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The Impact of a Media Backlash and the Moderating Role of
Sustainable Development Goal #17 on the relationship between Well-
Established Brands and Consumers' Valuations

An analysis of the SDG #17 – Partnership for the Goals as a moderator on the relationship between a media backlash involving well-established brands (mainstream vs. sustainability-rooted) and consumers' brand valuations.

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There is no business to be done on a dead planet.

- David Brower, 2007

Title: The Impact of a Media Backlash and the Moderating Role of Sustainable Development Goal #17 on the relationship between Well-Established Brands and Consumers' Valuations.

Abstract

Across many irreversible damages, sourcing and production of food are highlighted as the major contributors to the ecological footprint outrage. These have been topics of action by modern environmental movements across the globe. Subsequently, organisations have been highly encouraged to take action and engage in a strategic framework that protects both society and business's needs through Purpose-driven initiatives. Despite some brands being built upon sustainability like Starbucks, others like Nestlé embrace purpose-driven orientation at a later maturity stage. In fact, the latter has been under scrutiny of several media backlashes due to alleged cases of misconduct, disappointing consumers, and affecting their trust, loyalty, perceived quality, ethicality, and paying behaviour towards the brand. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide an opportunity for brands to act together for a better future. Particularly, SDG #17 aims at encouraging cooperation between brands. A study was conducted to analyse the impact of media backlash over well-established (mainstream vs. sustainability-rooted) brands on consumers' valuations, and the performance of information about SDG #17 - Partnership for the Goals between brands as a moderator on this relationship. Results show that media backlash has significant negative impact on consumers' brand valuations. However, SDG #17 as an informative tool assurance of social and environmentally-friendly practices is still not enough to fully mitigate such negative impacts. Overall, the communication effect of SDGs can be a powerful tool to inform and guide brands through purpose-driven actions. Yet, organizations and brands still need to better communicate their embracement of social and environmental causes.

Keywords: Mainstream Brand, Sustainability-Rooted Brand, Media Backlash, Sustainable Development Goals, CSR, Purpose-Driven Business, Consumers' Brand Valuations.

Resumo

Entre muitos danos irreversíveis, o *sourcing* e a produção de alimentos são os principais contribuintes para a indignação da pegada ecológica e têm sido tema pelos movimentos ambientais modernos. Com isto, as organizações foram encorajadas a agir e adaptar uma estratégia que proteja as necessidades da sociedade e das empresas, por meio de iniciativas voltadas para o propósito corporativo. Apesar de algumas marcas serem construídas sobre sustentabilidade, como a Starbucks, outras adotam o propósito num estágio de maturidade tardio, como a Nestlé. Esta última tem estado sob escrutínio de *backlash* dos media, devido a alegados casos de má conduta, decepcionando os seus consumidores e afetando as suas avaliações perante a marca. Os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODSs), particularmente o ODS #17, oferecem uma oportunidade para as marcas atuarem juntas por um futuro melhor. Assim, um estudo foi conduzido para analisar o impacto do *backlash* dos media sobre marcas bem estabelecidas (*mainstream* vs. sustentáveis) nas avaliações dos consumidores e o desempenho da informação sobre ODS #17 - Parceria para os Objetivos como moderador da relação. Os resultados mostram que o *backlash* dos media tem impacto significativo nas avaliações. No entanto, o ODS #17 como ferramenta informativa de garantia de práticas sociais e ambientais ainda não é suficiente para mitigar totalmente esses efeitos negativos – pode, sim, ser uma ferramenta poderosa para informar e orientar as marcas por meio de ações com propósito. No entanto, as marcas e organizações ainda precisam de comunicar melhor acerca do seu contributo para causas sociais e ambientais.

Palavras-Chave: Marca *Mainstream*, Marca Enraizada na Sustentabilidade, *Backlash* dos Media, Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável, Responsabilidade Social Corporativa, Avaliação da Marca pelo Consumidor.

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List of Abbreviations

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility
SCSR – Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility
SDG – Sustainable Development Goal
FMCG – Fast Moving Consumer Goods
UN – United Nations

Introduction

1.1 Problem Definition and Relevance

The food industry is one of the largest industries in the globe, representing around 10% of the world's GDP (Plunkett Research, 2018). The sourcing and production of food are also one of the major contemporary environmental problem contributors (Maloni & Brown, 2006). Some of these issues are related to plastic waste contamination, water scarcity, deforestation, field employees living with less than a dollar a day, and children wasting their childhood working in crowded factories. Consequently, companies and associated brands are often under the scrutiny of public criticism and backlash across media platforms, which damage their reputation and consumers' perceptions. With that being said, brands are encouraged to take action to minimize the damages caused by media backlashes, in particular, since these scandals may lead to misinformation or manipulation, carrying out bad reputation and long-life scrutiny (Lee, Oh, & Kim, 2013). Taking action means engaging in more socially and environmentally responsible when it comes to doing business and ensure the planet's sustainability for future generations (Latapí Agudelo et al., 2019).

The sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) literature (Bowen, 1953; Carroll, 1999; Freeman, 2001; Lantos, 2001; Porter & Kramer, 2006) suggests that society has never had such a responsible and powerful voice, being able to communicate with brands and becoming increasingly exigent in terms of the impact they have on the planet (Rose, 2016). The CSR field brings a major reflection on the effects of brands' conduct on consumers' perceptions and behaviour including a brand's image. This is possible since over the past decade consumers are becoming more and more aware of social issues and how corporations are enablers of such actions, therefore, willing to establish deeper connections with brands that stand for a better world (Chung-Kue, 2017).

Specifically, well-known food brands have been under the media's spotlight lately, accused of being involved in some misfortune cases (Laville, 2020). By the end of 2020, an uncommon year where topics such as health, safety, and environment were all over the news due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Nestlé was nominated top plastic polluters for the third year in a row. This counter-achievement had a huge impact on such a brand, mainly due to social media backfire.

As consumers and organizations around the world are becoming increasingly aware of these issues, numerous lawsuits due to bad behaviours against humanity have been issued over this company (Gallimore, 2016; Selyukh, 2019). To illustrate, eight people presented themselves in the Washington court to accuse Barry Callebaut, Cargill, Hershey, Mondeléz, Mars, Nestlé, and Olam of child exploitation and illegal slavery on the cocoa plantations in Côte d'Ivoire (United States District Court, 2021).

Having in mind how damaging these incidents can be to companies and associated brands' business, one might question: *Is it too late for well-established mainstream brands that are under public scrutiny to mitigate such negative effects?*

1.2. Objectives and Research Problem

Hence, the primary focus of the present research is to examine the impact level that these types of unfortunate cases have on consumers' valuations of well-established brands. Specifically, the author analyses two distinct scenarios for two well-established brands: First, a mainstream one such as Nestlé, which is a 155 year-living brand that has recently been involved in scandals involving ethical and social concerns as reported in the media between 2020 and 2021 (Laville, 2020; Balch, 2021). Second, a sustainably-rooted brand – Starbucks, which has been established on strict social and environmental principles and has an outstanding ethical reputation worldwide amongst the food and beverage industry (Editors, 2021).

As previously mentioned, not only consumers are becoming more aware of their duty as citizens to safeguard the environment, but also governments and businesses are increasingly becoming enlightened about the necessity for a large-scale change towards sustainability-related issues. For instance, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the United Nations (UN) are a means by which business and institutional leaders along with NGOs came together to find effective solutions to combat threats related to the aforementioned cases. These potential solutions are a conjoint effort to exert a positive impact on people and the planet (United Nations, 2015). In particular, the author will focus on SDG #17:

Partnership for the Goals, which addresses the importance of cross-cooperation to achieve a common objective and strengthens the means to enliven global partnerships for sustainable development.

An example of a partnership of cooperation under SDG #17 is the one that was established between Nestlé and Starbucks brands. On May 6th, 2018, Nestlé announced a global coffee alliance with Starbucks, a multinational chain of coffeehouses and roastery, rooted in social impact and sustainable behaviour (Starbucks, 2021). According to Starbucks, (2018) the brands are committed to targeting an ethical and sustainable balance of the value chain, by leveraging the complementary strengths of each.

As a result, the following statements were issued by Starbucks and Nestlé (2018):

“This global coffee alliance will bring the Starbucks experience to the homes of millions more around the world through the reach and reputation of Nestlé,” said Kevin Johnson, Starbucks’ CEO.

“This transaction is a significant step for our coffee business (...) With Starbucks, Nescafé and Nespresso we bring together three iconic brands in the world of coffee. (...) Both companies have true passion for outstanding coffee and are proud to be recognized as global leaders for their responsible and sustainable coffee sourcing,” stated Mark Schneider, Nestlé’s CEO.

By joining forces to make coffee becoming the first truly sustainable product, the partnership between these two well-established brands aims to achieve long-term stakeholder value creation. Whether both brands benefit from this partnership, is not clear. That is, *is Starbucks expected to benefit from Nestlé’s reputation, or is it the other way around?*

To understand this gap, it is also necessary to understand consumers’ perceptions towards both brands. On one hand, Nestlé is a mainstream brand, a very well-established brand within the FMCG industry, and the largest food company in the world (Sorvino, 2019). It also a brand that is

under the media's scrutiny due to a recent backlash¹ related to supply chain misbehaviours, such as plastic pollution (Laville, 2020), and child slavery (Balch, 2021). Yet, the company assures to be aligned with CSR principles and practices. Peter Brabeck-Letmathe, Nestlé's former chief executive officer, guarantees that CSR is a non-negotiable commitment for the firm, inherent to Nestlé's business strategy, principles, and practices, representing the guide in which the firm operates (Foundation Strategy Group, 2006). Specifically, the company has been investing in CSR-related issues such as rural development, human rights, nutrition, water scarcity, and embracing environmental sustainability at the core of its business operations. It has been implementing programs such as "Amra Korbo Joy"² (2010), "Reciclar é Alimentar"³ (2010), and "Nestlé Healthy Kids"⁴ (2018). Additionally, it is also positioned as a purpose-driven company, committed to creating value for both firm and society over the long term (Foundation Strategy Group, 2006).

From an operations perspective, the company has been improving its operational chain: making investments in electric fleets, providing benefits to stakeholders who are environmental-friendly and training employees on how to behave according to the principle of shared-value creation. These along with other practices result from the purpose-driven restructuring program that Nestlé is implementing, aiming to reduce and reach net zero emissions by 2050, called "Accelerate, Transform and Regenerate" (Nestlé, 2020).

Starbucks, on the other hand, can be identified as a sustainability-rooted brand, which is carrying sustainability at its core since the firm's earliest years. As one of the world's most admired food and beverage companies, Starbucks is rooted in stakeholder cooperation, environmental protection, and community engagement. Among some of its initiatives include the development of a cup sleeve made from recycled materials to replace the two cup's heat protection method; the accomplishment of a 99% ethically sourced coffee, the partnership with different environmental,

¹ Backlash means a strong negative reaction to a change or recent events in society.

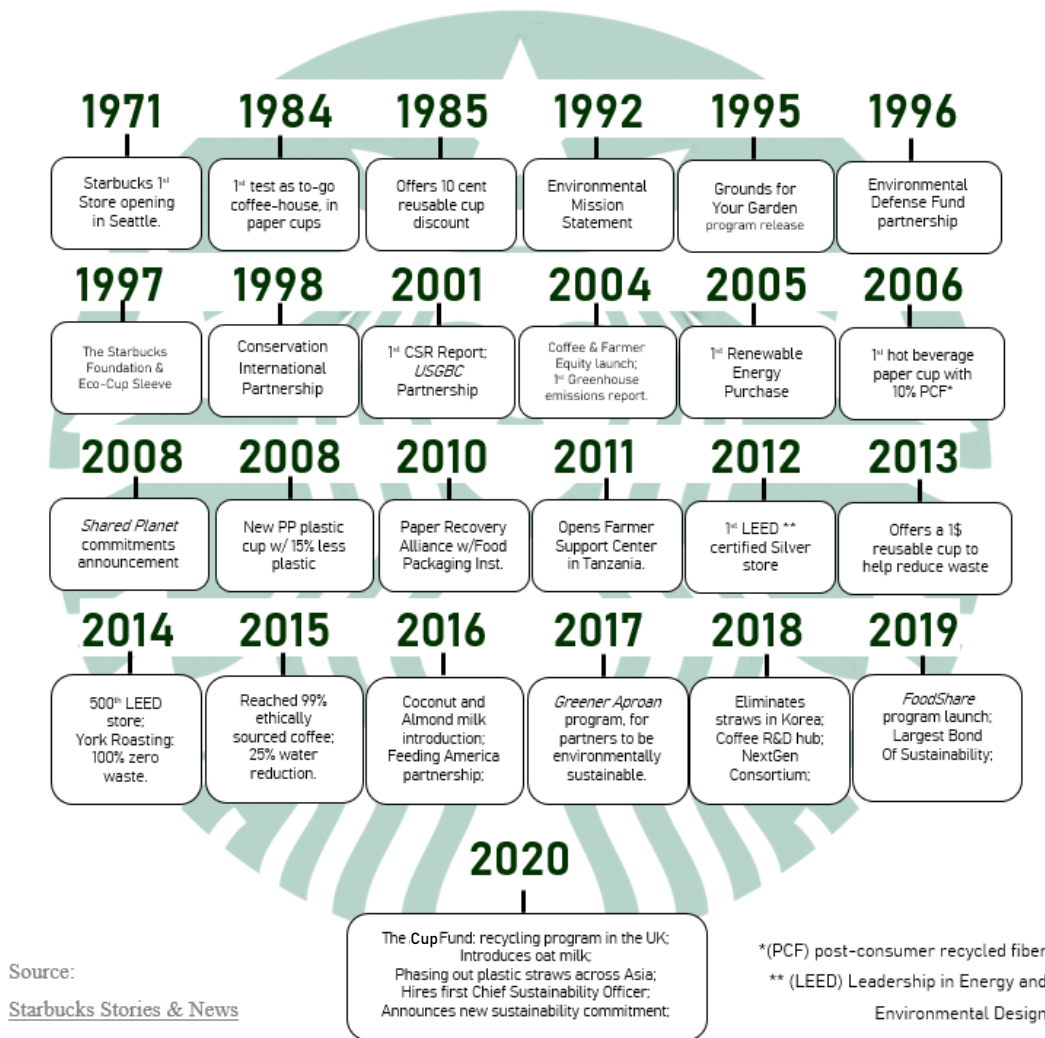
² "Amra Korbo Joy" program is based on Bangladesh local's NGO partnership, where Nestlé focus on farmers' livelihood enhancement.

