

**CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY IN THE FAST FASHION
INDUSTRY: HOW MEDIA PRESSURE AFFECTED CORPORATE
DISCLOSURE AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF RANA PLAZA**

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PLAZA**

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Abstract

This thesis aims to explore the reasons why companies themselves get involved in CSR initiatives and whether global news media attention has an effect on a company's CSR disclosure and initiatives.

The study draws upon legitimacy theory and media agenda-setting theory to explore the link between CSR disclosure and news coverage in the aftermath of the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013. Four global retailers H&M, Walmart, Loblaw and Primark were deliberately chosen at the center of the analysis, for their different CSR profiles and their involvement in the Rana Plaza collapse. The thesis is divided into three parts; each part explores in an inductive approach CSR before, during and after the collapse of Rana Plaza.

The result of the research and data analysis shows that the disclosures varied depending on the company's CSR profile. The media coverage was different depending on the company's CSR initiatives and pro-activity in relation to the collapse. One company got a substantial amount of positive media coverage, while another got a great deal of negative media attention. The result from the comparison with the disclosures shows that two companies did put effort to improve their disclosure and transparency in their disclosure of CSR activities, while the two other companies were less transparent.

This research has shown how preexisting reputation determines how a company is portrayed to the public by the media when it comes to major events and that negative media pressure does not necessarily make for more or better disclosures.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Disclosure, Rana Plaza, Media Pressure

JEL Classification System:

M14 Corporate Culture • Diversity • Social Responsibility

L82 Entertainment • Media

Resumo

Esta tese pretende explorar as razões pelas quais as próprias empresas se envolvem em iniciativas de Responsabilidade Social Corporativa (RSC) e se a atenção mediática global tem efeito na divulgação e iniciativas de RSC de uma empresa.

O estudo baseia-se na teoria da legitimidade e na teoria do agendamento para explorar a relação entre divulgação da RSC e cobertura mediática na sequência do desabamento do Rana Plaza em 2013. Quatro retalhistas internacionais, H&M, Walmart, Loblaw e Primark, foram especificamente escolhidos como foco da análise, devido aos seus distintos perfis de

RSC e o seu envolvimento no desabamento do Rana Plaza. Esta tese está dividida em três partes, sendo que cada uma explora, numa abordagem indutiva, o antes, o durante e o depois do desabamento.

O resultado da pesquisa e análise dos dados mostram que as divulgações variaram dependendo do perfil de RSC das empresas. A cobertura mediática também foi diferente, dependendo nas iniciativas de RSC das empresas e a sua proatividade perante o desabamento. Enquanto uma empresa recebeu uma considerável cobertura mediática positiva, outra deparou-se com muita atenção mediática negativa. O resultado da comparação das divulgações mostra que duas empresas se esforçaram por melhorar as suas divulgações e a transparência das mesmas nas suas atividades de RSC, enquanto as duas outras empresas foram menos transparentes.

Esta pesquisa demonstrou como a reputação preexistente determina a forma como uma empresa é retratada pela imprensa quando se trata de acontecimentos importantes e que a pressão mediática negativa não implica mais ou melhores divulgações.

Palavras-chave: Responsabilidade Social Corporativa, Divulgação de informação empresarial, Rana Plaza, Pressão mediática

Sistema de classificação JEL:

M14 Cultura Corporativa • Diversidade • Responsabilidade Social

L82 Entretenimento • Meios de comunicação social

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List of Abbreviations

The Accord - The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh
The Alliance - The Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety
CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility
EBA - Everything but Arms
GSP - Generalised Scheme of Preferences
GRI - The Global Reporting Initiative
H&M - Hennes & Mauritz
MFA - Multi Fiber Agreement
NGO - Non-Government Organization
RMG - Ready-made Garment

1. Introduction

1.1. Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a not an easily defined concept. It is generally used to describe that corporations have a responsibility towards their various stakeholders, but since the conception of the term, there has been no agreement on a set definition of the concept. Whatever the approach to CSR, the common denominator to the different theories is that CSR is about how corporation meets their objectives producing long-term profits using their power in a responsible way, while integrating social demands and contributing to a sustainable society by doing what is ethically correct (Garriga and Melé 2004).

