CSR could enhance consumer equity (Kim, Ko, Xu, & Han, 2012). However, few studies have examined the relationship between consumer-related outcomes and CSR for this specific sector. Specifically,

**Table 1. CSR-related characteristic of the fashion and apparel industry**

*Labour intensity*—Directly linked to human rights and labour issues

*Global sourcing*—Labour and social issues are related since international retailers choose less developed countries to minimize the production costs

*Market structure*—To serve global-scale consumers quickly, buyers dominate suppliers

*Short deadlines in production*—Unpredictable orders and demands lead to mass production in a limited time

*Low transparency*—Product responsibility, environmental issues and supply chain are related

*Lack of communication*—Communication barriers between suppliers and buyers affect labour issues

Source: Own development based on Laudal (2011) and Woo (2013).

for the fashion and apparel industry, for which CSR is an essential topic, empirical examination is scarce and needed. The fashion and apparel brands are in need of determining under what conditions consumers respond positively to CSR, and how their perceptions differ from one country to another. Identifying consumer insights will likely have practical implications regarding operational and communication strategies.

### 3. Research framework

In the previous section, the absence of concrete results regarding the influence of different cultural values on consumer perception of CSR has been stated. The scope of the present research is to shed light on this issue, by means of a close analysis of the consumer behaviour of two different countries. The central research question that leads this research is set to explore to what extent consumer's perception and response to CSR differ between Spanish and Turkish individuals. These two countries, Spain and Turkey, were chosen since they have similar cultural values yet they are very different in history and cultural inheritance. Both countries share the particularity of having a unique cultural and historical background. Being the biggest part of the Iberian Peninsula under Muslim governance for eight centuries has shaped Spanish cultural identity in a different way from that of its neighbouring countries. Moreover, the discovery and conquest of the American continent, the establishment of a worldwide empire and its later fall has limited the historical economic development of the country (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012), which has led to the particular idiosyncrasy of Spanish temper. On the other hand, Turkey is a democratic and secular country where the population is mainly from the Muslim religion. Subsequent to the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Turkey was turned into a modern nation-state in the Western style, with the adoption of the Latin script, among other measures to limit the influence of religion in civil life.

Spain and Turkey are also interesting places to investigate CSR agendas. In the context of CSR, the European Commission set some significant targets in the "Europe 2020: European Union's Growth Strategy", and its corresponding directives related to CSR as well as their national frameworks to foster social responsibility. To this end, the Member States of the EU are requested to comply with the regulations, and laws, while the candidate countries are also expected to improve their sustainability performances (Karaosman et al., 2015). Spain as a member state, and Turkey as a candidate country are important places to investigate to what extent societies perceive and communicate with CSR, which is widely endorsed at the governmental level. While global corporations reinforce their priorities to develop economies based on innovation, investigating consumer insights would be highly significant to show how CSR could be further embarked. More sustainable economies could be achieved only when consumer perceptions are positively linked with real purchase behaviour. The dimensions of Hofstede could be utilized to approach to the cultural values of Spain and Turkey. For each country, an index scale from 0 to 100 is used to measure each dimension and justify the cultural difference. The score of 100 is the highest level of power distance, while in the case of individualism and collectivism, "100" refers to the most individual country. For masculinity-femininity, higher ranks emphasize a culture's masculinity and uncertainty avoidance regards a high level of anxiety under unexpected situations. Last, for pragmatism and indulgence higher ranks call for high levels of each topic, respectively. A closer look must be given to the values given to each dimension. Table 2 shows the cultural dimensions as of Hofstede for both countries under study. It is believed that CSR perception and consumer behavioural outcomes are mostly shaped by these differences.

**Table 2. Cultural dimensions as of Hofstede (2014)**

	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	PRA	IND
Spain	57	51	42	86	48	44
Turkey	66	37	45	85	46	49



The Turkish score of 66 in power distance dimension indicates a hierarchical culture both at family and work level. Nevertheless, the score of Spain is slightly lower but also above the mean, which means that it should not be expected to find differences between consumers from both countries associated with this dimension. Due to power distance's negative relationship with CSR (Woo, 2013), the following question could be formulized.