³ "Reciclar é Alimentar" is the Nespresso's recycling program that aims to motivate consumers to recycle their capsules and give it a second life, where the aluminium is recycled and the coffee is donated to fertilize rice production centres in Portugal..

⁴ "Nestlé for Healthy Kids" is the Nestlé's program for nutrition education and water treatment in rural areas.

social, educational, and health NGO’s, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Retail program, the investment in research and development (R&D) for water waste, plastic recycling, and renewable energy, the implementation of recyclable, compostable and reusable cups, among others (Starbucks, 2021)). These are examples of achievements made by Starbucks over its fifty-years sustainable life – as seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Starbucks Sustainability Timeline



Furthermore, the main objective of this research is to analyse the impact of the partnership between these two well-established brands, Nestlé and Starbucks, has on consumers’ brand valuations. More specifically, it aims at analyzing how a media backlash impacts consumers’ brand valuations and whether the information about the partnership of cooperation between both brands, under SDG #17, helps mitigate the potential negative effects of such an event.

1.2.1 Research Questions

Based on the aforementioned arguments, the primary research question is focused on understanding how consumer's valuations about well-established brands (consumer trust, brand loyalty, perceived quality, purchase intentions, and consumer perceived ethicality) are impacted by their involvement in media backlashes.

RQ1: *How are consumers' valuations impacted by a media backlash from well-established brands?*

Additionally, the second research question aims to comprehend the differential impact, if any, of the brands' media backlash (mainstream – Nestlé vs. sustainability-rooted – Starbucks) on consumers' valuations.

RQ2: *What is the (differential) impact of a media backlash over well-established brands (mainstream vs. sustainability-rooted)?*

The third research question intends to disclose the impact of a purpose-driven partnership that aims to improve social and environmental issues, in light of SDG #17 also on consumers' brand valuations (consumer trust, brand loyalty, perceived quality, purchase intentions, and consumer perceived ethicality).

RQ3: *To what extent providing information about a partnership of cooperation like SDG #17 mitigates the potential negative effects from a media backlash over well-established brands?*

Literature Review

2.1 Sustainable Business

2.1.1 Corporate Social Responsibility

“The actions of companies have significant impacts on the lives of citizens in the EU and around the world. Not just in terms of the products and services they offer or the jobs and opportunities they create, but also in terms of working conditions, human rights, health, the environment, innovation, education, and training.”

(European Commission, 2019, p. 1)

The discussion that corporations must have a responsibility towards society has come in a long run. The seeds of CSR started to be shown in the post 2nd world war (Carroll, 1999), where the American federal government delivered huge significance when purposed corporations to expand resources under the business social responsibility. On behalf of profiting from free-market capitalism, the business should be aligned with business interests (Spector, 2008).

Around the second half of the 20th century, the Civil Rights Movement and anti-war campaigns (Waterhouse, 2017) started taking shape. Bowen (1953,p.6), the economist that established the backbone of CSR, referred to the obligations shareholders should have to take actions, pursue policies and regulate decisions that are established on top of the objectives and values of the society. Further, Bowen’s settled the fundamentals of the social responsibilities of a corporation, which also aimed at the improvement of a business’s responses towards achieving a social impact. This was considered by Carroll (2008) an approach way ahead of Bowen’s time, pointing him out as the “father of Corporate Social Responsibility” (Carroll, 1999).

By the end of the last century, Freeman (1994) introduces the Stakeholder Theory, also known as *stakeholder capitalism*, which acknowledges a response to the public interest, driven by a firm’s community and focused on the long-run valuable impact of the firm on society (Smith, 2001). Corporations became, then, more aware of the urgency to become responsible towards a broader set of stakeholders, and the need to manage the firm accordingly (Freeman, 2001).

The relationship between a firm and its stakeholders followed the need to be more effective and dynamic since the firm's influence structure was no longer placed on a vertical scale, but on a horizontal scale with different levels of influence between stakeholders (Friedman & Miles, 2002). This need answered society's demand for new corporate sustainable approaches that responded to inequality and environmental breaches scaled by the profit-centred capitalist model.

However, it was not until 1999, with the landmark speech of the former UN Secretary – Kofi Annan at the Davos' World Economic Forum - that the CSR discussion was placed in the global spotlight and gained another dimension. A more strategic but inclusive dimension, rooted in shared values and principles benefiting different stakeholders (United Nations Global Compact, 1999). This event resulted in the launch of the UN Global Compact, an organization that aims to create universal value through the markets by giving the tools to fulfil the social and environmental breaches of corporations. (Latapí Agudelo et al., 2019).

2.1.2 Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility

Further in history, Geoffrey Lantos (2001) went deeper into the previously mentioned approaches by Smith (2001), Friedman (2002), and Miles (2002), and recognized a new strategic point of view. That is, a company does not necessarily play in a socially responsible manner to carry out CSR under such a holistic path as the TBL but to generate profits and get financial returns. This view was the kick-off to an opportunity to rename CSR into Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility (SCSR) (Werther & Chandler, 2005; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Latapí Agudelo, 2019).

An example of a company with such strategy, that followed stakeholder capitalism (Freeman, 1994), is Mars, the world's second-leading manufacturer of chocolate (Statista, 2020). Mars created an initiative called Cocoa for Generations, a plan focus on the smallholder farmer that aims to protect children and forests while creating a pathway for cocoa farmers and communities to thrive. This initiative, not only ensured its mission of protecting the community and environment but ensured a fair price paid to farmers while benefiting from increased reputation and trust through the Fair Trade certification (Darnall et al., 2018).

Further, Porter and Kramer (2006) refined the SCSR, by conceiving the notion of shared value creation between a firm and society, as means to establish competitive advantage. According to recent research conducted by Latapy and colleagues (2019), SCSR was considered a win-win approach that benefited society while it improved the competitiveness of a firm, creating value across stakeholders.

Considering the CSR and the SCSR works of literature, there is a myriad of cases where brands engage in these business practices. For instance, Nestlé established its primary mission under SCSR upon the health and nutrition improvement to its consumer's community. Then, the firm developed several underlying projects to create both social and economic value. Due to such projects (e.g. Healthy Kids Global Program and Nestlé Health Science Institute), Nestlé assured the development of new products that better met consumer's needs and fulfilled social issues. Such a strategy further increased brand awareness and brand loyalty, whilst targeting long-term market growth, a greater slice of market share, and consequently profitability (Becchetti, Di Giacomo & Pinnacchio, 2008; Katarzyna, 2012).

Indeed, CSR policies when connected to the firm's strategy are a drive to disclose the unlimited potential for a company to align both social benefits and business goals, becoming a preponderant factor for the creation of shared value.

2.1.3 Shared Value

According to Porter and Kramer (2011), corporations that look for ways of impacting the community will progress in social concerns, as well as in economic matters, by exploring the opportunities left out by their competitors. Furthermore, there is no standard way to create shared value: the *modus operandi* depends not only on each firm's competitive environment and strategic position but also relies on the recalled SCSR approach and how the business and the strategy intersects with social issues (Bockstette & Stamp, 2011; Porter & Kramer, 2011; Porter et al., 2011).

“Nestlé, for example, redesigned its coffee procurement processes, working intensively with small farmers in impoverished areas who were trapped in a cycle of low productivity, poor quality, and environmental degradation. Nestlé provided advice on farming practices; helped growers secure plant stock, fertilizers, and pesticides; and began directly paying them a premium for better beans. Higher yields and quality increased the growers' incomes, the environmental impact of farms shrank, and Nestlé's reliable supply of good coffee grew significantly. Shared value was created. (Porter & Kramer, 2011)

In a nutshell, shared value is what a business can leverage as a social agent along with the ecosystem, where the main drive is to deliver sustainable benefits for society while pursuing financial success and uplift the competitive mindset, which is a dominant deed to bring about corporative purpose (Bockstette & Stramp, 2011).

2.1.4 Corporate Purpose

Over the last decade, the business world has been whispering about the “purpose” concept, which is the reason or the intention why something is done. Accordingly, its meaning escalated to the corporative world, and multi-nation companies such as Dove, USAA, and Nestlé developed purpose-driven strategies (Herédia-Colaço et. Al, 2021). These strategies can be seen as common commitment and meaning that a firm adds to its chain of operations, maintaining its incomes as the main source of growth and increasing shared value for the stakeholder’s community, from where a purpose-driven business arises (Herédia-Colaço et. al., 2020).

According to Accenture Strategy (2018), 62% of a 30,000 customers’ database revealed to expect companies to point out relevant topics such as transparency, sustainability, and equality across employment practices. Hence, the purpose of a company is a key driver to achieve its full potential (Fink, 2017).

As follows, a brand’s purpose must be an element of differentiation, and it should be carefully aligned with the values a company intends to represent when it comes to touch customers and meet their expectations. Thus, a responsible business (Moreira da Cruz et al., 2020a) with a purpose-

driven strategy and an integrated view of the relevant stakeholder's interest, aligning with its consumer's beliefs, can be a very powerful weapon in the business. It captures both community satisfaction and shareholder results (O'Brien et al., 2019), which is translated into shared value creation (Stanaland et al., 2011).

The extent to which brands' conduct is perceived well by consumers is not always the case. Since brands' actions are under the scrutiny of the public's eyes and more visible than ever, negative episodes in the format of media backlashes can be very damaging to the business.

2.2 Media Backlashes

In the digital era, where every kind of content is available online, and under the spotlight, companies are constantly fighting to be the leading star. Moreover, they are engaging with consumers through conversations and events, which are meant to promote the share of an experience and a feeling that keeps the brand memorable at any given time. According to Barton R. et al. (2018), this happens customers aren't just making decisions based on the stalwarts of product selection or either price, but they are assessing what a brand does, says, and stands for.

Although well-established brands are constantly gathering the necessary resources, practices, and approaches to be a sustainable and responsible business, they have also been scrutinized by external stakeholders such as the backlash statements made by the media over the news and social networks. Many say that, as long as people keep talking and bring publicity to the brand. it does not matter if the conversation is either positive or negative. However, for large corporations, it doesn't seem to work like that since scandals can cost these companies not only millions in sales and courts, but millions of clients. An example of a social media post on Nestlé's Instagram account related to controversial environmental issues can be seen below in Figure 2.

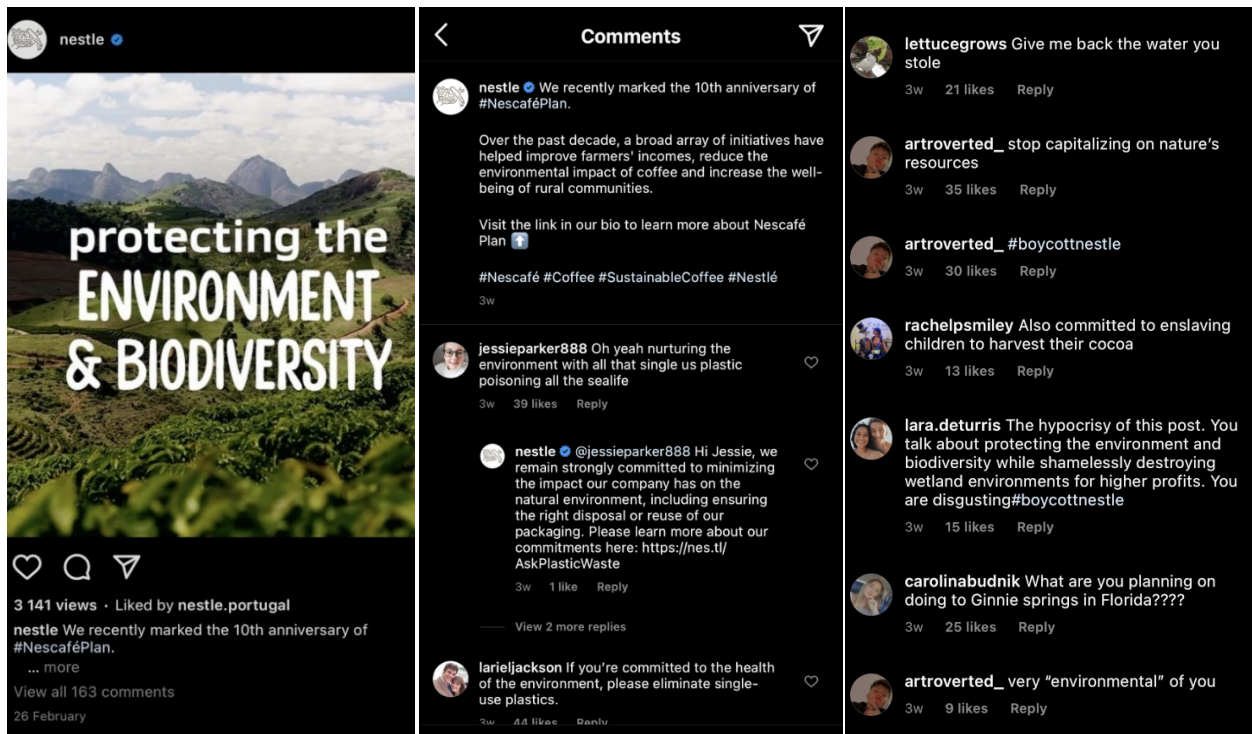


Figure 2 - Social Media Backlash

The FMCG giant has been under a public nightmare since 2010, when a full-on social media attack was launched by Greenpeace on Nestlé, regarding the usability of palm oil and its extraction methods. Since then, the company has been under further criticism and consumer's claiming. Thus, Nestlé had to make a strong restructure to rebuild its reputation (McEleny, 2010).