The foundation of the concept of CSR is that it is not enough for corporations to be solely concerned with financial profit, but that they are also a part of a broader society (Chandler and Werther 2011). Corporations are now more than ever being urged to take responsibility for the ways their operations impact society and the natural environment. They are being required to apply sustainability principles to the ways in which they conduct their business, and sustainability is expected from the company's stakeholders including their shareholders, which increases the need to focus not only on the financial obligations, but also on being a socially responsible organization (Chandler and Werther 2011). In today's business environment it is not enough for corporations to use CSR as an add-on item of corporate philanthropy, it needs to be an integrated part in how corporations creates their revenue, since CSR is not only about providing funding and resources for social causes, such as donating money to charities, but rather an integrated part on how companies construct their core product and services in line with what is in the best interests of society (Chandler and Werther 2011). CSR involves how corporations incorporate CSR into their business plan on how to produce products or provide services that are in the best interest for society. Where CSR is embedded into the company's business strategy in order to create value for the company, by engaging in CSR activities companies can generate favorable stakeholder attitudes as well as in the long run build a positive corporate image and strengthen their stakeholder relationships.

The increased focus on sustainability does not allow corporations to be just concerned with making profit. Not only are consumers more concerned with the environment and what corporations do to benefit the community, besides the goods and services, investors are also more willing to invest in a company that has a positive influence and benefits society.

1.1.1. Corporate Social Responsibility in fast fashion industry

Quickly produced, low priced, short trended and short lived fashion items are for many the quite opposite of sustainability. Nike has been in the news on more occasions for their suspicious practices conducted in their factories in less developed countries during the 1990's. "In the 1990s, protesters railed against sweatshop conditions at its overseas suppliers and made Nike the global poster child for corporate ethical fecklessness." (Zadek 2004: 36). Their practices ended up being discovered and were "touted as proof of the organization's irresponsibility and greed"(Zadek 2004: 36). With the intense pressure Nike experienced, they conducted several changes and implementations in order to cope with the bad publicity they got through the discovery of the practices with their subcontractors (Zadek 2004). Nike realized that it had to manage corporate responsibility as a core part of the business and to adjust its business model to embrace more responsible practices. But Nikes supply chain and business model was far from unique in the retail business of that time, which got Nike to realize that the issue was broader and included the whole industry, and for Nike to change its business practices they had to get both its competitors and suppliers involved (Zadek 2004). Several initiatives were launched; the most well-known are the Fair Labor Association (FLA), and the multi-stakeholder Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI). The initiatives focus on the collaboration between companies, NGOs, labor organizations, and public bodies. But "all have broadly responded to the same need to develop, monitor, and comply with now commonly accepted labor standards underpinned by UN conventions"(Zadek 2004: 42).

H&M has set their minds to becoming the leader not only in the fast fashion industry, but also in the CSR through their initiatives of using organic cotton, having a majority of women in management, recycling of clothes and education projects in Bangladesh, where most of the production lies. H&M is trying to position themselves as the CSR leader and ethical choice in the fast fashion industry. Even with the initiatives from Nike and H&M in improving the working conditions at their factories in developing countries, poor labor conditions in overseas sweatshops are not a problem left in the 1990's. We still read about accidents like the one that caused over a thousand lives when Rana Plaza factory collapsed in Bangladesh in 2013 and the fire in Tazreen factory 2012 and child labor is still a reality in many countries. It seems that the progress made on CSR is not big enough, not fast enough and not good enough.

1.1.2. Can fast fashion be sustainable?

In as little as three weeks, a piece can go from the drawing board to hanging in the stores and retailers as H&M and Zara have new items coming into their stores every day. This well matches the postmodern identity; that we are all a constant work in progress, and the constantly changing fashion items are a way to help to define an always evolving self-image. The fast fashion industry with its “low-cost clothing collections based on current, high-cost luxury fashion trends—is, by its very nature, a fast-response system that encourages disposability” (Joy et al 2012:275), thanks to the fast-fashion companies who profits with their high volume sales, making the CEOs of H&M and Zara some of the wealthiest men in the world. The fashion retailers like H&M, Zara and GAP sell trendy fashion at low prices and the business model is simple - "In order to sell clothes for cheap, you have to sell a lot of them, so you have to make them quickly and cost-effectively" (Reed 2015¹). The fast fashion business has grown faster compared to the rest of the clothing industry with a business model that consist of low cost production, fresh designs and quick response times, increasing the efficiency in meeting the consumers demand. Fast fashion chains typically have higher profit margins than their more traditional fashion retail counterparts (Joy et al 2012). Part of the reason for the higher profit margin is that the items are manufactured in large quantities in countries with very low cost of production.

