

Sustainability Promises of Turkish Origin Apparel Brands in the Context of Greenwashing

Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi

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ABSTRACT

The fashion industry is vital in terms of the employment and endorsement it creates. However, in recent years, fashion brands have come to the fore with the damage it causes to the environment and ecosystem. The reasons, such as the increase in the environmental awareness of the consumers and the supranational regulations, force all businesses, from the manufacturers operating in the fashion industry to the intermediaries, to engage in green activities. Due to the pressure on business and the contribution of green marketing activities to the brand image, companies see greenwashing activities as a way out. This paper aims to investigate the sustainability activities of Turkish origin apparel brands and to examine the brands that carry out sustainable activities according to the greenwashing criteria as well. Finally, it has been determined that only 5 of the 25 apparel brands of Turkish origin conduct sustainability activities consistently. As a result of the research, it has also been revealed that only one brand could be consistently described as "green," and the other four brands are partially contaminated with greenwashing.

Keywords : *Sustainable fashion ; fast fashion ; green marketing ; greenwashing*

1. INTRODUCTION

By the industrial revolution, the abandonment of traditional production methods (starting to use of synthetic dyes and fibers instead of natural raw materials) and mass production in the textile industry have had devastating effects on the environment and ecosystem. Since the 1980s, fast fashion, a business model that shortens the design-production-sales cycle, has triggered consumption and created a constant desire to buy. In this context, while fast fashion increases consumption, it also creates economic, ecological, and social problems with the waste it creates (Metlioğlu & Yakın, 2021).

The fashion industry is a \$2.4 trillion industry that employs 300 million people worldwide. On the other hand, it is responsible for 2-8% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, 20% of the world's wastewater, \$100 billion lost due to inefficient use and lack of recycling, and 9% of annual microplastic spills into the oceans (Adamkiewicz et al., 2022). The quantities reveal the fashion industry's impact on the environment in two striking ways: The first one is the increased consumption and the resulting waste of clothing. It was estimated that approximately 35.4 billion pounds of clothing would accumulate in US landfills in 2019. (Diddi et al., 2019). The second is the damage to the environment during production. Three thousand litres of water, 2 kg of chemicals, and 400 mega-joules of energy are used for one single jean while 71 lbs of carbon dioxide are thrown out. It is known that in the USA, 2.5 million tons of textile waste in 1980 increased to 7.4 million tons in 1995 and 15.1 million tons in 2013 (Metlioğlu & Yak, 2021; Wallender, 2012). In summary, the fashion industry which has a tremendous economic power draws attention to its second-hand waste and the damage it causes to the environment during production.

Consumers are becoming more and more sensitive to the environment. It is alleged that the most of the Europeans (94%) care about environmental protection. They are particularly concerned about climate change, air pollution, and waste generation. The fashion industry significantly increases the environmental destruction, causing more greenhouse gas emissions than international aviation and shipping combined. In addition, it is argued that the fashion industry is the second place worldwide causing the water pollution and consumption, and that synthetic textiles are also the main source of primary microplastics in the oceans (Sailer et al., 2022). Marketing has been held partially responsible for environmental damage as it shortens the product life cycle and increases consumption and waste. This idea has caused the industry and marketing sectors to determine the needs and values of green marketing and to change the way they work and their strategies (Gilg & Barr, 2006; Nidumolu et al., 2009). On the other hand, there are claims that corporations adopt green marketing merely to gain a competitive advantage and avoid legal pressures rather than moral reasons (Singal et al., 2013). In addition, the fact that consumers' positive attitudes towards the environment only partially transform into behavior (only 4% of the 67% of consumers who reported environmental concerns purchased green products) (Hughner et al., 2007) pushes companies to appear green. Many consumers see no hesitation between purchasing fast fashion items and maintaining sustainability. Many studies show that people who need fast fashion items are less concerned about the environmental impact. Fast fashion products are particularly attractive to the consumers who prioritize fashion consumption and adopt a culture of impulse buying (Yaprak & Güzel, 2020). The “environmental needs” of the fast fashion industry are at risk of being overlooked by consumers, making it more likely for fast fashion companies to engage in misleading green marketing (Lu et al., 2022). Greenwashing is defined as a company's misleading description of its environmentalist activities or the effort it spends to promote itself as green than the actual effort it spends for the environment.