Furthermore, any practice that does not seem intrinsically rooted in the ethical behaviour of the company, risks being seen as an opportunistic behaviour by consumer's eyes. Consequently, it will damage their trust by making them feel exploited. For example, Facebook, despite committing millions to racial groups of justice after the Black Lives Matter movement, found itself facing both internal and external revolt over its refusal to flag President Donald Trump's often false and misleading posts. Starbucks, on the other hand, has been playing one step ahead of such scandals. The company steps into fired topics in its social platforms very often, by being honest about their mistakes and empower the community to fight the common issue (e.g. employees are allowed to use t-shirts and badges related to the Black Lives Matter movement and engage with the customers towards the topic) (Curry, 2020).

2.3. Sustainability Development Goals

Be significant: Have a purpose that makes a meaningful contribution to an unmet social or environmental need such as those articulated by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

- Purpose Playbook, 2020, p.10

Focusing on the beneficial outcomes a purpose-driven strategy aligned with CSR can bring to a business and the environment, the United Nations answered the need for a large-scale change and established a framework that assures a synergy between governments, businesses, and society to act together for a better future (The Global Goals, n.d.). In 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was launched, and bearing in mind the booming exposure of ecological scandals and footprint awareness over the beginning of such a capitalist and industrialized century (Kibert et al., 2012), the 193 world leaders took the stand to assign Sustainability⁵ as a purpose (Dufour et al., 2017) and the concept of responsible business, that should be intrinsic across all organizations. Thus, the General Assembly agreed to define SDGs as a roadmap across all countries to positively impact our people and turn the Earth into a better place by 2030.



Figure 3 - Sustainable Development Goals. Source: United Nations

⁵ Sustainability is the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987).

Like CSR goes hand-in-hand with purpose, the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) go side-by-side with the strategies that focus on economic growth, while ensuring ecological and social needs along with well-being, such as justice, health, education, and environment, tackling poverty, hunger, inequality, and climate change issues. Following the promise of Leave No One Behind, countries have devoted themselves to pursuing the progress of the outliers resulting from a primary phase. Seventeen SDGs were defined as a result and as represented in Figure 3. For the present dissertation, only SDG #17 will be addressed which stands for Global Partnerships and Cooperation across regions and around the globe, in a way that knowledge, expertise, strategy, values, and goals can be shared to build a world with no falling pieces.

2.3.1 SDG #17 - Partnerships for the Goals

There are core targets under the 17th SDG responsibilities, such as finance, technology, capacity building, trade, and systematic issues. Systematic issues must be tackled along 1) with policy and institutional coherence, by enhancing sustainable development, coordinate policies, and mutual leadership respect.; 2) Data, monitoring, and accountability, by reinforce capacity-building support to the least developed countries and develop measures for progress and statistical capabilities.; and 3) multi-stakeholder partnerships, which underlines the following statements:

17.16 Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries. (United Nations, 2015)

17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private, and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries. (United Nations, 2015)

In 2020, the Partnership Accelerator 2030 Agenda was released with the purpose to develop the partnership-enabling ecosystem (see Figure 4), aiming to support the engagement of business as a sustainable development partner and accelerate the volume and consequently the effectiveness of partnerships, delivering the 2030 Agenda. Hence, the SDG #17 – Partnership for the Goals is settled as an essential approach to SDG, being placed at the core of the interconnected economy, society, and environment.



Figure 4 - SDG #17: Partnership Enabling Eco-system

Moreover, the partnership opportunity does not stand for a positive impact on sustainability matters but has the potential to generate relevant business outcomes such as increase access to qualified talents, up-level efficiencies, reduce costs of production and supplies, expand access to new markets, develop new products in existing markets, progress business enabling environment and mitigate the risk of market entry (Stibbe & Prescott, 2020).

The present research will focus on the 17.17 topic and the “business doing business” role: multi-stakeholder partnerships, that supports the circular economy and operating in a responsible, inclusive, and sustainable way, to share skills and resources with the shared focus to achieve sustainable development globally and deliver long term business value, and how this approach can affect consumer’s brand valuation over well-established brands.

2.4 Consumer's Brand Valuations

Contemporary research finds that consumer's perceptions are affected by much more than what is known about a brand. It is shaped through the brand-consumer relationship path, built in the long term. (Esch et al., 2006). Under CSR topic, the literature suggests brands that try to have a greater impact on causes that align with their customers' values and proceed to take actions over social issues, end up developing a stronger bond with their consumers (Barton R. et al., 2018). Thus, the present research will dig through consumer trust, brand loyalty, perceived quality, perceived ethicality, purchase intentions, and willingness to pay.

2.4.1 Consumer trust

Successful relationships require commitment and trust, and the brand-consumer relationship is no different. Morgan and Hunt (1994) consider trust as an exchange operation when one party has confidence in the other's reliability and integrity. Trust is defined as the belief that a brand has the skillset to deliver and keep on its commitment along the relationship path (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Brand trust goes far beyond consumer's expectations about the characteristics and benefits of a product, comprising symbolic evaluations, therefore including both cognitive beliefs, common purpose, and affective perceptions, resulting in a synergy that boosts the feeling of shared value (Becerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Within the context of sustainability-related issues, Stanaland et al. (2011), acknowledges that a socially responsible business is likely to improve its degree of trust among and between stakeholders. Additionally, SDGs are suggested to have the same impact and increase the likelihood of trust enhancement, especially on consumers because of the rising awareness about the firm's impact on society (Edelman, 2019).

Hence, the degree of trust is a key variable in the brand-consumer relationship and shows a connection with social and sustainable responsibilities. With that being said, consumer trust is a relevant take for the present research and worth empirically investigating it further.

2.4.2 Brand Loyalty

Consumer's trust is the basis for the development and maintenance of brand loyalty (Afzal et al., 2010). According to Jacoby and Kyner (1971), brand loyalty is a behavioural dimension of the brand-consumer relationship and stands for the repeat purchase of a preferred product. After a consistent brand's preference over time, the consumer becomes to feel it as part of them, and an emotional bond is triggered (Aaker, 1991; Herédia-Colaço et al., 2021)

A high degree of consumer's brand loyalty drives superior performance outcomes, which leads to sustainable competitive advantages such as new customers, market leadership, favourable word of mouth, and greater resistance among competitive strategies (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2010).

Furthermore, brands that have a purpose are more likely to leverage customer loyalty in today's marketplace since the traditional view that states customers only as buyers is no longer valid (Herédia-Colaço et al., 2021). Accordingly, purpose-driven businesses saw the opportunity to shape consumer's behaviour by addressing their beliefs. Thus, a relationship based on brand reliability and talkability⁶ is built, opening the door to a less price-sensitive community which points towards a further phase of brand loyalty and competitiveness (Krishnamurthi & Raj, 1991).

2.4.3 Perceived Quality

As stated by Aaker (1991), perceived quality is the perception of the overall excellence of a product regarding its utility and compared to alternatives. Considering the positive relationship between perceived quality, brand image, and brand loyalty (Alhaddad, 2015), prior literature suggests that consumers expect products they previously enjoyed consuming to have a similar quality as products they might consume in the present or the future. This phenomenon has to do with credibility (Milewicz & Herbig, 1994). As such, the association of brands with unethical behaviours and a media's backlash are likely to affect brand credibility and consequently reduce quality perception among consumers (Guo et al., 2017).

⁶ According to Merriem-Webster Dictionary, talkability means the quality or state of being talkable.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Chang and Wildt (1994) placed the discussion at two different levels: intrinsic and extrinsic information about a brand, a product or service also impacts consumer's perceived quality. With that said and having in mind how SDGs are encouraged by a credible and respectable institution body such as the UN –the present study aims to understand how a partnership that is established under the sustainable principles of cooperation between well-established brands impacts consumers' perceptions and behaviour.

2.4.4 Consumer Perceived Ethicality

Consumer perceived ethicality (CPE) is a variable that stands for the level of ethicality that is perceived by consumers towards a brand or a product (Brunk, 2010a; 2012). As previously mentioned, consumers do not restrict their considerations only to quality or price when it comes to choosing. Customers are demanding innovation, social responsibility, and ethical conduct from brands (Barton R. et al., 2018), which have been resulting in a wave of sustainable positioning of brands.

Since consumers choose brands that reflect their ethical and social concerns (Maxfield, 2008), brands are aware of the need of communicating their purpose-driven orientation to consumers. However, many companies are getting their image punished, not only by media's backlashes but by consumers in what they perceive as irresponsible practices and unethical attitudes (Brunk, 2010b). This has also a negative impact on the brand-consumer relationship.

Furthermore, Brunk (2010b) conducted a study that showed how negative information has a greater impact on CPE than a positive one since it was found that participants were more likely to name companies that had negative behaviours than positive ones. Accordingly, company's communications about positive ethical initiatives showed to have a neutral effect on CPE, which according to Brunk (2010b) may be explained by the fact that consumers trust more external sources (e.g. media) than internal sources (e.g. company itself).

The present research aims to test these previous assumptions and examine how media backlashes negatively affect ethical perceptions about well-established brands that are either mainstream or

sustainability-rooted such as Nestlé and Starbucks, respectively. Moreover, the author will analyse how Nestlé's and Starbucks' partnership under SDG17 can reduce the negative impact that the ethical impact that media backlash brought to brands.

2.4.5 Purchase Intentions

The modern buyer knows about a brand's potential either when experiencing it or listening to feedback from others. When a consumer perceives that a brand has the set to fulfil his needs, he/she will proceed to the intention of buying and then the willingness to purchase (Afzar et al., 2010). Purchase intentions represent buying behaviours and are a key input for managers not only to forecast revenue's expectations or measure consumer demand. But, also to understand the market's sensitivity towards a firm's actions and consumer's purchasing behaviour (Morrison, 1979). Moreover, purchase intentions have great potential for a firm's valuation, since the stronger the intentions, the stronger the brand-consumer bond which may motivate purchase behaviour.

Concerning CSR, prior research suggests that consumers are likely to have a positive reply towards brands that develop authentic CSR initiatives, including what concerns their purchase intentions (Alhouthi et al., 2016). Recalling the standards to create shared value and the advantages of a purpose-driven business, where expectations and beliefs among stakeholders are aligned, the literature suggests that a consumer that identifies himself with a company is likely to use the purchase of a brand's product as a way of expressing his own identity (Currás-Pérez et al., 2009). Prior literature, however, opens an avenue of research to understand further how unethical behaviours versus sustainable attitudes are translated into actual purchase intentions, especially when a distinction between mainstream and sustainable brands is at the core of the research problem, which is the case of the present research.

2.4.6 Willingness to Pay

The latest statistics results have shown that 35% of consumers are willing to spend significantly more money on sustainable food products (Statista, 2021). These results support prior literature which shows that consumers are increasingly more aware and consider the social and

environmental impact of their choices when it comes to purchasing. This heightened consciousness is thus, likely to influence their willingness to pay (WTP) towards sustainable food products. With that being said, WTP is a measure that stands for the maximum price a consumer is willing to pay for one unit of product or service, typically represented as a price range, that differs from customer to customer (Stobierski, 2020).

Accordingly, Janssen and Hamm (2012) provided a study related to food products, which disclosed that WTP is significantly higher when certifications due to good behaviour are present. It remains to be analysed whether the same conclusions apply when the brand is following an SDG behaviour.

Hypotheses and Conceptual Model

3.1. Hypotheses

As discussed above, consumers expect brands to be driven by a purpose and fulfil their social and environmental responsibilities among stakeholders. Otherwise, a brand will get less appealing to the customer's community, which can negatively affect the brand's reputation (Milewicz & Herbig, 1994). Moreover, the focus of the present research is on external sources of information such as the media and their negative effect of such communications on well-established brands – mainstream and sustainability-rooted.

Therefore, a brand's involvement in a media backlash episode might be associated with negative brand evaluations (Brunk, 2010a; Guo et al., 2017). However, such an effect is likely to be more impactful on sustainability-rooted brands than on mainstream brands due to the higher ethical expectations from the former. Following this prior literature, the initial hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There will be a negative impact from a media backlash on well-established brands (mainstream vs. sustainability-rooted), so that:

H1a: A media backlash will negatively impact consumers' brand valuations – consumer trust, loyalty, perceived quality, purchase intentions, willingness to pay, and consumer perceived ethicality.

H1b: The negative impact from a media backlash will be greater on sustainable brands than on mainstream brands.

Several studies indicate that sustainable, social, and ethical responsible attitudes can positively affect consumer's assessment of brands (Edelman, 2019). Thus, SDGs are a means by which to advocate such practices among brands since according to prior literature it is suggested that follow a sustainable drive can be effective to influence positively brand valuations. Therefore, it is expected that the information about the cooperation between well-established brands (mainstream vs. sustainability-rooted) under SDG #17 - Partnership for the Goals will moderate the aforementioned relationship between a media backlash and consumers' brand valuations. Further, it is expected that the SDG #17 information will help mitigate the negative effects of the media backlash on brands. This is expected to be especially relevant on mainstream brands (Nestlé) benefiting from its association with more sustainability-rooted brands (Starbucks). Therefore, the second set of hypotheses is proposed:

H2: Providing information about the partnership for the goals (SDG #17) will have a positive impact on well-established brands, so that:

H2a: Providing information about the partnership for the goals will have a positive impact on consumers' brand valuations (consumer trust, brand loyalty, perceived quality, consumer's perceived ethicality, purchase intentions, WTP), for both mainstream and sustainability-rooted brands.

H2b: Providing information (versus not) about the partnership for the goals between well-established brands will mitigate (versus not) the negative effects of a media backlash on well-established brands.