RQ1: How do consumers in both countries perceive CSR?

Contrarily, Spain has a higher value on individualism compared to Turkey. This suggests that Spanish individuals are seen more as individualists with regard to their Turkish counterparts. However, when compared to other European countries Spain could be regarded as collectivist. For instance, the values of individualism for France (71), Italy (76), Germany (67) or Sweden (71) contrast with the value obtained for Spain. In collectivist societies, people have a shared group feeling, which could bring some interesting insights regarding consumer behaviour. Particularly, in collectivist cultures, the communication that surrounds CSR is more indirect and loyalty is seen to be higher than in individualist cultures. This leads us to the second question to be answered in this study.

RQ2: How could cultural values affect CSR awareness in both countries?

Regarding the femininity dimension, both countries score similar values, 45 for Spain and 42 for Turkey. They are on the feminine side of the scale, which calls for a sympathy for the weak, poor and needy members of society. Therefore, it could be expected that, CSR awareness is high. Nevertheless, since the collectivist index is of a higher value than the femininity dimension, in the opinion of the authors the former would override the latter. For this reason, consumers say they care for sustainable products, although their actual purchase decision will be based on different, more practical criteria. Hence, the following question arises.

RQ3: How is purchase decision influenced by CSR awareness?

Both countries' scores in uncertainty avoidance are rather high, 86 for Spain and 85 for Turkey. In both countries, there is a strong feeling of having the need for rules. At the same time, citizens of these countries are famous for their ways of feeling rather comfortable in the grey zone of dishonesty. Therefore, it could be logical to ask to what extend global corporations are expected to channel their performance by showing results of their actions.

According to these results in uncertainty avoidance, it is foreseen that both Spaniards and Turks could demand that corporations communicate their CSR efforts and expect fashion brands to control their performance while maximizing profit. However, it is equally important to measure how CSR communication of multinational fashion brands is really received by locals.

RQ4: How is CSR communication received by the end-consumers in both countries?

The following section is dedicated to methodology to explain how aforementioned research questions were investigated.

#### 4. Methodology

The research strategy in international marketing research is determined by the current information in the field (Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2005). Due to the limited understanding provided by existing literature into consumer responses to CSR in an international setting, an exploratory qualitative study has been undertaken. In order to obtain in-depth knowledge, an inductive and exploratory approach is recommended as the most appropriate (Elg, Ghauri, & Tarnovskaya, 2008). This research utilized focus group interviews to acquire input from Spanish and Turkish consumers. Focus groups are considered to be an effective means of exploratory data collection, as they are defined as "a way of collecting qualitative data by attracting a small number of people in group discussions, 'focused'

around a particular set of issues” (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009). This suggests that, compared to other forms of group interviews, participants’ reactions, responses and interactions are encouraged and monitored to sustain the topic’s focus (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). This methodology is particularly appropriate when insights surrounding a subject are limited and context is relatively unresearched (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013), as in this case. Focus group data were analysed in order to develop an inductively derived theory emerging from them. The methodology used in this research is consistent with procedures recommended for marketing theory development (Parasuraman, Zeithami, & Berry, 1986).