This paper aims to investigate the sustainability activities of Turkish origin apparel brands. In addition, the research is aimed to examine the brands that carry out sustainable activities according to the greenwashing criteria developed by TerraChoice. To be clear, is the fast fashion firm really green, or is it pretending to be “green” on the strength of fast fashion consumers who put environmental concerns in the background? The research seeks an answer to this question, and reviews about greenwashing and sustainable fashion are given in the literature review.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this section, after the process of transition from fast fashion to sustainable fashion is discussed, the literature about greenwashing, which occurs as a result of companies' abuse of green marketing, is included.

2.1. Fast Fashion and Sustainable Fashion

The fast fashion industry minimizes the purchasing cycle and duration of supply by updating products frequently. The fast fashion system combines short production cycles, fast distribution, and trendy designs. This production model allows fashion products to penetrate the market instantly. As a result, there is a significant increase in the frequency of fast fashion purchases compared to the purchasing cycles that traditional fashion companies plan for about one year (Alexa et al., 2021).

Low production costs and low prices make it easier to buy products more often and wear them for shorter periods (Anguelov, 2015; Jackson & Shaw, 2008). Thus, it

can be inferred that fast fashion brands promote “throw-away culture” and “single-use society” (Cooper, 2005). Globalization has contributed to the overconsumption of fashion products reaching alarming levels, as it has reduced clothing costs to disposable products. In recent years, many clothing brands have adopted a fast fashion business model, including cheap pricing, low-quality materials, and the following fashion. This adaptation has unnecessarily caused usable clothes to be thrown into the garbage (Diddi et al., 2019). Due to the fast fashion trend, the world population increased by one-fifth between 2000 and 2015, while the production of clothes doubled, and due to their cheapness, these clothes became wasted by wearing one-third less. The value of the clothes thrown away in the world in the same year exceeded 450 billion dollars (Kunzing, 2020).

Fashion and sustainability may seem like two inherently contradictory concepts; the former is defined by hedonism and short product life cycles, especially for fast fashion, while the second denotes ethics, durability, and reuse of products. The concept of sustainable fashion started with anti-fur campaigns in the 1980s. This situation has created social pressure on fashion companies and retailers. As a result, the sustainable fashion consumer movement started with *Vogue Magazine*, which made the environment a new trend in fashion (Lundblad & Davies, 2016).

Although consumption continues to increase worldwide, the level of social awareness of consumers is also increasing. People are becoming more aware of their social responsibilities, and they are increasingly worried about their consumption behavior's impact on the world. In 1994, at the Oslo Symposium, sustainable consumption was defined as “the use of services and related products that meet basic needs and provide a better quality of life while minimizing natural resources and emissions of waste and waste, as well as toxic substances, so that the needs of future generations are not endangered” (McNeill & Venter, 2019). Sustainability also refers to an ecological system that maintains the balance between man and the environment as the user of its resources (Farley & Hill, 2015).

Sustainable fashion refers to sustainable clothing products that address social and environmental sustainability from one or more perspectives, do not harm the environment or employees, and use biodegradable materials and/or organic cotton. There is no single definition of sustainable fashion; however, the concept broadly refers to a series of corporate initiatives to “correcting various perceived wrongs in the fashion industry, including animal cruelty, environmental damage, and worker exploitation” (Han et al., 2017). Sustainable fashion is also a part of the movement in the fashion industry called slow fashion, which is based on a philosophical ideal focused on sustainability values such as good working conditions and reducing environmental degradation. While this concept encourages slow production and reduced consumption of fashion, it shifts the mindset of consumers from quantity to quality (Bianchi & Gonzalez, 2021).

Sustainability has three main components. The first is environmental sustainability, which includes all issues related to the environment, depletion of natural resources, and climate change. In terms of fashion, this field covers areas such as non-toxic production and the use of environmentally friendly materials. Second, social sustainability focuses on the well-being, health, and overall quality of life of communities and individuals. In the fashion industry, this field deals with working conditions, wages, and human rights for everyone involved in the production process. The third is economic sustainability, and economic success should co-occur with environmental and social areas (Orminski et al., 2021).

One of the main issues for the fast fashion companies is the sustainability as the industry has complex environmental and social consequences for production and consumption. However, in the context of global marketing, there is a constant pressure

that consumption and well-being should go hand in hand with sustainability. Therefore, more and more companies have started using green marketing to create or maintain a positive company image (Alexa et al., 2021).