H2c: The mitigation effect will be more pronounced on mainstream brands rather than on sustainability-rooted brands.

3.2. Conceptual Model

The following conceptual is thus proposed which intends to examine the repercussions of media backlashes (independent variable) over well-established brands (mainstream vs. sustainable) on consumers' valuations, consumer trust, brand loyalty, perceived quality, consumer's perceived ethicality, purchase intentions, and WTP (dependent variables) and the moderating effect of the SDG #17 - Partnership for the Goals' information on this relationship.

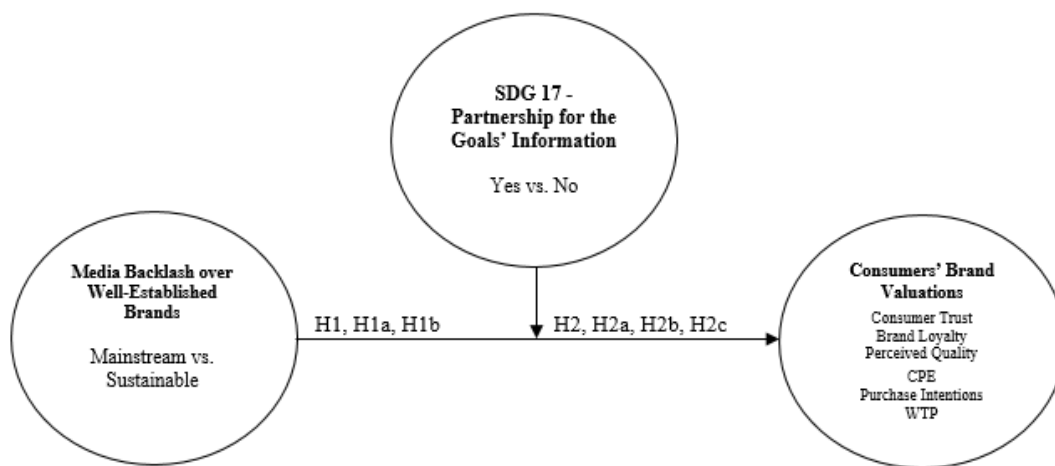


Figure 5 - Conceptual Model

Methodology and Data Collection

4.1 Research Method

Following the literature review, the researcher collected primary data to comply with the research objectives of the present study.

Three different experimental studies were performed to address the research: a pre-test, a pilot test, and the main study, where a survey was developed for each. The platform used was Qualtrics Survey Platform, an online operating system that provides several benefits, such as a user-friendly interface with optimization tools that simplified data collection, which provided random scenarios, with customized performance and data downloaded to SPSS software.

Additionally, the online survey methodology has multiple advantages, for instance: low costs associated, free access for individuals located in different places, and automated data collection, allowing the researcher to be more efficient in time and performance (Wright, 2005). Therefore, the survey was designed to be clean, straightforward, and comprehensive, with closed-response questions and visual scenarios.

The distribution through the respondents was carried via a link, generated by the platform, and shared across centralized messaging platforms and social media networks (Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn), which provided a considerably greater degree of reach and advanced accessibility than a face-to-face research environment (Wright, 2005). Through this approach the researcher aimed to reduce constraints and bounds, since the respondents can participate in the study from their comfortable environment, whenever they feel willing to, and with anonymity and confidentiality guaranteed.

4.2 Sampling

Regarding the sampling method, the researcher adopted a non-probabilistic convenience sampling method in the current study. Convenience sampling is a technique in which the researcher collects the data through a population that is conveniently available to participate in the study, which issues research benefits such as easy recruitment, ease of availability, and cost-effectiveness (Malhotra, 1999). Indeed, the respondent does not have a specific probability to be part of the sample. The researcher notes the importance of giving the information to participants that their responses are anonymous and would be processed as confidential, to encourage honest participation from their side.

4.3 Research Instruments

As previously mentioned, three experimental studies were developed and distributed: a pre-test study, a pilot-test of the main study, and the main study, through Qualtrics Survey Software. Participants were able to access the study through link-shared centralized messaging platforms and social media networks. The following presents a description of the procedures adopted throughout the research instruments.

4.3.1 Pre-Study

The pre-test study was launched from the 21st of March until the 25th of March and was conducted with a total of 36 valid answers. The main objective relies on understanding which food & beverage brands, mainstream and sustainability-rooted, respondents are more familiar with. With that information, the author could verify whether the brands analysed in the study (Nestlé vs. Starbucks) were perceived by respondents as mainstream vs. sustainability-rooted. The used measure was the level of brand awareness.

The pre-test survey consisted of two sections. Firstly, an introductory section welcoming the respondents and providing information regarding the expected duration and confidentiality of the study. According to previous literature, brands with a high degree of brand awareness are correctly

identified when a product category is given (Keller, 1993). Thus, the second section of the pre-test conveyed two questions that assessed whether the mainstream and sustainability-rooted food & beverage brands are on top of the mind of consumers. The first question defined a mainstream brand as a contemporary brand that is well-known and commonly accepted to be popular.

After, respondents were asked to name the first three food & beverage brands that came to their minds and could be considered mainstream brands. The second question was similar, which provided respondents with a literature-based definition of sustainability-rooted brand: any brand that carries sustainability at its core since its origin, which means sustainability is embedded within root's business strategy and principles. As previously, they were asked to name the first three food & beverage brands that came to their minds which could be considered sustainability-rooted brands (see [Appendix 1](#)).

Results show that Nestlé was the most mentioned mainstream brand. 13.6% of respondents rated it as the first mainstream brand that came to their minds, followed by 8.3% as the second, and 20.8% as the third. As the first sustainability-rooted brand, Starbucks was also the most mentioned brand, identified by 14.3% of respondents as the first sustainability-rooted brand that came to their minds, followed by 4.8% as the second, and 9.5% as the third.

4.3.2 Pilot Study

The pilot-study study was launched from the 21st of March until the 30th of March and was conducted with a total of 8 valid answers. The purpose of performing this study before launching the main study was to audit whether the scenario flow was running precisely and to check if questions, stimuli, and manipulations were being correctly understood by the respondents.

The pilot study was assessed in person, with eight respondents who did not participate in the main study, of which four were exposed to Nestlé and four to Starbucks. By doing an in-person assessment, the researcher interviewed the respondents after taking the survey and got feedback about the questions and stimuli comprehensibility. Subsequently, adjustments to the main study were made accordingly to the respondent's feedback.

Furthermore, the results of the pilot test allowed to check whether the brands chosen for the study performed according to further expectations. Thus, results from a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) support that Nestlé and Starbucks are well-established brands among consumers since the level of brand familiarity showed to be significant-high ($M_{\text{Mainstream}} = 5.95$, $SD = 1.06$ vs. $M_{\text{Sustainability-rooted}} = 4.95$, $SD = 1.92$; $F(1, 206) = 34.65$, $p < .001$) (see Table 1).

Mainstream Brand		Sustainability-rooted Brand		<i>F-test</i>
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
5.95	1.06	4.95	1.92	34.65***

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p \leq .1$

Table 1 - Brand Familiarity Descriptives (one-way ANOVA)

4.3.3 Main Study

The main study was held from the 31st of March until the 22nd of April and concluded with 297 answers, with two languages available: English and Portuguese (See *Appendix 2* for English version).

Out of the poll of collected answers, 208 were valid, reflecting a low drop-outs rate. Among the 208 responses, 106 participants were exposed to a stimulus regarding a mainstream brand (Nestlé) and 102 participants were exposed to a stimulus regarding a sustainability-rooted brand (Starbucks). Out of the 106 exposed to the mainstream brand, 52 were exposed to neutral information and 54 were exposed to positive information regarding SDG #17 - Partnership for the Goals, between both brands. Out of the 102 respondents that were exposed to the sustainability-rooted brand, 46 were exposed to neutral information and 56 were exposed to positive information regarding Sustainable Development Goal and Partnership for the Goals between brands. Since further literature suggests a minimum requirement of 40 participants in each group to achieve consistency and validity, the main study is compliant with the suggestion.

4.4 Design and Procedure

As previously mentioned, the data was collected through a survey on the software Qualtrics. The main objective of the study is to analyse how a media backlash may have a negative impact on consumers’ brand valuations - consumer trust, brand loyalty, perceived quality, purchase intentions, and consumer perceived ethicality – of well-established (mainstream vs. sustainability rooted) brands. Also, to analyse the moderating role of providing information about SDG17 (versus not) on this relationship.

The study design followed a 2 (Media backlash over well-established brands: Mainstream vs. Sustainability-rooted) x 2 (SDG17 - Partnership for the Goals’ Information: Yes vs. No) between-within subject’s design.

To clearly understand the impacts of media backlash and partnership for the goals on consumers’ brand valuations, it was necessary to measure the dependent variables in three different moments: before providing any information about the brand (mainstream or sustainability-rooted), after providing information about the media backlash over the brand (mainstream or sustainability-rooted), and, lastly, after providing information about whether (vs. not) the brand (mainstream or sustainability-rooted), developed a partnership for the goals in light of the SDG #17.

The main study was composed of 5 sections. Firstly, a brief text was presented to the participants, to clarify the scope and purpose of the survey. Subsequently, respondents were randomly allocated to one of the four scenarios (see Figure 6).

		Scenarios			
		1	2	3	4
Media Backlash over a Brand	Mainstream	x	x		
	Sustainability-rooted			x	x
Partnership for the Goals	Yes	x		x	
	No (neutral information)		x		x

Figure 6 - Manipulation Scenarios

The first main section presented a well-established brand (either Nestlé or Starbucks) to the participants. After, they were asked to evaluate their knowledge and perceptions along with six questions about brand familiarity and brand personality of the brand presented (initial manipulation check variables), their degree of trust in the brand, their level of brand loyalty, their perceived brand quality, the perceptions about the ethicality of the brand (CPE), purchase intentions towards the brand, and willingness to pay for the brand's product (dependent variables).

Following, the media backlash manipulation was presented in a scenario that could read the brand's involvement in a misbehaviour scandal. Subsequently, the dependent measures were applied to consumer trust, brand loyalty, perceived quality, CPE, purchase intentions, and WTP). The third section presented a scenario with either information about SDG #17 Goal - Partnership for the Goals or neutral information (control). Then, respondents were again asked about their brand valuations.

Next, a fourth section was presented to participants, which asked about their social and environmental motivations. Lastly, a fifth section was presented where demographics were assessed (gender, age, country, level of education, current occupation, and household monthly income). See [Appendix 3](#) for the survey flow.

4.5 Stimuli Development

Six visual and textual stimuli were developed: stimulus A, informing participants about media backlash over a mainstream brand, stimulus B, informing participants about a media backlash over a sustainability-rooted brand, stimulus C informing about SDG #17 - Partnership for the Goals and stimulus D as neutral information. The stimuli which were tested before the main study, in the pilot study, were randomly assigned to participants.

Stimuli A and B were similar in content and wording and only differed in the brand's name - Nestlé or Starbucks. To illustrate, a well-known newspaper headline was presented to participants as an external source of information, which intended to harm consumers' brand valuations (Brunk, 2010a). Moreover, the text presented in the media backlash scenario provided negative information about the brand's ethical behaviours (independent variable) such as the non-compliance safety code and ongoing pollution claims towards either Nestlé or Starbucks. Moreover, to achieve credibility on the stimulus, the text was adapted from a piece of real news, and the image is adapted from a newspaper layout. The stimulus A and B can be found in [Appendix 4](#).

Stimuli C (mainstream brand, SDG #17 information) and stimuli E (sustainability-rooted brand, SDG #17 information) are an image of a press release. Again, an external source of information - where participants were presented with information about the SDGs which announced a Partnership for the Goals between both a mainstream brand (Nestlé) and a sustainability-rooted brand (Starbucks). The stimulus C and E can be found in [Appendix 5](#).

Stimuli D (mainstream brand, neutral information) and stimuli F (sustainability-rooted brand, neutral information) showed an identical press release, yet it presented a piece of neutral information (no SDG information was provided). Again, stimuli D and stimuli F are very similar in appearance to stimulus C and stimuli E, in terms of letter font, quality of information, and size of the visual content, aiming to reduce bias. The stimulus D and F can be found in [Appendix 6](#).

4.6 Variable Descriptions

4.6.1 Manipulation Check

Firstly, brand familiarity was used as a manipulation check variable to confirm if either Nestlé or Starbucks are well-established brands, and assessed by asking the participants to rate their level of familiarity with the brand presented: “How familiar are you with Nestlé (Starbucks)?”; a seven-point scale was used to measure the variable (1 = not at all familiar, 7 = very much familiar).

Then, brand personality was needed to be a measure to understand if both brands are perceived alike. So, participants were asked to state their level of agreement with the following item: “Overall, I think Nestlé (Starbucks) is reliable.”; a seven-point scale was used to measure the variable (1 =strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), adapted from Aaker (1997).

Lastly, a third manipulation check was assessed to confirm if the stimuli used in the manipulation’s scenarios were effectively understood: participants were asked about their level of agreement with “Nestlé (Starbucks) is a socially responsible brand” before and after each stimulus (media backlash; SDG information vs. neutral information), measured using a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Further manipulation check results are analysed in the next chapter.

4.6.2 Independent Variable

Media backlash over well-established brands (Mainstream vs. Sustainability-rooted): was assessed by exposing participants to negative ethical information about brand’s behaviours. The same questions towards *consumers’ brand valuations* were asked before and after the information was presented.

4.6.3 Dependent Variables

All the dependent variables were assessed using a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree), except the buying behavioural measures related to Purchase Intentions and WTP.

Consumer trust – was assessed by asking the respondents to rate their level of agreement with two items: “I trust Nestlé (Starbucks).”; “Nestlé (Starbucks) delivers what it promises.”; adapted from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001).