The fast fashion industry has been under the spotlight from activists and the media because of their manufacturing procedures, use of water and pesticides and working condition in many countries, mostly Bangladesh. Some CSR initiatives concerning environment are implemented and even some CSR initiatives, as organic cotton and energy saving to name a few. Some of the initiatives are H&Ms recycling of clothes or Levis water saving. These types of initiatives put the focus on what can be done, but the human rights and working conditions part of CSR have not gotten the same attention and when it is in focus, it is mostly negative as with the collapse of Rana Plaza in 2013 or fire in Tazreen factory 2012 in Bangladesh. This indicates that not enough is done and there will be a long way to go before the fast fashion industry can start calling itself sustainable. The collapse of Rana Plaza has created more focus on CSR related issues within the fast fashion industry and has raised important questions about whether fast fashion can be sustainable altogether.

¹ Reed, R. 2015. Watch John Oliver Slam Fashion Industry’s Child Labor Practices. Rolling Stone. <http://www.rollingstone.com/tv/videos/watch-john-oliver-slam-fashion-industrys-child-labor-practices-20150427>. Accessed 31.01.2016

1.2. Prior research

The collapse of Rana Plaza and the following discussion brought forward new urgency to the question of the responsibility and role of the fashion industry when it came to their production practices in Bangladesh. One of the key principles of Corporate Social Responsibility is the unspoken social contract between the company and the society it operates in (Chandler and Werther 2011). The retailers involved in the fast fashion industry got to feel the consequences of this contract taken into question, as they received a lot of pressure to adopt corporate codes of conduct that would prevent similar accident from happening in the future (Chandler and Werther 2011).

The social contract is based on corporations' need to build social and environmental issues into their strategy and that they have a contract with society and stakeholders beyond financial responsibilities. Any breach of this contract has negative implications on the survival of the company, as any organization in society operates on the support from their stakeholders (Deegan and Islam 2010). In order to maintain the social contract with society the company has to be viewed as trustworthy. According to scholars a company's corporate disclosure is a good tool to show society that they are legitimate. Companies might change their operations to meet changing community expectations, and in order to effectively retain or regain legitimacy it is vital that the organization informs the community about its changes (Deegan and Islam 2010). In other words, companies engage in corporate social reporting to show that they are good corporate citizens, using reporting as a tool to show that their actions are legitimate as social bounds and norms may change over time. Corporate social reporting should mainly be considered a reaction to the organizations continuous demonstration of their legitimacy, it is used as a response to the public pressure for more transparency (Hooghiemstra 2000).

Previous research done by Brown and Deegan (1998) and Deegan and Islam (2010) suggest that increased media attention on environmental and social issue leads to greater corporate disclosures. Furthermore, their research suggests that when industry experiences higher levels of negative media coverage concerning the industry's environmental and social implications, companies in that industry will respond to the media and public pressure with increasing the amount of disclosures. This research looks closer at the disclosers after negative media coverage, followed by a major legitimacy breach in form of a disaster. In this way this research intent to contribute to existing research by looking at quality of the disclosures instead of quantity.

1.3. Object of study

There is a lack of research that specially focuses on factors that motivate companies on CSR initiatives. This thesis aims to explore what influences a company's decision making when it comes to CSR initiatives. The research in this thesis investigates factors that motivate companies to take and disclose CSR initiatives in general. In doing so, it explores whether the global news media is able to influence the decision making and whether the pressure is visible in the CSR disclosure. This thesis researches the relation between global retail companies CSR disclosures and the news media pressure in the wake of the collapse of the Rana Plaza production factory in 2013. The study draws upon legitimacy theory and media agenda setting theory to explore the link between CSR disclosure and news coverage. The media agenda setting theory suggest that the global news media is able to influence companies' decisions when it comes to CSR initiatives and disclosure by creating pressure and expectations of the global community. The legitimacy theory explains not only why communication and disclosure of CSR initiatives are important for a company to operate, but also the relationship between the CSR communication and the expectation of the global community.