2.2. Greenwashing

Marketing has been held partially responsible for environmental damage as it shortens the product life cycle, and increases consumption and waste. This idea has caused the industry and marketing sectors to determine the needs and values of green marketing and to change how they work and their strategies (Gilg & Barr, 2006; Nidumolu et al., 2009). In the 1990s, green marketing became a green movement, and the 1990s decade was declared the "*age of green revolution*" (Vandermerwe & Oliff, 1990). Using toxin-free ingredients and environmentally friendly processes in manufacturing products has been recognized as an essential feature of green marketing (Garau & Ranchhod, 2005).

Green marketing refers to developing and marketing products deemed environmentally safe (www.ama.org). Sustainable Marketing defined as "*the process of planning, implementing and controlling the development, pricing, promotion, and distribution of products in a manner that satisfies the following three criteria: (1) customer needs are met, (2) organizational goals are attained, and (3) the process is compatible with eco-systems*" (Fuller, 1999). We can list the reasons why organizations start green marketing as follows; it provides a competitive advantage, it is more ethical, the pressure of competitors' environmental activities, and the increasing pressure of governments on the environment (Singal et al., 2013). Most of the reasons listed above are an element of pressure, so organizations do not fully adopt green marketing. This situation causes companies to try to appear green.

In the last decade, stakeholders such as investors, consumers, governments, and corporate customers have increased pressure on companies to disclose information about their environmental performance and environmentally friendly products (Netto et al., 2020). However, research shows that consumers are more inclined to "*if they believe that a brand will protect the environment, they will prefer one brand to another*" and take more positive attitudes toward these brands (Alexa et al., 2021). Nielsen Media Research found that 66% of global consumers are willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products. It has been found that when these customers perceive companies as socially responsible, they are more willing to purchase products from them at a higher price (Netto et al., 2020). On the other hand, green marketing is thought to exaggerate environmental claims and neglect consumer behavior (Gordon et al., 2011). As a result, the gap between consumers' environmental attitudes and green purchasing behavior is observed (Lee, 2008; Peattie & Crane, 2005). The data support this notion. While 30% of UK consumers expressed concerns about the environment, this attitude rarely transformed into actual purchases. Similarly, only 4% of the 67% of consumers who reported environmental concerns purchased green products (Hughner et al., 2007).

Similarly, it is argued that while consumers have environmentalist attitudes, they do not exhibit environmental behavior at the same level (Han et al., 2017; Park & Lin, 2020; McNeill & Moore, 2015). A couple of research shows that consumers seem reluctant to embrace sustainable fashion. Many consumers exhibit inconsistent pro-sustainability attitudes and sustainable consumption behaviors. McKinsey's 2014 global fashion market research reveals that fashion consumers are becoming more environmentally conscious, but surprisingly few are willing to pay more for eco-friendly products. This situation creates the "*paradox of sustainability in fashion.*" In other words, while consumers express their sustainability concerns and expect fashion companies to show social responsibility, they do not exhibit sustainable consumption behavior themselves (Han et al., 2017; Black, 2008; Jacobs et al., 2018; McNeill & Moore, 2015).

Other studies show an intention-behavior gap between consumers' concerns and intentions about sustainability and their purchasing behavior in sustainable fashion (Connell & Kozar, 2014; Niinimäki, 2010).

It has been determined that the more consumers are conscious of sustainability, the less they buy new products, and they mostly prefer alternatives such as second-hand and rental. Price is still a crucial criterion for the average consumer when he/she purchases. The reasons behind the attitude of not turning into buying; it has been seen that consumers' lack of trust in companies and their sustainability statements prevents them from buying sustainable products or making it more often. Therefore, firms should invest in concrete actions to be perceived as more transparent and reliable (Riesgo et al., 2022).

While many fashion brands/retailers embark on challenging sustainability projects focusing on reducing their environmental footprints, creating a better working environment, and improving the social impact of sustainable fashion, apparel manufacturing is still a process that consumers do not fully understand (Shen et al., 2012). Companies turn to greenwashing because consumers do not have enough information about the production processes, and their attitudes toward environmental products have not turned into behavior.

As for the historical line, the greenwashing began in the 1960s when a group of activists thought the largest energy companies were not as honest as they were when making environmental claims (Marciniak, 2009). The greenwashing accusation was first reported by activist Jay Westerveld in 1986 when hotels began asking guests to reuse towels. It became clear that this was a company's claim to be a water-saving strategy, but not taking action on more significant environmental impacts (Netto et al., 2020).