#### **4.1. Sample and data collection**

Academic literature suggests conducting one focus group interview by gathering four to eight participants (Saunders et al., 2009). The more complex the subject under study is, the smaller the number of members recommended in the focus group. In this case, based on the subject’s complexity and the need for further discussions, the chosen number of participants in each interview is six. The rationale for this precise number was to promote diversity and generate a comfortable environment to enable participants to exchange ideas, thoughts and experiences. Focus group data were gathered through multiple sources including a moderator, an assistant moderator and observer. These three individuals composed the moderator team. This team worked closely to obtain, verify and interpret the data. For the purposes and intentions of this research, multiple focus groups were conducted to achieve saturation of both data and theory. In order to undertake sufficient focus groups, it is suggested conducting three or four group interviews with any one type of participant or group (Saunders et al., 2009). After the third or fourth group, if a moderator team can no longer receive new information, it is believed that saturation has been reached. A total of six focus group interviews were conducted in the two countries under study. Three focus groups, six participants per group, were held in Madrid, Spain. The remaining three, six participants per group, were conducted in Istanbul, Turkey. It is important to highlight the reason behind the selection of sample cities. Madrid and Istanbul are two important cities in the fashion and apparel industry considering the high growth in the fashion market. Istanbul emerges as an important metropolitan city where global fashion brands have numerous displays just to attract highly growing and equally trend driven society, while Madrid has been the capital of some significant mainstream brands that rule the street style such as Zara, Mango and Desigual. Given both cities inevitable influence on street style, utilizing consumers from these markets would make a significant contribution to the course where CSR applications of said brands are explored. Furthermore, due to Europe 2020 addressed previously, both markets have a significant importance to put CSR in corporate agendas.

All focus groups took place in February 2014, during a short period of time in which there were no scandals in the media that could bias the participants’ opinions. The focus groups were structured in accordance with standards conventionally applied in marketing literature (Parasuraman et al., 1986). Participants were selected due to their common characteristics and relation to the topic discussed, with the aim at achieving a consensus. Respondents were assessed to ensure that they were active consumers and interested in the fashion industry. To maintain homogeneity and assure maximum participation, individuals were chosen based on demographic areas including age, marital status, occupation, gender and education. Table 3 shows the main characteristics of the participants.

Consistency in age was ensured within groups; however, age diversity across groups was also provided to have different standpoints. With regard to the consumer participants, the fundamental dimension for sampling was consumers’ interest and knowledge about CSR-related issues.

The researchers established one set of questions to utilize during the focus group interviews. The questions asked in the discussions were based on current literature and were open-ended to let participants actively participate. At the beginning of each group discussion, a brief definition of CSR was given to initiate the discussion. In order to maximize individuals’ participation in the discussion, the focus groups in Spain were held in Spanish while the focus groups in Turkey were held in Turkish. Each discussion was recorded with the participants’ permission, and then the transcript of these

**Table 3. Focus group participants' characteristics**

Group	Spain 1	Spain 2	Spain 3	Turkey 1	Turkey 2	Turkey 3
Number of participants	6	6	6	6	6	6
Age average	25–30	20–25	25–30	25–30	35–40	25–30
Education	Doctoral	University	Masters	Doctoral	University	Masters
Female/male distribution	4 F, 2 M	3 F, 3 M	4 F, 2 M	3 F, 3 M	2 F, 4 M	4 F, 2 M
Annual income	€30,000– €35,000	€35,000 and more	€30,000– €35,000	20,000– 24,999 TL	35,000 TL or more	30,000– 34,999 TL
CSR knowledge	Basic	High	High	Basic	Basic	High
Purchase frequency	Not often	Often	Not often	Quite often	Quite often	Often
Segment	Mainstream	Mainstream	Mainstream	Mainstream	Luxury	Mainstream

Notes: Minimum wage in Spain: €752.85 per month in 12 payments, €645.30 per month in 14 payments.  
 Minimum wage in Turkey: 1,071.00 YTL per month in 12 payments.

group discussions was translated into English. The method used to analyse each of these six focus groups' transcripts is described in the next section. The questions asked during the discussions were primarily aimed at gaining new insights into the following research areas, which are in accordance with the objectives presented in the previous section, (1) the concept of CSR; (2) cultural differences in consumer perception and CSR awareness; (3) CSR impact on consumer purchase decision and (4) CSR and its communication in the fashion and apparel industry.