Brand Loyalty – was assessed by asking the respondents to rate their level of agreement with three items: “Nestlé (Starbucks) delivers what it promises.”; “ I would repurchase Nestlé (Starbucks) in my next shopping.”; and “ I would recommend Nestlé (Starbucks) to other people.”, adapted from Erdogmuş and Büdeyri-Turan (2012).

Perceived Quality – was assessed by asking the respondents to rate their level of agreement with the following item: “Nestlé (Starbucks) products are of good quality,” adapted from Erdogmuş and Büdeyri-Turan (2012).

Consumer’s Perceived Ethicality (CPE) – was assessed by asking the respondents to rate their level of agreement with the five items: “Nestlé (Starbucks) respects moral norms.”; “Nestlé (Starbucks) always adheres to the law.”; “Nestlé (Starbucks) avoids damaging behaviour at all cost.”; “Nestlé (Starbucks) is a socially responsible brand.”; and “Nestlé (Starbucks) is a good brand.”, adapted from Brunk (2012).

Purchase Intentions – was assessed by asking the respondents to state in one statement if they would buy either Nestlé or Starbucks, using a seven-point scale (1 = definitely would not buy, 7 = definitely would buy), adapted from Batra and Ray (1986).

Willingness to Pay (WTP) – was assessed by asking the respondents how much they would be willing to pay (from 0 to 3 euros) for either a Nestlé or Starbucks chocolate bar; “Approximately how much would you willing to pay, in Euros, for a Nestlé (Starbucks) milk/dark chocolate bar in small size (50g)?”. No image of the product was provided to avoid bias.

4.6.4 Moderator

Sustainable Development Goal – SDG 17 Partnership for the Goals Information was manipulated using scenarios that either presented the information about SDG #17 – Partnership for the Goals versus neutral information.

4.6.5 Covariate

Consumer’s motivations towards social and environmental issues – was assessed through a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), retrieved from Schuhwerk and Lefkoff-Hagius (1995), by asking the respondents to rate their level of agreement with the eight items related to environmental and sustainable behaviours, adapted from Tilikidou et al. (2002):

“I am concerned about the environment.”; “Whenever I have the choice, I choose for less polluting products.”; “I try to find products with the ecological badge (eco-label).”; “I am interested in asking about the environmental consequences of a product before buying it.”; “I try to find products with the fair-trade certification.”; “I am interested in asking about the ethicality of a product before buying it.”; ”I try to avoid ethically, socially, and environmentally harmful products.”; “My actions impact on the environment.”

4.6.6 Variable Coding

Aiming to conduct and facilitate the analysis of the study, the following variables were coded to check differences between groups:

Variable	Values
Brand Media Backlash	0 = Mainstream brand
	1 = Sustainability-rooted brand
SDG 17 Information	0 = No SDG information
	1 = SDG information

Table 2 - Conditions' Coding

Analysis and Results

5.1 Sampling Characterization

Characterization of the sample is a key component for the present research and was performed by exposing respondents to a demographic section at the end of the survey (see [Appendix 2](#)). By understanding the characteristics of the sample, the researcher gets hold of tools to look for causality matters and disclose possible results and outcomes from the study. The final sample, which excludes non-finalized responses, is composed of a total of 208 participants, where 40,4% are represented by Male, 59,1% by Female, and only 0,5% of the respondents preferred not to disclose.

Subsequently, 2.9% of the sample is represented by participants under 18 years old, followed by 61% aged between 18 to 24 years, 14% aged between 25 to 34 years old, and 5.3% aged between 35 and 44 years old. Participants aged between 45 and 54 years old represent 14% of the sample, aged between 55 and 64 years represent 2.4%. The remaining 0.5% are aged 65 or above. Most of the participants are from Portugal (91.3%) and the remaining (8.7%) are respondents from Brazil, Djibouti, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain, and Northern Ireland.

Regarding education level, most of the sample is composed of respondents with a High School (38.5%) and bachelor's degree (42.3%) completed. Respondents that hold a master's degree represent 17,8% of the sample, as the remaining ones are distributed across less than High School (2.4%), Doctoral Degree (0.5%), and Professional Degree (0.5%).

Considering the current occupation, 42.8% of the participants are students and 37% are employed, while 14.4% are student-workers, 4,8% are unemployed and only 1% are retired. Finally, they were asked about the current monthly household income, in Euros, where 19.2% of participants preferred not to share. Thus, 3.8% represent under 500€ monthly income respondents, 8.2% between 501€ and 1000€, 25% between 1001€ and 1500€, 13% between 1501€ and 2000€, and lastly, 20.8% of the sample represents a monthly income above 2000€.

5.2 Scales Reliability

Despite that the scales used in the present study are adapted from the literature – Aaker, 1997; Brunk, 2012; Chaudhuri & Holdbrook, 2001; Park et al., 2010; Lee & Shin, 2010; Erdogmus & Büdeyri-Turan, 2012 – these were subject to factor analyses and reliability analyses to ensure the accuracy of the measures employed. Since respondents were exposed to three different stimuli, there is the need to consider the different moments' participants were exposed to, and further examine the data, as presented in Table 3.

Moment	Description	Notation
1	Before the information is presented	[M1]
2	After the first stimuli is presented (media backlash)	[M2]
3	After the second stimuli is presented (media backlash)	[M3]

Table 3 - Survey Moments

Therefore, for variables with 2 items, such as consumer's brand trust (*I trust Nestlé; Nestlé delivers what it promises*), a bivariate correlation test was performed for each of the three Moments to determine the strength of the relationship between items (see Table 4).

Variable	Moment	Number of Items	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig (2-tailed) (p)
Consumer trust	1	2	.69	.000
Consumer trust	2	2	.74	.000
Consumer trust	3	2	.82	.000

Table 4 - Consumer Trust (Pearson Correlation)

The Pearson Correlation (r) value range is from -1.00 to 1.00, where -1.00 represents a perfect negative correlation and 1.00 represents a perfect positive correlation. A 0 value represents there is no relation between two variables (Ahlgren et al., 2003). Additionally, a significant correlation is represented by $p \leq .05$ (2-tailed). Moreover, consumer trust items present high significant Pearson Correlations, with $r > 0.5$ and $p = .000$ across all three moments, which supports the high level of reliability for the scales used to study consumer's brand trust.

To validate the measures with three or more items used in the study, such as Brand Loyalty, Consumer's Perceived Ethicality, and Motivations, a factor analysis procedure with a principal component analysis and varimax rotation was conducted. From the first two, only one component was extracted (Brand Loyalty with factor loading from .89 to .94; CPE with factor loading from .81 to .91). However, results show that, for the consumers' motivations towards social and environmental concerns measure, two components were extracted (see Table 5).

Awareness Item	Component	
	1	2
1 - I am concerned about the environment.	.41	.75
2 - Whenever I have the choice, I choose for less polluting products.	.64	.58
3 - I try to find products with the ecological badge (eco-label)	.77	.34
4 - I am interested in asking about the environmental consequences of a product before buying it.	.87	.09
5 - I try to find products with the fair-trade certification.	.85	.19
6 - I am interested in asking about the ethicality of a product before buying it.	.88	.17
7 - I try to avoid ethically, socially, and environmentally harmful products.	.75	.38
8 - My actions impact on the environment.	.03	.87

Table 5 - Motivations towards social and environmental issues

Furthermore, a factor analysis with a component analysis and varimax rotation was conducted (with factor loading from .03 to .88 in Component 1; from .09 to .87 in Component 2; Cronbach's Alpha= .91), which indicates that items 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 measuring social and environmental motivations loaded heavily on one factor. The remaining items 1 and 7 were considered as part of component 2.

Thus, the researcher used the following criteria to disaggregate the items: items that present a higher value for component 1 than component 2 are related with motivations towards sustainable behaviours, and items that present higher value for component 2 than component 1 are related to motivations towards environmental awareness. Therefore, two new variables were generated, however, only motivations were further considered as a covariate.

Following, a descriptive scale reliability analysis with Cronbach's Alpha assessment was performed to assure internal consistency across the scales with three or more items (see Table 6).

	Moment	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted	Items deleted	Final Number of Items
Brand Loyalty	1	3	.91	.91	-	3
Brand Loyalty	2	3	.93	.93	-	3
Brand Loyalty	3	3	.93	.90	-	3
CPE	1	5	.92	.92	-	5
CPE	2	5	.96	.97	-	5
CPE	3	5	.95	.97	-	5
Sustainable Behaviour	-	6	.91	.91	-	6

Table 6 - Brand Loyalty, CPE, and Sustainable Behavioural (Cronbach's Alpha)

The variables presented a Cronbach's alphas between .91 and .96, which is the interval for an excellent scale (George & Mallery, 2003), meaning there is a very high level of reliability for the variables across the three moments. Hence, no item was deleted from the scales.

5.3 Manipulation Check Results

Manipulations regarding brand familiarity were assessed through an independent samples *t-test* at a 95% confidence interval, to check if both brands were equally familiar to respondents (see Table 7). Since the present research is focused on well-established brands, it was essential to assure the brands chosen to be presented in the experiment were known by the majority of the participants.

Mainstream Brand		Sustainability-rooted Brand		<i>t-test</i>
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
5.95	1.06	4.95	1.92	4.69***

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p \leq .1$

Table 7 - Manipulation Check 1 (Independent Samples *t-test*)

Moreover, results indicate the chosen brands are effectively well-known brands among consumers, with mean scores higher than 4 (the mid-point on the scale), which is in line with the results of the pre-test. As expected, there is a statistically mean difference between brands ($M_{[Mainstream]} = 5.92$, $SD = 1.06$ vs. $M_{[Sustainability-rooted]} = 4.95$, $SD = 1.92$; $t(206) = 4.69$, $p < .001$).

Then, to understand if the brands chosen were similarly perceived by the respondents, participants were asked to state their level of agreement with sentences that translate the brand personality, before being exposed to the stimulus. For manipulation purposes, item 3 - “Overall, I think Nestlé (Starbucks) is reliable.” - scores were chosen to be analysed through a one-way ANOVA (see Table 8)

Mainstream Brand		Sustainability-rooted Brand		<i>F-test</i>
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
5.78	1.32	5.56	1.26	1.57

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p \leq .1$

Table 8 - Manipulation Check 2 (One-Way ANOVA)

The results show there is no statistical significance between brands, ($M_{[Mainstream]} = 5.78$, $SD = 1.32$ vs. $M_{[Sustainability-rooted]} = 5.56$, $SD = 1.26$; $F(1, 207) = 1.57$, ns), meaning the brands chosen are equally perceived as reliable by the respondents, which the author considers appropriate for the research purpose.

After, participants were asked to state their degree of agreement with the judgment “Nestlé/Starbucks is a socially responsible brand”, which translates the perception towards a brand social and responsible behaviour, to check if the manipulations scenarios were correctly understood before and after the stimulus were presented (negative information regarding media backlash; positive SDG information vs. No SDG information). Therefore, a paired-samples *t-test* was performed, in which the researcher did not differentiate the brand nature (either mainstream nor sustainability-rooted).

	Mean	SD	<i>t-test</i>
Moment 1	4.92	1.41	9.85***
Moment 2	3.94	1.71	

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p \leq .1$

Table 9 - Manipulation Check 3 (Paired-Sample *t-test*)

Looking to the Table 9 above, the researcher concludes there is a significant effect of the media backlash stimulus on consumer’s perceptions towards Nestlé and Starbucks ($M_{[M1]} = 4.92$, $SD = 1.41$ vs. $M_{[M2]} = 3.94$, $SD = 1.71$; $t(207) = 9.85$, $p < .001$), which leads to considering the media backlash stimuli was negatively perceived, as predicted.

The same paired-sample *t-test* procedure was followed to check if the SDG #17- partnership for the Goals’ Information stimuli was positively understood (see Table 10).

	SDG info			NO SDG info		
	Mean	SD	<i>t-test</i>	Mean	SD	<i>t-test</i>
Moment 2	4.06	1.75	-3.82***	3.81	1.69	-1.38
Moment 3	4.39	1.59		3.94	1.62	

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p \leq .1$

Table 10 - Manipulation Check 4 (Paired-Sample *t-test*)

Results show there is a significant effect of the SDG #17 information on consumer's perceptions towards Nestlé and Starbucks ($M_{SDGinfo[M2]} = 4.06$, $SD = 1.75$ vs. $M_{SDGinfo[M3]} = 4.39$, $SD = 1.59$; $t(109) = -3.82$, $p < .001$). For those exposed to the neutral information (no SDG information), no statistically significance was obtained ($M_{noSDGinfo[M2]} = 3.81$, $SD = 1.69$ vs. $M_{noSDGinfo[M3]} = 3.94$, $SD = 1.62$, $t(97) = -1.38$, $p > .1$, meaning the neutral information worked as predicted.

Accordingly, since the mean is higher when participants were exposed to the SDG information ($M_{SDG} = 4.39$; $SD = 1.59$) than when exposed to neutral information ($M_{NoSDG} = 3.94$; $SD = 1.62$), leads to consider that the SDG stimuli was positively understood, as intended.

5.4 Main Results

5.4.1. The impact of the media backlash over well-established brands on consumers' brand valuations

As discussed above, consumers expect brands to be driven by a purpose and fulfil their social and environmental responsibilities. Otherwise, a brand will become less attractive in the eyes of consumers, which can negatively affect a brand's reputation (Milewicz & Herbig, 1994). Therefore, it is hypothesized that consumers' perceptions of well-established brands will be impacted when exposed to a media backlash.

Six new variables (Δ Variables.S1) were first computed to express the difference between Moment 1 (pre 1st Stimuli) and Moment 2 (post 1st Stimuli).