There are many definitions of greenwashing in the extant literature. Greenwashing is "misleading/deceiving consumers that it is engaged in environmental activities or has products/services that offer environmental benefits" (Chen & Chang, 2013, p. 489). In other definitions, it is seen that companies show their cats as environmentalists even though they are not, and they eliminate negative company information about the environment and highlight the positive ones (Parguel et al., 2011; Lyon & Maxwell, 2011; Delmas & Burbano, 2011). Greenwashing is defined as a company's misleading description of its environmentalist activities or the effort it spends to promote itself as green than the actual effort it spends for the environment. In other words, in greenwashing, only a tiny part of an environmental practice or activity is emphasized. In contrast, all other practices negatively affecting the environment are hidden, and the firm presents itself as more sustainable than it is (Adamkiewicz et al., 2022).

Greenwashing strategies are popular among firms as they strengthen the brand image, reduce capital costs, and increase revenues by attracting green consumers and investors. However, it has been determined that the more consumers perceive greenwashing about the company, the less their intention to purchase related products will decrease. In addition, it has been observed that consumers with high impulse buying levels are more sensitive to the financial risk caused by greenwashing behavior (Lu et al., 2022).

Although it is known that advertisements are subject to strict control and consumers react negatively to greenwashing, why do companies resort to greenwashing? A 1991 study found misleading claims in 58% of all green advertisements in selected US magazines from 1989 to 1990. A study of German and British green print ads over the next two decades (1993–2009) classified 77% of these ads as potentially deceptive (Sailer et al., 2022). The reasons for this situation are that companies need to look as if they are environmentalist due to the pressure of consumers, green performance determination, and the lack of criminal responsibility for greenwashing (Delmas &

Burbano, 2011). In addition, it has been determined that growing companies are forced to be green by their stakeholders and efficient from within the organization. They are in a dilemma and turn to greenwash (Kim & Lyon, 2015). Consumers also have a share in the increase in greenwashing. Although companies tend to greenwash, it is argued that consumers' purchasing green products to gain status and show off in society increases these tendencies of companies (Lorianne & Ramey, 2011).

Studies show that despite the economic recession in the 2000s, green advertising has increased with the demand for green products. Compared to the 1980s, it has been determined that green claims are more accurate, and the rate of the definition of green claims as greenwashing has decreased. Additionally, it has been determined that consumers' perception of greenwashing decreases when companies act honestly and state in their advertisements that they make environmental investments for economic reasons rather than environmental reasons (Vries et al., 2015). This situation also shows the improvement in green advertisements (Segev et al., 2016).

Green skepticism is one of the obstacles to green marketing in addition to greenwashing. Valid green promises will suffer from this growing skepticism, as it is difficult for customers to discern the credibility of green marketing initiatives. Green marketing firm TerraChoice has published a study to help customers identify companies with the seven sins of greenwashing (Netto et al., 2020). It pointed out in its 2009 report that 98% of products that make environmental claims are guilty of at least one type of green laundering. By 2010, the number of green products offered in North American stores increased by 73%, while the greenwash rate remained virtually unchanged, above 95% (TerraChoice, 2007).

3. METHODOLOGY

In this study, which is a qualitative research, the websites of Turkish clothing brands operating in Turkey have been examined according to the content analysis within the scope of sustainability activities. Content analysis, a qualitative research method, is systematic, unbiased, and, if desired, digitizes the data to measure the variables in a text (Bayram & Yaylı, 2009). A search was made on Google using the keywords "Turkish origin apparel brands" between 1-3 November 2022. Following the limitation of the research, Turkish origin shoe and accessory brands were excluded. Thus, 24 Turkish origin apparel brands were included in the study to be examined. As a result of the preliminary investigation, no evidence of sustainability was found in 15 (62%) of the 24 brands. It was found that four brands (17%) only mentioned sustainability superficially, and it was determined that 5 (21%) brands attach more importance to sustainability and even have sustainable clothing collections. Based on this, it has been concluded that the majority of the big clothing brands in Turkey need to give the necessary importance to the issue of sustainability. Table 1 summarizes the clothing brands in Turkey and their sustainability situation.