#### 4.2. Data analyses

As previously indicated, focus group interviews were recorded while the moderator and assistant moderator took notes. In order to establish a careful investigation, a tape-based analysis was conducted for this research. The tape-based analysis is a widely used method in which the researcher listens to the recordings and creates a transcript by organizing the ideas (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). This technique was pursued so as to focus on the research question and transcribe the sections that could fit in with a better understanding of the research interest. Analysing and interpreting the data from different groups' interactions, especially from dissenters, allowed researchers to determine to what extent the data achieved saturation. More specifically, constant comparison analysis was applied. Various scholars suggest that using this technique to analyse data could generate valid contextual implications. Constant comparison analysis covers three major stages; open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). During the first stage, (open coding) the data are sorted into small units by assigning codes. Then during the second stage (axial coding) these initial codes are grouped into categories. In the final stage (selective coding), themes are developed to channel the content of focus group data. In this research, 110 codes were assigned, 12 categories were created and accordingly four themes emerged. During open and axial coding processes, online qualitative data analysis software was used (Saturate, 2013). Constant comparison analysis was used since multiple focus groups were conducted in this research. The purpose of using constant comparison analysis was to assess saturation in and across groups. One focus group's data are analysed at a time; therefore, multiple focus groups' analyses could serve as a substitution for theoretical sampling in order to assess the relevance of the themes. After analysis, the themes emerged showed a consistency with research questions, and could be listed in four categories, (1) *consumers' perception of CSR* to explain how consumers in both countries perceive CSR, (2) *the influence of cultural values on CSR awareness* to explain how cultural values affect CSR awareness, (3) *CSR impact on consumer behaviour via exemplification* to explain how purchase decision is influenced by CSR and (4) *transparency of CSR communication* to explain how CSR communication is received by the end-consumer in both countries. The findings associated with these categories are described in the next section.

## 5. Results and discussion

In this section, the findings of this exploratory study are presented.

### 5.1. Consumers' perceptions of CSR

In both Spain and Turkey, CSR embraces activities associated with consumers, local communities, workplace and environment. When participants were asked to define the concept of CSR, a consensus was recorded across groups; however, some differences emerged across countries. Spanish consumers defined responsibility as required corporate actions towards employees. In spite of being aware of the fact that a corporation seeks to maximize profits, participants in Spanish focus groups are nevertheless concerned with how those profits are made. The consumers identify the corporation as being responsible when it treats its employees in a fair manner and when consumers are asked to pay a reasonable price for good quality. Turkish consumers, on the other hand, indicated that corporations' biggest responsibility is satisfying consumers. Corporations' consumer-related responsibilities consist of a wide range of attributes including quality, product durability, after sales support and service quality. Some participants also stressed that corporations should be environmentally responsible. Recycling, waste reduction and renewable energy are some aspects that corporations are expected to further implement.

It is worth noting that consumers from both countries felt that CSR is part of a marketing strategy. According to the opinion of the focus groups, regardless of the country, CSR should be employed at corporate level rather than being held as a separate strategy for a marketing purpose. Turkish and Spanish participants stressed that, in their opinion, CSR can be considered not part of such marketing strategies only when the corporation integrates it into the business model. This result allows us to conclude that consumer perception of CSR is similar in both countries, as no differences in power distance have been encountered. That is, there is empirical evidence of a reasonable similarity in the perception of CSR among participant from both countries. This finding is in line with Öberseder et al. (2013) who stated that corporations were expected to be more credible, and with the fact that there are two types of corporations involved in sustainable actions. A first group involves multinational corporations that want to break into "green" actions to gain market share, while the second is composed of smaller corporations that adapted their business models to establish their own brand associated with these positive environmental attributes. The focus groups with Turkish participants revealed that multinational corporations were expected to encourage governments to improve the regulations. Due to its multinational nature, the fashion and apparel industry involves different countries, facilities, groups or individuals. Turkish consumers argued that frameworks and regulations had some legal holes in some countries. Therefore, multinational fashion enterprises are strongly expected to improve legal conditions and have local standards improved rather than taking advantage of them. This supports the ideology that CSR should be held at a governmental level. Turkish consumers emphasized that governments were also responsible for social welfare; CSR-related activities should thus be strictly monitored.