The base of the research is to look at a situation where the industry got a significant amount of media attention and their CSR practices were discussed. Therefore the research is based on the aftermath of the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013, measuring the media attention in the aftermath of the collapse. Four global retail companies H&M, Walmart, Loblaw and Primark were deliberately chosen at the center of the analysis because of their different CSR profiles, backgrounds and their different involvement in the Rana Plaza collapse. H&M was chosen because of its big focus on sustainability, Walmart was chosen because of its controversy and bad reputation when it came to working condition, Loblaw and Primark were chosen because they were the only companies who admitted to have production in the factories located in Rana Plaza at the time of collapse.

The thesis is divided into three parts; one for each research question, each question exploring in an inductive approach CSR before, during and after the collapse of Rana Plaza. The first part is to establish a common ground of where the different companies stand when it comes to CSR before the collapse of Rana Plaza. There are however some difficulties when it comes to comparing CSR profiles, since CSR initiatives are far from mandatory for companies, which means that the practices varies to a great degree, since there are no common guidelines to follow when it comes to CSR initiatives. The companies' CSR performance is therefore also difficult to compare. The research in this part is based on the

CSR initiatives as stated by the companies in their annual reports and sustainability reports. The comparison was based on the Global Reporting Initiative guidelines.

The second part is based on the media attention received, and how the different newspapers covered the collapse in relation to the different companies. Since the majority of retailers with manufacturing in Bangladesh are from North America and Europe the different newspaper articles are collected from the most read online newspapers in the English speaking western world, in order to measure the attention which would have them most impact on the relevant community.

The third part of the research is to connect the media attention and CSR disclosure analysis in order to see if the media coverage had any influence on the CSR initiatives and reporting after the collapse. The method used is the same as in the first part, that is to say, a qualitative analysis is developed based on annual and sustainability reports and following the Global Reporting Initiative guidelines.

1.4. Research questions

This study addresses a number of research question related to the Corporate Social Responsibility profiles for four main fast fashion brands before, during and after the collapse of Rana Plaza 2013. The main focus is on how the companies presented their CSR profile, the media's perception of the companies CSR initiatives and efforts and how the companies handled the media attention in form of CSR initiatives and disclosures.

Research question 1: How were the companies' disclosure practices and view on CSR before the collapse?

First the CSR profiles for H&M, Walmart, Loblaws and Primark were analyzed, based on their own sustainability reports from 2012, specifically focused on their view and initiatives when it came to workers rights, outsourcing and manufacturing.

Research question 2: Did the media attention treat the companies differently depending on the companies' view on CSR?

Here the media attention the companies received in relation to the Rana Plaza collapse were measured. The sample was taken from the most prominent English speaking newspapers from western countries. The sample was coded for three frames derived from a qualitative analysis. The three frames the articles were coded for were "Negative", "Neutral", or "Positive" media attention.

Research question 3: Did the media attention affect the companies' CSR disclosure or their CSR initiatives?

The last step is to analyze the companies' CSR profiles and initiatives based on their own sustainability reports from the year after the collapse (i.e. 2013).

The two illustrations below show when the news coverage data was collected in relation to the Rana Plaza collapse and the CSR initiatives, and which year the sustainability and annual reports were taken from.