Table 1. Turkish Origin Apparel Brands and Sustainability Activities

#	Brand	Sustainability Activities
1	LCW	LCW Green Collection
2	Koton	Yaşama Saygı Collection
3	Mavi	Mavi All Blue Collection
4	DeFacto	Defacto Life
5	Roman	Mindful Collection
6	LittleBig	Smattering
7	Colins	Smattering
8	Silk and Cashmere	Smattering
9	Desa	Smattering
10	Altınyıldız	No evidence
11	Beymen	No evidence
12	İpekyol	No evidence
13	Vakko	No evidence
14	Sarar	No evidence
15	Kıgılı	No evidence
16	Hetemoğlu	No evidence
17	Ds Damat	No evidence
18	Süvari	No evidence
19	Twist	No evidence
20	Jakamen	No evidence
21	Mudo	No evidence
22	Network	No evidence
23	Yargıcı	No evidence
24	Karaca	No evidence

Are the five brands that claim to be sustainable and produce sustainable product collections for this purpose sustainable as they claim? To what extent do brands with sustainability promises take concrete steps? After the preliminary examination carried out within the scope of the research, it was stated that most of the 24 brands (79%) still needed to make the promise of sustainability. In other words, a secondary examination was conducted to test whether the five identified brands were greenwashing. In this context, the websites of 5 brands were examined according to the “*six sins of greenwashing*” criteria developed by TerraChoice. These criteria are briefly summarized below (TerraChoice, 2007):

- **Sins of Hidden Trade-off:** It refers to asserting that a product is "green" by emphasizing a single environmental attribute or a few unreasonable attributes while not paying attention to much more critical environmental issues (such as energy, global warming, and water use). Such promises are usually not false but are made to appear more environmentally friendly than they are. For instance, the paper towel manufacturer emphasizes its recycled content without considering the environmental effects (air emission, water emission, global warming) during production.

- **Sins of No Proof:** Any environmental claim that cannot be verified with easily accessible supporting information or a trusted third-party certification falls under the Sin of Unproven. For example, lighting manufacturers claim energy efficiency without supporting evidence or certification.
- **Sins of Vagueness:** It refers to a weak or broad definition of the true meaning of the brand's promise of sustainability, which leads to misunderstanding by the intended consumer. For example, the Mobius cycle shows that the product is recycled. Uncertainty prevails in matters such as whether the entire product or only the package is made of 100% recycled material.
- **Sins of Irrelevance:** It refers to "green" promises that may be true within the product category. However, that risk distracts the consumer from the more enormous environmental impacts of the category. For example, the use of environmental attributes such as "organic" when the category of cigarettes is questionable in terms of environmental values.
- **Sin of Lesser of Two Evil:** It refers to "green" promises that may be true within the product category, but that risk distracting the consumer from the larger environmental impacts of the category as a whole. For example, the use of environmental attributes such as "organic" when the category of cigarettes is questionable in terms of environmental values.
- **Sins of Fibbing:** It refers to the completely false promise of sustainability. For instance, dishwasher detergent that uses plastic packaging, although it claims to use "100% recycled paper" packaging.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Five Turkish origin apparel brands were examined according to the greenwashing criteria developed by TerraChoice, within the scope of the research.

LCW

The LCW brand has released the "*LCW Green Collection*" within sustainability. The brand defines its collection as "*uses recycled cotton and recycled polyester; we produce products "in the name of nature" with less water, less chemical use, vegetable dyeing techniques and the production of colored cotton from nature.*" Abide by this promise, the brand is expected to prove that it uses recycled cotton, polyester, and less water and chemicals.

Certification

In this context, they certify the products in the LCW Green Collection according to internationally accepted certification programs. The productions are made with fabrics whose traceability is followed within the scope of GRS (Global Recycle Certificate) or RCS (Recycle Claim Certificate), and are inspected by independent inspection organizations in accordance with recycling criteria. Furthermore, organic cotton produced with good agricultural practices contributes to biodiversity and seed continuation protection. They certify the organic products in their collections and the products and processes of these products within the scope of internationally accepted certification programs (Global Organic Textile Standard and Organic Content Standard).

Water and Energy Saving

40% less water is used in the production of jeans. Even with only women's jeans in the LCW Green Collection, 130,000 liters of water were saved. In order to save energy, 16,400,000 KWh of electrical energy was saved in one year with the transformation of the stores into LED signboards and luminaires. This figure is as high

as the annual electricity need of 5500 houses. Similarly, 8,500,000 KWh of electricity was saved by the automatic conversion of electrical systems in stores. The pilot study in 50 stores saved an amount as high as the annual electrical energy need of 2850 residences.