### 5.2. The influence of cultural values on CSR awareness

The majority of the participants from both countries stressed that they did not check or ask where fashion garments came from. This finding suggests that, in both countries, CSR awareness does not intervene while purchasing. Although, Spanish participants indicated that social awareness in society was growing, it is still not seen as a direct enabler to respond positively. During the interviews, there was a common theme that CSR-related problems or social scandals would be forgotten fast. Several of the participants agree that since those incidents happen far away from Spain, consumers do not feel affected in person. This finding suggests an interesting perspective: when a Spanish person or group is affected directly, other Spaniards would consider punishing the corporation that causes the incident, in the so-called "My People" approach. Even though Spanish participants do not punish the corporations due to previous social records, they would respond negatively when their local communities are in danger. When Turkish participants were inquired, the majority of participants agreed that corporations would be punished if their local communities were to encounter a social scandal. Though, Turkish participants also indicated that under normal circumstances, they

would not consider what happened in other countries or what previous social records were. That is, for both countries a change of mentality, which involves thinking about punishing the corporation, could be observed when their local communities encounter a social challenge or scandal. The consistency in Spanish and Turkish consumers' perceptions of how to respond to a social scandal suggests that CSR awareness is low and similar for both countries, as their cultures are of a collectivist nature. It can be termed "low" as no influence of geographically far scandals affect them as consumers. But at the same time, the worry for the well-being of local communities is present in both countries. This is attributed to the dominance in both Turkish and Spanish culture of the collectivist dimension over the individualist. While people in individualist societies look after themselves and their immediate nuclear families, in collectivist cultures children are taught to think in terms of "we" rather than "I", which justifies the mentioned result. Moreover, it was articulated that individualistic cultures would value "explicit CSR" by which corporations address social issues through their CSR actions (Matten & Moon, 2008). Contrarily, collectivist cultures tend to value "implicit CSR" by which corporations address social issues through some other voluntary actions in a much wider scope. Apart from the abovementioned issues, other issues arose as findings of this research. Participants from both countries expect fashion corporations to hold explicit CSR strategies by which consumers could be well informed and convinced, and conditions would be precisely improved. Furthermore, participants from both countries stated that education would be an important indicator to assess and respond to CSR. In that sense, Northern European countries were believed to be more aware and conscious regarding CSR due to their socio-economic situation than Spain and Turkey.

### **5.3. CSR impact on consumer behaviour via exemplification**

During the interviews, the participants were inquired to prioritize their purchase criteria. Participants of both countries claimed that self-interest and personal values were the biggest influences. Particularly, Spanish consumers indicated that price and product attributes (i.e. design and quality) were their main criteria. Similarly, Turkish respondents indicated that price, product durability and quality were their main criteria to purchase. This stresses that both Spanish and Turkish consumers would choose products with responsible attributes when explicitly asked. However, their actual purchase decision is based on other practical criteria, regarding the purchase criteria. These findings show that CSR is not the most dominant criteria within the purchase decision-making process. Price, quality, branding and other product attributes are considered relevant and decisive factors in the purchase decision. An evidence of the validity of the result is Pookulangara and Shephard's (2013) theory, which argues that regardless of the awareness level, price, design and quality have greater impacts on purchase behaviour. In order to find out if the participants would choose products with responsible attributes when explicitly inquired, an exemplification was employed, through the depiction of two products A and B.

- Product A: One garment that is desired to be possessed by the consumers. It is unique, cheap and accessible. However, the fashion brand is associated with social scandals and it was exposed to the media.
- Product B: One garment with standard attributes, nothing is original. It is accessible and affordable. However, the fashion brand is investing in improving the social conditions of workers.