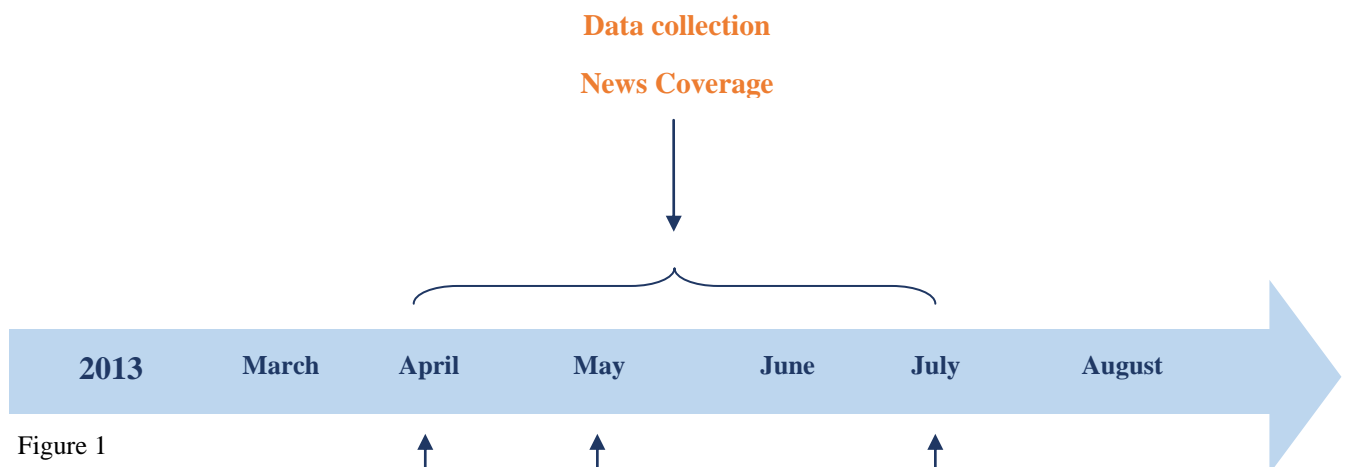


Figure 1

Source: Author based on data analysis

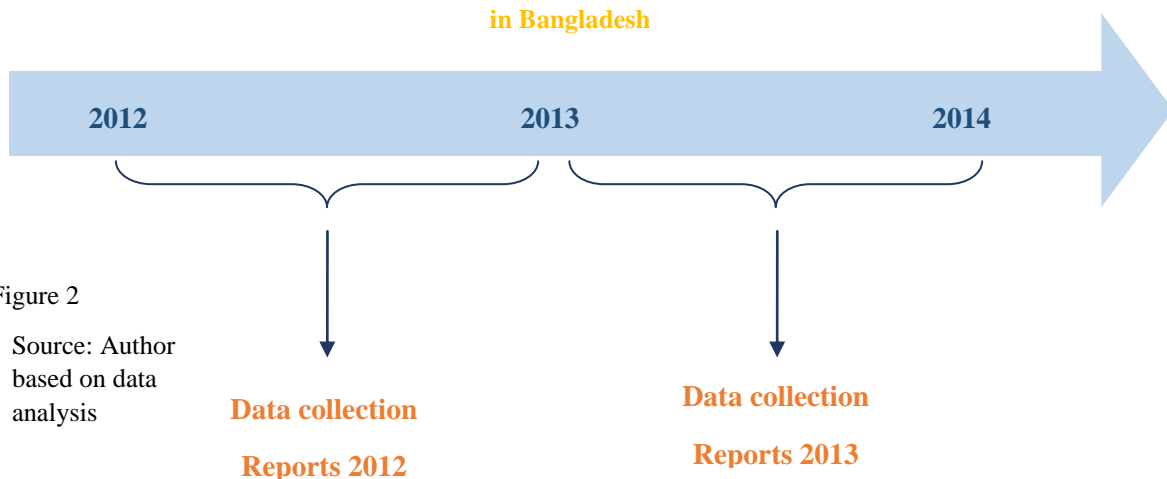


Figure 2

Source: Author based on data analysis

2. Background

2.1. Ready-made Garment Industry in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has developed a strong position among European and US retailers as a place for outsourcing production, because of competitive prices, available capacities and suppliers (Berg et al 2011). Outsourcing is far from new to the ready-made garment (RMG) industry; both European and US retailers have been making their clothes in developing countries for many years. China has for a long time been the favorite destination for the RMG industry. But the industrialization and rising economy in China turned up the wages, which forced retailers to look for other more profitable places for their labor intensive production. That is one of the reasons North American and European retailers have looked towards Bangladesh, where labor costs were among the lowest in the world. The last decades Bangladesh has seen rapid growth in the RMG production industry and has become one of the top RMG industry exporters and the RMG industry now is Bangladesh's most important industry (Berg et al 2011). In 2012/2013, the country had 5876 factories employing 4 million workers; the total export of the country was 27 billion USD of which the RMG amounted to 79.61 % according to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). In 2013 58.7% was exported to Europe and 26.8% to North America (BGMEA).