Variable	Expression
Δ Trust _[M1→M2]	Trust _[M2] – Trust _[M1]
Δ Loyalty _[M1→M2]	Loyalty _[M2] – Loyalty _[M1]
Δ Perceived Quality _[M1→M2]	PQ _[M2] – PQ _[M1]
Δ CPE _[M1→M2]	CPE _[M2] – CPE _[M1]
Δ Purchase Intentions _[M1→M2]	PI _[M2] – PI _[M1]
Δ WTP _[M1→M2]	WTP _[M2] – WTP _[M1]

Table 11 - Expression for Δ Variables M1 to M2

To further test H1 and H1a, where it is suggested that a negative impact from a media backlash is expected on well-established brands, especially among sustainability-rooted brands, a one-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was performed with the variables computed above.

	Mainstream Brand			Sustainability-rooted		
	Mean	SD	<i>F-test</i>	Mean	SD	<i>F-test</i>
$\Delta\text{Trust}_{[M1 \rightarrow M2]}$	-0.91	1.17	64.41***	-0.95	1.37	47.29***
$\Delta\text{Loyalty}_{[M1 \rightarrow M2]}$	-0.37	.84	20.65***	-0.45	1.11	16.69***
$\Delta\text{Perceived Quality}_{[M1 \rightarrow M2]}$	-0.5	.88	33.38***	-0.39	.87	19.87***
$\Delta\text{CPE}_{[M1 \rightarrow M2]}$	-0.82	1.09	60.27***	-0.95	1.3	53.97***
$\Delta\text{Purchase Intentions}_{[M1 \rightarrow M2]}$	-0.58	1.14	27.19***	-0.78	1.22	40.93***
$\Delta\text{WTP}_{[M1 \rightarrow M2]}$	-0.05	.31	2.98 ⁺	-0.13	.34	15.73***

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p \leq .1$

Table 12 - Media Backlash over Well-Established Brands Main Effect (MANOVA)

Results from the MANOVA analysis show a significant main effect of the media's backlash on both the mainstream and sustainability-rooted brands on all the dependent variables (ΔTrust , $\Delta\text{Loyalty}$, $\Delta\text{Perceived Quality}$, ΔCPE , $\Delta\text{Purchase Intentions}$) and a marginally significant main effect for the WTP dependent variable for the mainstream brand ($F(1, 207) = 2.98$), as can be seen in Table 12.

Overall, the results show the scores for *consumers' brand valuations* decreased after presented with media backlash information. These findings suggest that the media backlash harms consumers' brand valuations (consumer's trust, brand loyalty, perceived quality, consumer's perceived ethicality, purchase intentions, and willingness to pay) for both mainstream and sustainability-rooted brands, supporting H1a.

To further analyse the differential impact of the media backlash on the mainstream versus the sustainability-rooted brand (H1b), an independent-samples *t-test* was once more performed (see Table 13).

	Mainstream Brand		Sustainability-rooted Brand		<i>t-test</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	
$\Delta\text{Trust}_{[M1 \rightarrow M2]}$	-.92	1.16	-.96	1.37	.205
$\Delta\text{Loyalty}_{[M1 \rightarrow M2]}$	-.37	.83	-.51	1.18	1.005
$\Delta\text{Perceived Quality}_{[M1 \rightarrow M2]}$	-.49	.88	-.41	.88	-.646
$\Delta\text{CPE}_{[M1 \rightarrow M2]}$	-.83	1.08	-.95	1.29	.744
$\Delta\text{Purchase Intentions}_{[M1 \rightarrow M2]}$	-.58	1.14	-.80	1.22	1.341
$\Delta\text{WTP}_{[M1 \rightarrow M2]}$	-.05	.31	-.13	.34	1.800+

Note: ****p* < .001, ***p* < .01, **p* < .05, +*p* ≤ .1

Table 13 – Media Backlash over well-established brands (Independent-Samples *t-test*)

Analyzing the table above, the analysis suggests the impact of media’s backlash (negative information) on mainstream versus sustainability-rooted brands does not differ (all *ts* < 1.341, ns) except for a marginal significance on WTP favoring the sustainability-rooted brand. Although there is a greater inclination of the (negative) impact of the media on the sustainability-rooted brand, H1b is not supported.

5.4.2. The impact of SDG #17 information on consumers’ brand valuations after media backlash

A paired-samples *t-test* was conducted on the dependent variables on Moment 2 (pre 2nd Stimuli) and Moment 3 (post 2nd Stimuli) to better test H2a and H2b. That is, to assess the mean score differences between Moment 2 [after media backlash information was presented (pre 2nd Stimuli)] and Moment 3 [after SDG information vs. no SDG information was presented (post 2nd Stimuli)]. Also, to deeper understand the impact of providing information about SDG #17 on consumer’s valuations of brands that were involved in the media backlash, while testing for a positive effect.

	Mainstream Brand						Sustainability-rooted Brand					
	SDG info			No SDG info			SDG info			No SDG info		
	Mean	SD	t-test	Mean	SD	t-test	Mean	SD	t-test	Mean	SD	t-test
Trust[M2]pre2 nd stimuli	4.49	1.55		4.49	1.34		4.45	1.31		4.0	1.39	
Trust [M3]post2 nd stimuli	4.84	1.57	-3.6**	4.8	1.38	-2.55*	4.64	1.27	-1.98	4.12	1.5	-1.09
Loyalty [M2]pre2 nd stimuli	4.95	1.59		4.88	1.20		4.52	1.61		3.71	1.73	
Loyalty [M3]post2 nd stimuli	5.12	1.64	-2.02*	5.03	1.20	-1.61	4.59	1.57	-.75	4.04	1.69	-2.99**
Perceived Quality [M2]pre2 nd stimuli	5.37	1.65		5.62	.95		5.32	1.3		4.85	1.69	
Perceived Quality [M3]post2 nd stimuli	5.33	1.62	-.6	5.6	.98	.2	5.41	1.2	-1.	4.89	1.49	-.39
CPE[M2]pre2 nd stimuli	4.07	1.59		4.09	1.49		4.29	1.42		3.63	1.57	
CPE[M3]post2 nd stimuli	4.34	1.53	-2.93**	4.31	1.41	-1.85 ⁺	4.55	1.27	-3.91***	3.81	1.43	-1.93 ⁺
Purchase Intentions [M2]pre2 nd stimuli	5.2	1.99		5.23	1.46		4.59	1.79		3.78	2.09	
Purchase Intentions [M3]post2 nd stimuli	5.32	1.84	-1.1	5.27	1.44	-.57	4.63	1.8	-.35	3.96	2.0	-1.94 ⁺
WTP[M2]pre2 nd stimuli	1.04	.57		1.	.54		1.2	.62		1.09	.77	
WTP[M3]post2 nd stimuli	1.03	.57	.4	1.	.46	.00	1.23	.6	-1.39	1.09	.73	-.12

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p \leq .1$

Table 14 - SDG information vs. no SDG information (Paired-Samples t-test)

Results show there is a positive effect of the SDG information on both brands, specifically on:

Trust_Mainstream ($M_{SDGinfo[M2]} = 4.49$, $SD = 1.55$ vs. $M_{SDGinfo[M3]} = 4.84$, $SD = 1.57$; $t(53) = -3.6$, $p < .01$); Trust_Sustainability-Rooted ($M_{SDGinfo[M2]} = 4.45$, $SD = 1.31$ vs. $M_{SDGinfo[M3]} = 4.64$, $SD = 1.47$; $t(55) = -1.98$); Loyalty_Mainstream ($M_{SDGinfo[M2]} = 4.95$, $SD = 1.59$ vs. $M_{SDGinfo[M3]} = 5.12$, $SD = 1.64$; $t(53) = -2.02$, $p < .05$); Perceived_Quality_Sustainability-Rooted ($M_{SDGinfo[M2]} = 5.32$, $SD = 1.3$ vs. $M_{SDGinfo[M3]} = 5.41$, $SD = 1.2$; $t(55) = -1$). For the CPE dependent variable, results were marginally significant: CPE_Mainstream ($M_{SDGinfo[M2]} = 4.07$, $SD = 1.59$ vs. $M_{SDGinfo[M3]} = 4.34$, $SD = 1.53$; $t(53) = -2.93$, $p < .01$); CPE_Sustainability-Rooted ($M_{SDGinfo[M2]} = 4.29$, $SD = 1.42$ vs. $M_{SDGinfo[M3]} = 4.55$, $SD = 1.27$; $t(55) = -3.91$, $p < .001$).

For the behavioural intention dependent variables, results show a non-statistically significant difference on purchase intentions and WTP, ($t(55) < -1.39$, $p > .1$), partially validating H2a.

Further, when analysing the contrast between providing SDG #17 information versus no SDG #17 information, no statistically mean differences were found, showing close mean differences:

[Trust_Mainstream ($M_{SDGinfo[M2]} = 4.49$, $SD = 1.55$ vs. $M_{SDGinfo[M3]} = 4.84$, $SD = 1.57$; $t(53) = -3.6$, $p < .01$) vs. ($M_{noSDGinfo[M2]} = 4.49$, $SD = 1.34$ vs. $M_{noSDGinfo[M3]} = 4.8$, $SD = 1.38$; $t(51) = -2.55$, $p < .05$); Trust_Sustainability-Rooted ($M_{SDGinfo[M2]} = 4.45$, $SD = 1.31$ vs. $M_{SDGinfo[M3]} = 4.46$, $SD = 1.27$; $t(55) = -1.98$, $p > .1$) vs. ($M_{noSDGinfo[M2]} = 4.0$, $SD = 1.39$ vs. $M_{noSDGinfo[M3]} = 4.12$, $SD = 1.5$; $t(45) = -1.09$, $p > .1$)].

To test H2c, a 2 (Media Backlash: Mainstream, Sustainability-rooted) x 2 (SDG #17 Information: yes, no) MANCOVA was performed on consumers' brand valuations, integrating the motivations towards sustainable behaviours as a covariate. The two-way interaction between the two variables is analysed (see Table 15).

	Mainstream Brand		Sustainability-Rooted Brand		Motivations towards Sustainable Behaviours (covariate) <i>F-test</i>	Media Backlash (mainstream vs. sustainability-rooted brand) <i>F-test</i>	SDG info (vs. no SDG info) <i>F-test</i>	Media Backlash x SDG 17 - Partnership for the Goals <i>F-test</i>
	SDG info (n = 105)	No SDG info (n = 96)	SDG info (n = 100)	No SDG info (n = 109)				
Consumer Trust _[M3]	4.85 (.20)	4.79 (.20)	4.66 (.19)	4.05 (.22)	2.77 ⁺	5.39 [*]	2.77 ⁺	1.96
Brand Loyalty _[M3]	5.11 (.21)	5.02 (.21)	4.61 (.21)	3.93 (.23)	1.98	13.77 ^{***}	3.14 ⁺	1.87
Perceived Quality _[M3]	5.43 (.19)	5.59 (.19)	5.43 (.18)	4.86 (.20)	2.11	3.8 ⁺	1.41	3.75 [*]
CPE _[M3]	4.36 (.19)	4.30 (.19)	4.58 (.19)	3.71 (.21)	5.88 [*]	.87	5.45 [*]	4.17 [*]
Purchase Intentions _[M3]	5.29 (.24)	5.27 (.25)	4.66 (.24)	3.86 (.27)	.91	17.04 ^{***}	2.58	2.24
WTP _[M3]	1.04 (.08)	.99 (.08)	1.4 (.08)	1.08 (.09)	2.12	2.82 ⁺	1.52	.47

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p \leq .1$; Mean (Std. Error)

Table 15 - 2 (Media Backlash: Mainstream, Sustainability-rooted) x 2 (SDG #17 Information: yes, no) (MANCOVA)

Comparing the MANCOVA output with the MANOVA (see [Appendix 8](#)), the author verifies that dependent variables' interaction effect presents higher significance when the motivations towards sustainable behaviours' covariate is entered in the interaction model. Thus, MANCOVA results show there is [media backlash over well-established brands: mainstream vs. sustainability-rooted] x SDG #17 Information (yes vs. no)] interaction effect on Perceived Quality (Perceived Quality_[M3], $F(1, 204) = 3.75, p \leq .05$) and on CPE (CPE_[M3], $F(1, 204) = 4.17, p \leq .05$). All the remaining dependent variables showed no interaction effects (all $F_s < 2.24$ and, $p > .1$) when accounting for consumers' motivations towards sustainable behaviours as a covariate.

Contrast analysis was then assessed to understand the differences between groups (Mainstream vs. Sustainability-rooted) in the variables where an interaction effect was disclosed:

	Mainstream Brand			Sustainability-rooted Brand		
	SDG info	No SDG info	<i>F-test</i>	SDG info	No SDG info	<i>F-test</i>
	Mean	Mean		Mean	Mean	
Perceived Quality _[M3]	5.43 (.19)	5.59 (.19)	.32	5.43 (.18)	4.86 (.20)	3.67*
CPE _[M3]	4.36 (.19)	4.30 (.19)	.05	4.58 (.19)	3.71 (.21)	9.78**

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p \leq .1$; Mean (Std. Error)

Table 16 - Interaction Contrast Analysis

Contrary to expected, results show that SDG information vs. no SDG information is statistically significant for the sustainability-rooted brand: Perceived Quality ($M_{SDGinfo} = 5.43, SE = .18$ vs. $M_{noSDGinfo} = 4.86, SE = .20$; $F(1, 200) = 3.67, p < .05$) and on CPE ($M_{SDGinfo} = 4.58, SE = .19$ vs. $M_{noSDGinfo} = 3.71, SE = .21$; $F(1, 200) = 9.78, p < .01$).

For the mainstream brand no statistically significant differences between providing SDG #17 information versus not providing SDG #17 information, rejecting H2c. These results seem to indicate that the manipulated SDG #17 – Partnership for the goals information benefited Starbucks (sustainability-rooted) than Nestlé (mainstream) brand. To better visualize data that supports the

H2 hypothesis, graphs were plotted to show the difference between variables (Trust, Loyalty, CPE, Perceived Quality, and Purchase Intentions) mean scores across the three moments (see [Appendix 9](#)). WTP is not included since the scale differs from the ones mentioned previously.