Chemical Use

The brand aims to reduce its chemical footprint within the scope of its chemical compliance policy. In this context, chemicals such as AZO, phthalates, heavy metals, and formaldehyde, known to be harmful to human health, are prohibited at any stage of production. In order to protect water, soil, air, and living health during production, to preserve ecological balance, and not to harm biodiversity, they have carried out more than 3 million ecological tests on 360 thousand samples in the last year in their laboratories, which have international accreditation and are inspected by independent institutions. These analyses determine whether the chemicals used in production pose a risk to textile products, and the suitability of wastewater discharge is checked. All necessary tests regarding APEO, permanent organic pollutants, and heavy metal chemicals that pose a risk to environmental health are also carried out. Moreover, the use of chemicals in jean products in the LC Waikiki Green Collections has been reduced by 30 percent. Gas emissions from air conditioning systems play an essential role in global warming. Following their ecological compliance policies, they have revised the gas systems used in air conditioners in all their stores worldwide with versions that do not harm the ozone layer.

Animal Rights

The brand imposes restrictions on the use of materials of animal origin or uses methods and certification processes that will not harm animals. Certified materials are preferred, especially for goose-down coats and coats in outerwear products. RDS (Responsible Down Certificate) certified goose and bird feathers are used in these products, which we can monitor the supply chain and obtain without harming living things. When the LCW is examined, it is seen that the company has taken and documented a series of steps in the areas of energy and saving, the use of certified organic products, reducing the use of chemicals, avoiding the use of heavy metals that are harmful to the environment, and respect for animal rights, which have essential effects on sustainability, as summarized above. In this context, the LCW has successfully passed six greenwashing criteria.

KOTON

Koton released the “*Yaşama Saygı Collection*” (Respect the Life Collection) within the scope of sustainability. While describing this collection, Koton claimed to use less water, recycled materials, and organic cotton. However, no evidence was found regarding the above promises on the collection's website and the page where product specifications are given. Only products concerning life collection contain Better Cotton Initiative (BCI)* cotton. BCI (Better Cotton Initiative) is a non-profit program created to enable millions of worldwide farmers to produce cotton in healthier conditions. With the pride of being the first brand to become a BCI member in Turkey, Koton supports implementing sustainable agriculture principles in cotton production. On the web page of the Saygı collection of Koton brand, only supporting evidence for the use of organic cotton was found among the claims of using less water, recycled materials, and organic cotton. Evidence for other promises was not available. In this context, it can be stated that the brand has committed sins of no proof.

MAVI

For the products of MAVI, “*All Blue collection*”, organic, recycled, or Better Cotton licensed cotton, recycled polyester, and sustainable materials are used. Fiber materials developed with sustainable methods are 100% vegan, and recycled content paper is used in their labels. MAVI Hemp Denim (sustainable Jean brand) is manufactured with minimal water consumption with Hemp plant grown only with rain water. By the use of recycled cotton, sewing threads, and materials and the use of eco-friendly buttons made of hazelnut shells, it contributes to sustainability with less energy use with fewer processes. All Blue products are produced with efficient technologies that consume less water and energy than conventional production techniques. In this context, 26% less water consumption and 24% less energy use are achieved. It is still being determined whether the savings realized here apply to all products or the sustainable collection. In this context, it can be stated that the brand has committed sins of no proof.

DeFACTO

Defacto has released the “*DeFacto Life Collection*” with the promise of sustainability. Although the brand has set 2023, 2030, and 2050 targets on its sustainability web page, it has yet to include what it is doing about sustainability today. It has been concluded that the brand has stuck to the sins of hidden trade-off, sins of no proof, and sins of vagueness criteria since it only focuses on a small point and does not provide sufficient evidence while making a sustainability claim and not mentioning more critical issues such as energy saving and chemical use.

ROMAN

Roman has released the “*Mindful Collection*” as a part of sustainability. It is stated that recycled materials are used in environmentally friendly products with the Mindful label. When the web page is examined, it is seen that the sustainable product portfolio is narrow, and only 39% recycled polyester is used. It can be said that the brand has committed sins of hidden trade-off, sins of no proof, and sins of vagueness since it only focuses on a small point and does not provide sufficient evidence while making its sustainability claim and not mentioning more critical issues such as energy saving and chemical use.