The reason for the rapid growth of Bangladesh RMG sector is a combination of three factors; Government support of the industry, trade preferences and the rising economy in China. The government in Bangladesh has lead an RMG friendly policy, meaning they have formulated their policies in such way that the RMG sector has been let more or less alone, while other manufacturing sectors have been heavily regulated. Cash incentives, drawback schemes, encouragement of foreign direct investment, organizing trade fairs, establishment of export processing zones are just some of the initiatives taken of the government to boost the growth of the RMG sector, for example, exemption of corporate taxation on export profits and a concessional duty rate of 7.5 percent on capital equipment imports for several years (Yunus 2012).

Another favorable addition is the trade agreements with the European Union and United Nation of America. Through the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) under the Everything but Arms (EBA) initiative, Bangladesh benefits from the fact that exporters from developing countries pay less or no duties on their exports to the EU, which allows the Bangladeshi RMG industry to enter in Europe without paying duties (Rahman 2014). In the US the Multi Fiber Agreement (MFA) assisted the Bangladeshi RMG industry to enter the

market; the Multi Fiber Agreement was established in order to control quotas to support countries like Bangladesh by giving their products a favored position in the market of the US and other developed countries (Hakim et al 2010).

Amongst the several reasons for the strong growth of the RMG sector in Bangladesh, the most prominent is the low wages. Bangladesh has one of the lowest labor cost in the world, a minimum wage of 68 USD a month in 2013, while competing China had a minimum wage of 156 USD ²(Luebker 2014). This is even after the protests in 2013 where the minimum salary was raised from around 37 USD (3000 takas) to 68 USD (5.300 takas) (Reuters 2013). The low wages have helped Bangladesh on high volume and mass production of RMG items to compete directly with other countries as China, India and Vietnam (Yunus 2012).

The RMG industry in Bangladesh is divided into three tiers of factories. Tier 1 factories are the ones that secure the orders from buyers or intermediaries directly. They are often larger units, with 2,000 or more workers. The tier 1 factories are accounting for approximately 20 percent of the total number of garment companies in the industry (Ahmed and Nathan 2014:5). The tier 2 factories are medium-sized units with just a few hundred workers. The Tier 2 factories are sub-contracted by the tier 1 factories, often to fill capacity gaps or to produce specific lines, which means that the tier 2 factories do not get orders directly from the buyers, unless buyers are not able to complete their buying requirements from the tier 1 factories. This also means that Tier 2 factories are outside the ‘compliance net’ of buyers, whose compliance audits are confined to those who get the direct orders. Tier 3 factories are factories supplying inputs for various items of trim or accessories (Ahmed and Nathan 2014:5). The retailers will usually make a contract with the first and sometimes the second tier factories, where, in addition to the product agreement, they have to fulfill the health and safety procedures from the buyer, which is seen as essential in order to get the contract (Sundström et al 2013). The first and second tier factories then subcontract third tier factories in peak times, when they have a lot of orders that they are not able to complete in time. This practice makes it difficult for the buyers to control the conditions as the third tier factories are small operations that many times do not have the financial capacity to implement the buyer’s code of conduct (Sundström et al 2013).

According to Ahmed and Nathan (2014) there are in general large-scale violations of building norms in Bangladesh, and the RMG industry is no exception. The high density of

²This numbers are based on a report made by ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, where they compare the wages in the garment industry for the top 25 apparel-exporting countries in USD as of 1 January 2014.

workers in RMG factories means that the violations of building regulations are likely to have very high fatality rates. In a study done by Ahmed et al (2014) 95% of the employees told the surveyors that the owners forced them to work in an unsafe and unhealthy work environment, filled with workers beyond the capacity, without proper ventilation. In fact workers are often exposed of dust and fumes, fire, gas, flames, loud noise, extreme heat, and dangerous tools. As many as 80 % of the workers were exposed to loud noise and 67 % were exposed to fire, gas and flames. While conducting the interviews, the surveyors found other alarming safety hazards in the factories, including emergency routes being blocked, lack of signage for escape routes, fire exit or emergency staircases lacking proper maintenance (Ahmed et al 2014). Prior to the Rana Plaza incident several issues were identified at the site, specific to compliance with the CSR sector, such as wages, lack of labor union, safety, government involvement that was predicted to have implications on further growth in Bangladesh RGM sector if no initiative was taken.