When participants were explicitly asked which one they would choose, the majority of both Spanish and Turkish consumers answered that, even though price would be the essential purchase criteria, they would rather buy Product B, the socially responsible one than buy Product A, associated with social scandals. When asked to elaborate, participants stated that they would not support bad working conditions. This is a contradiction, as participants had previously declared that social records did not affect their purchase criteria. Therefore, this could be attributed to the emergence of some traces of feminine values present in both Spanish and Turkish cultures, that show social awareness when inquired about it, but that is surpassed and smoothed by the actual strong collectivist values that drive the overall national culture of participants. This was proved with a further brainstorming on this issue, in which all participants agreed that after a certain time, social scandals in distant countries would

not be remembered and most likely, consumers would keep purchasing the brand. Another interesting theme emerged during the interviews with Spanish consumers. The majority of the participants argued that fast fashion products were not of quality, irrespective of the brand or the category, meaning that consumers spent money on a brand name rather than quality. Contrarily, the majority of Spanish participants agreed that local manufacturers had better quality than fast fashion retailers. However, since international fashion retailers' products are relatively affordable and names are more known, people keep purchasing in spite of knowing that regular merchandise would not last long.

#### **5.4. Transparency of CSR communication**

The findings revealed that in order for consumers to respond to CSR, they should be fully informed. Transparency is an important indicator for the communication of CSR (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013). Both Spanish and Turkish responders indicated that the communication of CSR was not sufficient and consumers could not comprehend the intentions, purposes and CSR reality. Due to this communication lack, consumers are not aware of the corporations' entire CSR missions. There is a general consensus arguing that corporations should deploy CSR into their business models; yet consumers react sceptically since the majority perceives fashion retailers' CSR actions as marketing tactics. The main idea all respondents agreed upon was that transparent disclosure was needed. Turkish participants argued that in order to prevent them from being suspicious, fashion retailers should answer what, why and how questions regarding their CSR strategies. Spanish consumers claimed not to be aware of Spanish fast fashion retailers' CSR actions. Some Turkish participants suggested that if multinational fashion retailers would allow consumers to engage in social actions, these would be more easily perceived, and would contribute to the corporation's reputation. This shows that consumers respond to CSR actions when they are appropriately disclosed. The implication is clear; corporations should examine their strategies and channels of CSR for a better communication.

#### **6. Conclusions and implications**

In this paper, exploratory research was conducted by utilizing the focus group methodology. The influence of CSR actions adopted by global fashion and apparel brands on consumer behaviour, and an intermediate effect of cultural differences on consumer perception were investigated by comparing two important yet culturally different fashion markets, Spain and Turkey. Based on our findings, some important insights could be derived in terms of academic as well as managerial implications. The subject of this study was raised due to a lack of research in existing literature dealing with the relationship between CSR and consumers' behavioural outcomes in a cross-cultural setting.

In particular, consumer background, and the intermediate effect of culture were neglected while studying ethical standpoints in marketing literature. Having obtained a sufficient base of information – from six focus groups featuring 36 end-consumers—the extent to which (1) CSR is perceived, (2) cultural values affect CSR awareness and (3) CSR awareness could influence purchase decision of global end-consumers' were identified.

Results demonstrated that two countries under study could be regarded as sharing many of their cultural values, despite their geographical distance and historical background differences. Both countries can be identified with collectivist culture, although Turkey scores higher in the rank. The importance of the collectivist dimension in the culture of both countries has proved to be determinant in the development of consumer awareness towards CSR. While participants of both countries show concern about the well-being of local communities, a lack of interest in the manufacturing conditions of fast fashion retailers in distant countries has been encountered. Moreover, CSR awareness of consumers from both countries has been found to be low. Regarding the credibility of multinational fashion brands' CSR actions, it can be concluded that consumers, regardless of the country, perceive CSR actions as part of the marketing strategies. This brings a negative influence on consumer perception. Contrarily, when corporations integrate CSR actions into their business models, consumers' perceptions are positively affected. Furthermore, multinational fashion corporations are