As such, these findings show that the Sustainable Development Goal implementations still do not fully mitigate the impact of media backlash over well-established brands, specifically for mainstream brands. Contrary to initial predictions, providing information about SDG #17 – partnership for the goals after the media backlash for the Starbucks brand, showed to be positive. This may be an indication that the announced partnership with the Nestlé brands might have been perceived as more of a strategic one due to the large-scale operations and resources that the latter brand offers.

Conclusions and Implications

The present research aims to understand the impacts of media backlash over well-established brands on consumers' brand valuations and whether the engagement with SDG #17 – Partnership for the goals can mitigate those impacts.

Regarding the first research question (RQ1), findings show that media backlash negatively impacts consumers' brand valuations towards well-established brands, following Guo et al. (2017) and Brunk's (2010ab) literature, which suggests that brand's reputation will be strongly impacted by cases of misfortune and negative communication from external sources such as the media. However, results show that consumers' willingness to pay is marginally affected by media backlash for the Nestlé mainstream brand but significantly affected for Starbucks, the sustainability-rooted brand.

The analysis of the second research question (RQ2) shows that, although there is a greater (negative) impact on the sustainability-rooted brand, there is no differential impact, of the brand's media backlash [mainstream (Nestlé) vs. sustainability-rooted (Starbucks)] on consumers' valuations.

In what concerns the third research question (RQ3), results show that despite the purpose-driven partnership in light of SDG #17 does not impact consumers' brand valuations overall, it has a positive effect on consumer trust, brand loyalty, perceived quality and consumer perceived ethicality. These findings are aligned with prior research that suggests SDGs are likely to increase consumers' quality perception due to the association of brands with ethical attitudes (Guo et al., 2017) and rise the likelihood of trust in organizations (Edelman, 2019). However, only perceived quality and CPE showed an interaction effect, meaning that SDG #17 information does not fully overcome the negative effects of media backlash, supporting previous literature that highlights that the first information given has a stronger impact on consumers compared to the following ones. Also, that consumers trust more external sources (the media) than internal sources (the company itself) (Brunk, 2010ab).

Respecting the more overarching questions posed at the beginning of the dissertation concerning whether it is too late for well-established mainstream brands that are under public scrutiny to mitigate such negative effects, more research is needed to understand the power of (other) SDGs in mitigating negative consumer perceptions.

Overall, the present research shows that Starbucks is more likely to benefit from Nestlé's reputation. This may be due to the fact the Nestlé, despite the alleged cases of ethical misconduct, has built a strong business reputation over the years. Consumers seem to acknowledge this as shown in H2c findings, which indicated that the mitigation effect of providing SDG #17 information to compensate for a media backlash is more pronounced on sustainability-rooted brands than on mainstream brands. However, this study shows that consumers' social and environmental motivations show to have an impact on consumers' perceived ethicality of brands involved in a media backlash and subsequently exposed to information related to SDG partnership with another brand.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The present research contributes to the literature on strategic corporate social responsibility (Lantos, 2001; Werther & Chandler, 2005; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Carroll, 2015; Latapí Agudelo et al. 2019) on purpose-driven business and consumption (Herédia-Colaço et al., 2021; Moreira da Cruz et al., 2020a; 2020b), consumer perceived ethicality (Brunk, 2010ab: 2012), and consumer's brand valuations (Dutton et al., 1994; Brown & Dacin, 1997; Esch et al., 2006; Barton R. et al., 2018). It introduces a new finding which is the moderating effect of *Sustainable Development Goals*' information on the relationship between media backlash impact and consumers' valuations of well-established brands (Pimonenko, T. et. Al, 2020). In addition, extends the more recent literature on brands' adoption of SDGs as a strategic move to embrace and contribute to sustainable development (Milewicz & Herbig, 1994; Brunk, 2010ab; Stanaland et al., 2011; Janssen & Hamm, 2012; Alhouti et al., 2016).

The research findings also broaden the previous literature concerning ethical misbehaviors, which advocates that consumers are concerned to choose a brand based on the alignment with their values, and beliefs (Barton R. et al., 2018), and confirms the impact of negative information by external sources (media backlash), supporting Brunk's (2010b) observation that unethical behaviours can bruise brand reputation and consequently harm consumer's behaviours and brand valuations. Since the topics presented in the stimulus (inadequate safety standards; plastic waste) were chosen so that participants could not relate themselves, results support the literature.

As previously suggested by Janssen and Hamm (2012), WTP is significantly higher when certifications are provided, since it compensates for the good behavioural efforts subsequently made by brands when negative events occur. The present research also shows that to a certain extent the same conclusions may also apply when the brand makes an effort to create shared value via an SDG partnership with another brand. The strategic move in this direction is both interesting and valuable since joined purpose-driven efforts can positively influence consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards brands. Accordingly, the present research underlines the importance of the SDGs and their capability to restructure brand reputation after media's scrutiny (Vredenburg et al., 2021).

6.2 Managerial Implications

The present research provides important implications regarding the considerable disadvantages of being negatively exposed in the media. Specifically, findings show that well-established brands can be negatively impacted if involved in a media backlash since consumers' brand valuations decrease, leading to a negative brand reputation. Therefore, companies should re-evaluate their ethical conduct from the bottom up and avoid unethical behaviors. More specifically, they should be fully transparent to stakeholders along with their value and supply chain in order to protect themselves from public scrutiny and misinformation. Accordingly, this study suggests a key takeaway that relies on consumers' demand for consistent good behaviours, honesty, and responsibility regarding the sustainability of the business.

Considering mainstream brands, media backlash can indeed decrease consumer trust, brand loyalty, perceived quality, CPE, and purchase intentions. However, when it comes to willingness to pay, it shows that information about misconduct harms the brand, but for mainstream brands, consumers are willing to pay the same price either way. This effect does not apply to sustainability-rooted brands, according to the study hereby presented. Additionally, there are implications related to the advantages of brand engagement with SDGs.

Despite these not fully mitigating the negative effects of a media backlash, SDGs play a positive effect on consumers' brand valuations and should be leveraged by organizations across the globe.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study contributes to consumers' brand valuation through the lens of CSR and purpose-driven business. Nonetheless, the research has limitations that must be acknowledged, mainly due to time constraints and financial concerns.

In spite that the research instrument used, an online survey was previously highlighted on the advantage side, disadvantages should be considered. The online survey methodology has a limitation as it does not ensure the accuracy of answers since there's low control about respondent's focus and understandability. In other words, it lacks some internal validity when compared to experimental studies run in the lab. Further research would benefit if a different research instrument were explored, such as lab experiments or interviews, to test consumer's behaviours in more detail.

The second limitation is the type of sample used. A convenience sample was chosen to be performed, which resulted in the majority of the respondents being aged between 18 to 24 years and belonging to one nationality (Portuguese). The results might have been influenced by these aspects, since participants are likely to have identical perceptions, given their similar characteristics. Accordingly, it would be compelling to understand if demographic factors affect responses. Therefore, future research is suggested to have a more representative sample, which included people from other generations and countries, thus, different cultures and points of view.

The third limitation is related to time constrain. Further research would benefit from exploring the impact of both a media backlash and SDG informative behaviours in the long run since this a fairly recent topic. Also, future research could explore different SDGs and analyse how consumers would react when exposed to different stimuli. Notwithstanding that it is not the core of the analysis, the author highlights there is evidence of a low familiarity level with the SDGs (see [Appendix 7](#)). This may be a limitation since it suggests that might be a barrier to the SDG effectiveness, suggesting the need for longitudinal studies and the use of larger samples to examine these findings further.

However, consumers are becoming increasingly aware of ethical issues and show their commitment to reach out for a responsible business (Rose, M., 2016). As such, consumers are increasingly demanding more transparency and ethicality from brands. Thus, SDGs can be a powerful tool to guide organizations and brands through CSR and Purpose to gather benefits such as consumers' recognition, c reliability and, offer a competitive advantage. This opens an avenue of research for brands to invest in quality education (SDG #4) and marketing communication campaigns destined to inform its customers about the company's social and environmental efforts under SDGs framework (Latapí Agudelo et al., 2019).

Appendices

Appendix 1: Pre-Test Survey

Introduction Block

Dear Participants,

Welcome and thank you for agreeing to participate in this study, which addresses my master thesis. The survey will take less than one minute to complete. Please be assured that the information you give will remain anonymous and confidential.

Thank you for your contribution!

Joana Oliveira

Question 1: Mainstream Brands

A mainstream brand is any contemporary brand that is well-known and generally accepted to be a popular choice.

Please name the first 3 food & beverage brands that come to your mind and that can be considered mainstream food brands.

Question 2: Sustainable Brands

A sustainability-rooted brand is any brand that carries sustainability at its core since its origin, which means sustainability is embedded within root's business strategy and principles.

Please name the first 3 food & beverage brands that come to your mind and that can be considered sustainability-rooted food brands.

Acknowledgment

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.

Your response has been recorded.

Appendix 2: Main Study Survey

Introduction Block

Dear Participants,

Welcome and thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The survey aims to study consumer's brands valuations, in the food & beverages industry context.

Therefore, I would like to ask you to please answer honestly. There is no right or wrong answers and your participation is very important to completion of my master thesis.

It should take approximately 7 minutes to complete and all data obtained will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Your contribution is highly appreciated!

Thank you.

Joana Oliveira

s-joauoliveira@ucp.pt

Randomized (Nestlé or Starbucks)

Introduction to the brand (example: Nestlé)

Nestlé is a Food & Beverages brand that aims to "unlock the power of food to enhance quality of life for everyone, today and for generations to come."



Brand Familiarity

Please think about what you have heard, seen or experienced about Nestlé.

On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), how familiar are you with Nestlé?

	Not at all familiar (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Very much familiar (7)
How familiar are you with Nestlé?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Brand Personality

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
Overall, I think Nestlé is cheerful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall, I think Nestlé is up-to-date.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall, I think Nestlé is reliable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall, I think Nestlé is charming.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall, I think Nestlé is outdoorsy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Consumer trust

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
I trust Nestlé.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nestlé delivers what it promises.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Brand Loyalty

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
I prefer Nestlé over competitors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would repurchase Nestlé in my next shopping.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would recommend Nestlé to other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Perceived Quality

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
Nestlé products are of good quality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Consumer's Perceived Ethicality

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
Nestlé respects moral norms.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nestlé always adheres to the law.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nestlé avoids damaging behaviour at all cost.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nestlé is a socially responsible brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nestlé is a good brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Purchase Intentions

On a scale from 1 (definitely would not buy) to 7 (definitely would buy), please state if you would buy Nestlé products.

	Definitely would not buy (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	Definitely would buy (7)
I would buy Nestlé products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Willingness to Pay

Approximately how much would you willing to pay, in Euros, for a Nestlé milk/dark chocolate bar in small size (50g)?

	0	0.4	0.8	1.1	1.5	1.9	2.3	2.6	3
Approximately how much would you willing to pay, in Euros, for a Nestlé milk/dark chocolate bar in small size (50g)?									

Stimuli A (mainstream brand)

Now, please take time to read and think about the news stated below:



Stimuli Familiarity – Media Backlash

Please think about what you have heard, seen or experienced about Nestlé.

On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), how familiar are you with this news article?

	Not at all familiar (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Very much familiar (7)
On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), how familiar are you with this news article?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Consumer trust

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
I trust Nestlé.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nestlé delivers what it promises.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Brand Loyalty

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
I prefer Nestlé over competitors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would repurchase Nestlé in my next shopping.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would recommend Nestlé to other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Perceived Quality

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
Nestlé products are of good quality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Consumer's Perceived Ethicality

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
Nestlé respects moral norms.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nestlé always adheres to the law.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nestlé avoids damaging behaviour at all cost.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nestlé is a socially responsible brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nestlé is a good brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Purchase Intentions

On a scale from 1 (definitely would not buy) to 7 (definitely would buy), please state if you would buy Nestlé products.

	Definitely would not buy (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	Definitely would buy (7)
I would buy Nestlé products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Willingness to Pay

Approximately how much would you willing to pay, in Euros, for a Nestlé milk/dark chocolate bar in small size (50g)?

0 0.4 0.8 1.1 1.5 1.9 2.3 2.6 3

Approximately how much would you willing to pay, in Euros, for a Nestlé milk/dark chocolate bar in small size (50g)?	
--	--

Stimuli C (mainstream brand; SDG information)



Nestlé and Starbucks form a Global Partnership

In alignment with UN's Sustainable Development Goal # 17 - Partnership for the Goals, which focus on achieving sustainable development globally by join multi-stakeholder strengths, Nestlé announces a global alliance with Starbucks, with the purpose of sharing commitment to ethical and sustainable sourcing of coffee.

The 17th **Sustainable Development Goal** is part of a collection of global goals establish in 2015 by the United Nations to eradicate poverty, inequality, protect the planet and aspire for universal peace. Their success relies heavily on the joint action of the world's community.

"Achieve a better and more sustainable future for all."

Stimuli Familiarity - SDG

Please think about what you have heard, seen or experienced about Nestlé.

On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), how familiar are you with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

	Not at all familiar (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Very much familiar (7)
On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), how <u>familiar</u> are you with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Stimuli Familiarity – Partnership

On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), how familiar are you with the partnership between Nestlé and Starbucks?

	Not at all familiar (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Very much familiar (7)
On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), how <u>familiar</u> are you with the partnership between Nestlé and Starbucks?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Consumer trust

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
I trust Nestlé.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nestlé delivers what it promises.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Brand Loyalty

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
I prefer Nestlé over competitors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would repurchase Nestlé in my next shopping.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would recommend Nestlé to other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Perceived Quality

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
Nestlé products are of good quality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Consumer's Perceived Ethicality

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
Nestlé respects moral norms.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nestlé always adheres to the law.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nestlé avoids damaging behaviour at all cost.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nestlé is a socially responsible brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nestlé is a good brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Purchase Intentions

On a scale from 1 (definitely would not buy) to 7 (definitely would buy), please state if you would buy Nestlé products.