Table 2. Evaluation of Turkish Origin Apparel Brands in the Context of Greenwashing

#	Sins of Hidden Trade-off	Sins of No Proof	Sins of Vagueness	Sins of Irrelevance	Sin of Lesser of Two Evil	Sins of Fibbing
LCW	Na	Na	Na	Na	Na	Na
Koton	Na	Available	Na	Na	Na	Na
Mavi	Na	Available	Na	Na	Na	Na
DeFacto	Available	Available	Available	Na	Na	Na
Roman	Available	Available	Available	Na	Na	Na

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As a result of this research, which focused on the contents of the websites of Turkish origin apparel brands, no evidence was found regarding sustainability in the

majority of the 24 brands examined. This finding, representing more than 60% of apparel brands of Turkish origin, shows that sustainability, adopted by many sector initiatives from banking to electronics and central and local governments, needs to be given more importance or ignored in the apparel industry. Although there is some evidence of sustainability on the websites of only four brands examined, it can be said that sustainability needs to be adopted holistically. This finding implies that businesses consider sustainability as if they were on the sustainability train, that is, as a greenwashing activity. On the other hand, it was concluded that about 20% of the Turkish origin apparel brands examined within the scope of the study adopted sustainability as a business policy. In brief, these findings suggest that brands operating in the apparel industry have a long way to go regarding sustainability.

Although brands have consistently embraced sustainability, they can commit several sins that harm their sustainable brand image. In addition to referring to the sustainability theme on their websites, brands that produce sustainable collections can also be involved in these sins. It has been found that LC Waikiki, which aims to dress individuals of all ages and socio-cultural classes by adopting the strategy of penetrating the market, has not committed any of the sins of greenwashing. It shows that the sustainability promises of the brand and its operations are entirely consistent. It was found that Koton, another Turkish origin apparel clothing brand, committed "sins of no proof," one of these sins. Although there are sustainable promises such as less water, recycled materials, and the use of organic cotton on Koton's website, the only evidence of the use of organic cotton has been found. In contrast, evidence of other promises has yet to be reached. Similarly, since Mavi does not support the claim that it produces with less water and energy consumption, it has been concluded that it operates "sins of no proof." The reason for the inference that Mavi is partially involved in this sin is that there is no clear evidence as to which products the brand's claim is valid or not. Finally, it can be inferred that DeFacto and Roman, two of the five brands that have clues about adopting sustainability with a holistic approach, are involved in three common sins: "sins of hidden trade-off," "sins of no proof," and "sins of vagueness." The reason for this is that although DeFacto sets 2023, 2030 and 2050 targets on its website, it does not include what it does concerning sustainability and does not provide sufficient evidence. Besides, Roman promises sustainability at a superficial level instead of addressing more critical issues such as energy saving or chemical use. As a result, in this study, it was concluded that only one of the Turkish origin apparel clothing brands adopts sustainable business activities as a policy without greenwashing.

6. CONCLUSION

The study offers a number of contributions and suggestions to both academics who will conduct their research in this field and marketing practitioners. First of all, there are several limitations of the research. In this study, only Turkish origin brands, only apparel brands and only the evidence of sustainability on the websites of these brands were examined. In addition, greenwashing activities were examined according to the "six sins of greenwashing" criteria. A series of suggestions can be presented to researchers who will carry out their studies in this field in the following years. For example, it is recommended that researchers do their research on the annual reports of the brands instead of the web pages of the brands they choose, and by using the content analysis method, one of the qualitative research methods. Similarly, researchers are advised to examine brands operating in sectors such as electronics, automotive or food, other than apparel brands. Moreover, researchers are advised to examine the brands that have evidence of greenwashing according to criteria other than "six sins of greenwashing" in the literature. Finally, researchers are advised to examine the impact of businesses' compliance with their sustainable promises on consumers' brand preferences. The results of the research offer a series of clues to businesses operating in the sector, and especially to marketing practitioners. If businesses adopt sustainability as a policy, it is

recommended that they include it on their web pages with clear and concise evidence. On the other hand, it is recommended that they should not ignore the fact that greenwashing activities used by brands as a "scam" may adversely affect the brand image, especially if consumers who want to have a high level of knowledge about the relevant brand while choosing brands realize this fact.

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