expected to become change agents towards enhancing local regulations. Another finding is that the criteria that determine the purchase decision is governed by self-interest, mainly price, design and product durability. However, a contradiction has been detected between attitudes and behaviours. Even though the intention is to avoid purchasing from brands that have bad social records, people actually do not avoid doing so. Therefore, it can be stressed that practical issues mainly motivate purchase decisions. This is attributed to the fact that both countries' collectivist dimension prevails over their femininity dimension. A difference between participants from both countries has been found with regard to their demand for more regulation towards CSR in their local setting. While this was an important issue for Turkish interviewees, the Spaniards did not mention it. This difference is attributed to the only noticeable dissimilarity in cultural dimensions between these countries, the higher Turkish score in collectivism. Finally, transparency in CSR disclosure is not sufficient in the opinion of participants from both countries. Therefore, appropriate communication of CSR is required for a positive consumer response.

Results suggest that, the level of awareness is often low among consumers, regardless of their country. This could imply that such fashion brands must leverage their communication strategies to increase the awareness. Pressure to adopt CSR practices is expected to come from brand-owning fashion companies in order to lead to a proactive approach in the industry. Nevertheless, end-consumers stress that CSR has been acknowledged as a part of marketing campaigns, hence a positive association among consumers and CSR is hard to obtain. In this vein, fashion companies must implement strategies with a clear message of what is intended and what has been and not been accomplished. Providing clearer information, disclosing performance results, and giving real-life examples could improve consumer interest in CSR. Even though, CSR perception is low and consumers were not found so eager to change their behavioural outcomes, there is an inclination in society to support business models aiming at meeting societal needs. It could be depicted that CSR knowledge is like water in a pot, which requires time to boil. Once the water starts boiling, the pot would not resist the pressure, and the boiling water would overflow. CSR takes time to be well perceived and get boiled. The message thus should be clear, real and more transparent. End-consumers are in need of affordable yet healthier business practices. Nevertheless, to boil the water of CSR, companies must invest in communication to leverage the process. Self-interest is an important parameter to take into account, for both consumers and companies. Thus, legislative compliance should intervene to move CSR beyond voluntary boundaries. Practical criteria, such as price and design, were observed dominating the purchase decision-making process. Nevertheless, once CSR is integrated into business models rather than being sold as a separate project in bespoke collections, consumers could feel the need in changing their behaviours toward supporting CSR. Monitoring suppliers, distributors and consumers is as equally important as implementing CSR practices along the value chain. Consumer awareness must aim to be increased by taking into account cultural values. Thus, companies are suggested to provide "easy-to-understand and easy-to-reach" information to increase knowledge among consumers across countries in terms of materials, performance measures, and social conditions behind the showcases. Lack of commitment was observed, and its negative effect on consumer identification was also noticed. To positively change this, communication must be improved. There is an increase in sustainability disclosure among fashion companies. Nonetheless, this proliferation could not be considered well received and understood. It is suggested that information should be better channelled on what companies are doing and aiming at. This study provides important academic contributions. A significant research gap, which is CSR impact on consumer behaviour in a cross-cultural setting, was contributed with a clear understanding of how CSR influenced purchase behaviour in two different yet significant countries for mainstream fashion market. In this vein, a contribution was made to consumer behaviour literature by showing how cultural values could change CSR perception, and how this perception could lead to purchase behaviour. Suggestions provided could extend the knowledge on how to balance CSR agendas, consumer expectations, and company objectives. Collaboration between societal and organizational theories, and a clear understanding of what could be done to make CSR become more understandable, and communicative must be the standpoint of any kind of CSR research, which was delivered as a key message of this study.

## 7. Avenue for future research

Given that the results for two countries could not take us to the saturation point, which is Spain and Turkey within this study, further research, which may help make more generalizable and comparable conclusions, is required. To achieve saturation of CSR impact on consumer behaviour in fashion and apparel industry, other countries could be studied and future research could deliver more comprehensive results out of cross-cultural settings. Afterwards, through comparison, it could even be useful to verify global results to enhance communication as well as the marketing strategies of fast fashion retailers.

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