	Definitely would not buy (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	Definitely would buy (7)
I would buy Nestlé products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Willingness to Pay

Approximately how much would you willing to pay, in Euros, for a Nestlé milk/dark chocolate bar in small size (50g)?

0 0.4 0.8 1.1 1.5 1.9 2.3 2.6 3

Approximately how much would you willing to pay, in Euros, for a Nestlé milk/dark chocolate bar in small size (50g)?	
--	--

Motivations

Please think about your awareness towards **ethical, ecological, and sustainable behaviours**.

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
I am concerned about the environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Whenever I have the choice, I choose for less polluting products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to find products with the ecological badge (eco-label).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am interested in asking about the environmental consequences of a product before buying it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I try to find products with the fair-trade certification.

I am interested in asking about the ethicality of a product before buying it.

I try to avoid ethically, socially, and environmentally harmful products.

My actions impact on the environment.

Demographics

Lastly, please answer some demographic data about yourself.

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary/third gender
- Prefer not to say

How old are you?

- Under 18 years
- 18-24 years
- 25-34 years
- 35-44 years
- 45-54 years
- 55-64 years
- 65 years or above

Country In which country do you currently reside?

▼ Afghanistan (1) ... Zimbabwe (1357)

What is the highest level of education completed?

- Less than High School
- High School Graduate
- Bachelor Degree
- Master Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Professional Degree

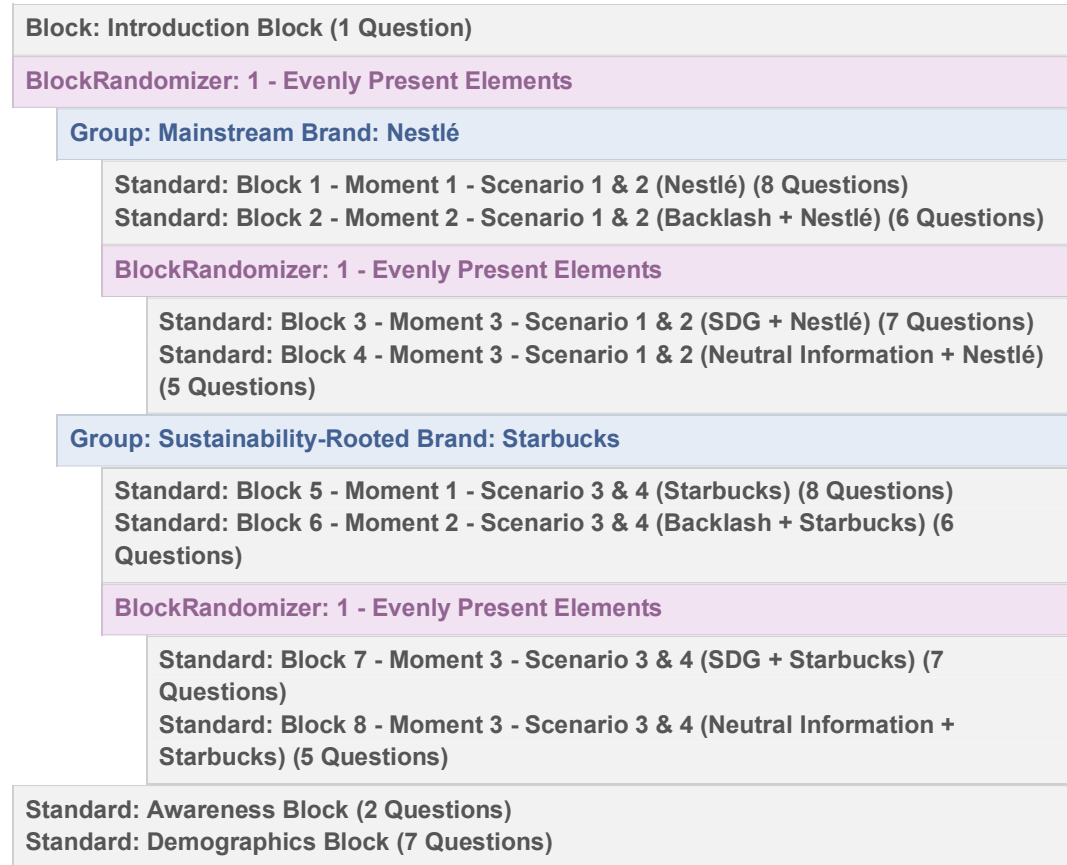
What is your current occupation?

- Student
- Student-Worker
- Employed
- Unemployed
- Retired

What is your household current monthly income in Euros?

- Under 500€
- 501€ - 1000€
- 1001€ - 1500€
- 1501€ - 2000€
- Above 2000€
- Prefer not to say

Appendix 3: Main Study Survey Flow



Appendix 4: Stimuli A and B

Stimuli A (media backlash, mainstream brand)



The Guardian
Thursday 11 August 2016
11p
From £3.75 per subscription

Nestlé accused of inadequate Safety Code in cocoa plantations

Adding to last year allegations of "zero progress" on reducing plastic waste, Nestlé is now facing a legal action taken by former workers due to inadequate safety standards in their outsourced farms.

The image shows a newspaper cover for The Guardian. The top left corner features a small photo of a child in a field. The main headline is "Nestlé accused of inadequate Safety Code in cocoa plantations". Below the headline is a photo of workers in a field carrying large sacks. A text box at the bottom of the page contains a sub-headline and a paragraph of text.

Stimuli B (media backlash, sustainability-rooted brand)



The Guardian
Thursday 11 August 2016
11p
From £3.75 per subscription

Starbucks accused of inadequate Safety Code in cocoa plantations

Adding to last year allegations of "zero progress" on reducing plastic waste, Starbucks is now facing a legal action taken by former workers due to inadequate safety standards in their outsourced farms.

The image shows a newspaper cover for The Guardian, identical in layout to Stimulus A. The main headline is "Starbucks accused of inadequate Safety Code in cocoa plantations". The sub-headline and text box at the bottom are identical to those in Stimulus A.

Appendix 5: Stimuli C and E

Stimuli C (SDG information, mainstream brand)



Official Partnership Release

Nestlé and Starbucks form a Global Partnership

In alignment with UN's Sustainable Development Goal # 17 - Partnership for the Goals, which focus on achieving sustainable development globally by join multi-stakeholder strengths, Nestlé announces a global alliance with Starbucks, with the purpose of sharing commitment to ethical and sustainable sourcing of coffee.

Stimuli E (SDG information, sustainability-rooted brand)



Official Partnership Release

Starbucks and Nestlé form a Global Partnership

In alignment with UN's Sustainable Development Goal # 17 - Partnership for the Goals, which focus on achieving sustainable development globally by join multi-stakeholder strengths, Starbucks announces a global alliance with Nestlé, with the purpose of sharing commitment to ethical and sustainable sourcing of coffee.

Appendix 6: Stimuli D and F

Stimuli D (neutral information, mainstream brand)



Nestlé

Official Statement

About us

Nestlé was founded in 1866 by Henri Nestlé, as "Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company". Its trademark is based on the founder family's coat of arms and the nest is a reference to the family name. He added three young birds being fed by a mother, to create a visual link between his name and his company's infant cereal products.

Stimuli F (neutral information, sustainability-rooted brand)



STARBUCKS®

Official Statement

About us

Starbucks is a multinational chain of coffeehouses and roastery reserves, founded in 1971 by Jerry Baldwin, Zev Siegl, and Gordon Bowker primarily as a coffee bean store. The brand's name is inspired by a character of the novel *Moby Dick*, the young chief mate Starbuck.

Appendix 7: Consumer's familiarity with the Sustainable Development Goals

On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), how familiar are you with sustainable development goals (SDGs)?

Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Deviation
3.5	1	7	2.1

N = 110

Table 17 - SDG Familiarity Descriptives

	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
1 (not at all)	33	15.9	30.0
2	9	4.3	38.2
3	12	5.8	49.1
4	15	7.2	62.7
5	20	9.6	80.9
6	9	4.3	89.1
7 (very much)	12	5.8	100.0
Total	110	52.9	

Table 18 - SDG Familiarity Frequencies

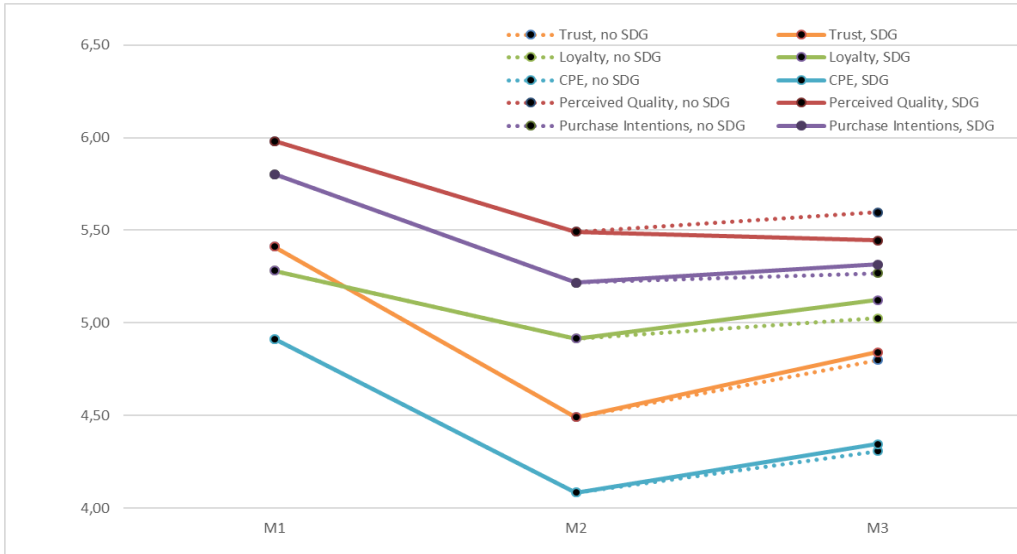
Appendix 8: 2 (Media Backlash: Mainstream, Sustainability-rooted) x 2 (SDG #17 Information: yes, no) MANOVA

	Mainstream Brand		Sustainability-Rooted Brand		Media Backlash (mainstream vs. sustainability-rooted brand) <i>F test</i>	SDG info (vs. no SDG info) <i>F test</i>	Media Backlash x SDG #17 - Partnership for the Goals <i>F test</i>
	SDG info (n= 105)	No SDG info (n= 96)	SDG info (n= 100)	No SDG info (n= 109)			
Consumer trust _[M3]	4.8 (1.58)	4.8 (1.38)	4.64 (1.27)	4.08 (1.51)	5.96*	2.19	1.74
Brand Loyalty _[M3]	5.09 (1.64)	5.03 (1.20)	4.59 (1.57)	3.96 (1.68)	13.33***	2.62	1.69
Perceived Quality _[M3]	5.42 (1.62)	5.60 (.98)	5.41 (1.37)	4.89 (1.53)	3.57 ⁺	.82	3.48 ⁺
CPE _[M3]	4.34 (1.54)	4.31 (1.41)	4.55 (1.27)	3.76 (1.43)	.69	4.20*	3.64 ⁺
Purchase Intentions _[M3]	5.28 (1.84)	5.27 (1.44)	4.63 (1.8)	3.89 (2.01)	16.77***	2.28	2.11
WTP _[M3]	1.03 (.57)	1.00 (.46)	1.23 (.6)	1.09 (.73)	3.00 ⁺	1.15	.38

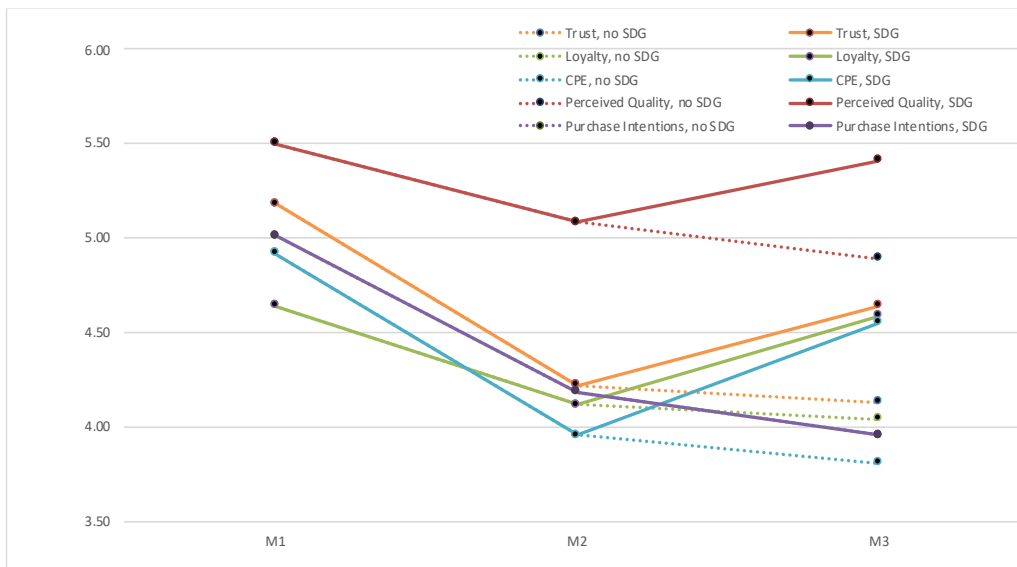
Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p \leq .1$; Mean (Std. Error).

Appendix 9: Valuations through the Moments, across Brands

Mainstream Brand (Nestlé)



Sustainability-Rooted Brand (Starbucks)



Note: M1 and M2 points are designed by the mean of scores that aggregated both group 1 and group 2 to be accurate to the data collected where the starting point should be an average of mainstream brands valuations throughout Moment 1 and Moment2. Thus, to compute the M3 point, the researcher presents the difference between group 1 and group 2 to understand the effect on the dependent variables.

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