2.2. The collapse of Rana Plaza

On the 24th of April 2013 shortly after 9 am, the eight-floor Rana Plaza building came tumbling down. The building held five RMG factories with a total of around 5000 workers on the upper floors. The Rana Plaza collapse was the most deadly accident in the Bangladeshi garment industry, with 1.134 casualties and more than 2.500 injured (Hoskins 2015).

The day before the collapse, large cracks had appeared and were visible in the buildings foundation, but the safety of the building had been assured by the owner of Rana Plaza. Early in the morning before the collapse, workers and manager were arguing outside the factory, many of the workers were too scared to enter the building. The workers were told that if they did not go to work they would not be paid for the whole month (Akhter 2014).

The following days several survivors were rescued from the collapse, the last surviving victim was pulled up from the buildings remains 17 days after the collapse of the building. The rescue operation that began the day of the collapse ended 13th of May 2013 with no more hope to find any more survivors alive. The reason for the collapse was discovered to be that the building was placed on the unsafe ground of a pond filled in with sand and earth which weakened the foundations of the building (Paul and Quadir 2013). In addition to the unstable foundation, Rana Plaza had three illegal floors built on top of the five floors initially permitted on the building. The poor quality of construction material contributed to the structural weakness, and the generators that had been placed on several floors to keep the

power and sewing machines running during the city's regular power cuts created constant vibrations (Hoskins 2015). This, in addition to a constant stream of more people, machines and fabric that was placed inside the factories in the building, caused the load-bearing columns to crack apart and eventually the building to collapse (Hoskins 2015).

It was estimated that the factories placed in Rana Plaza produced clothes for around 30 retailers at the time of the collapse, but the companies with production in Bangladesh all denied to have anything to do with Rana Plaza or that they have used the factories before, but did not have any production there at the time of the collapse, except for Loblaw and Primark. It soon became clear that the problem behind the collapse was not limited to the two retailers admitting production in the building at the time of the collapse; the problem was bigger than that it was rather a problem that involved the whole ready-made garment industry. The collapse put the poor working condition and safety issues at the agenda, as the collapse was established as the most deadly industry accident in the garment industry. There was little doubt that initiatives had to be put in place in order to avoid similar accidents in the future, as this accident created a massive outcry for workers' safety, workplace conditions and overall labor rights which resulted in an extensive coverage in the media worldwide, and the retailers buying ready-made garment from Bangladeshi factories were seen as responsible and the ones that had to take the initiatives to fix it. The solution took form of two different CSR initiatives involving all major stakeholders. The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh was initiated of NGOs and international labor unions and signed by mostly European companies, in May 2013. In July 2013 several North American companies created their own initiative called the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety as an answer to the legal binding aspect of the Accord.

2.3. CSR initiatives after the collapse: the Accord and the Alliance

2.3.1. Accord for Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh

The Accord for Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh was the first CSR initiative after the collapse of Rana, an attempt to prevent similar future accidents to take place. The Accord is a five year independent, legally binding agreement between global brands and trade unions designed to build a safe and healthy work environment in the Bangladeshi RMG industry. The aim is to set a framework to enable a safe and healthy working environment through measures of independent and transparent inspections, health and safety training, worker empowerment,

remediation of health and safety risks, and repercussions for suppliers that refuse to comply (Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh official website).

The agreement was signed on May 15th 2013, as an initiative after the Rana Plaza collapse, but the outline of the Accord started much earlier in February 2010 after another incident at the Garib & Garib sweater factory, a previous form of the Accord called Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreement had been signed only by PVH and Tchibo. After the collapse of Rana Plaza there was an urgency to develop a complete and comprehensive fire and building safety program. On May 5th 2013 IndustriALL Global Union and the UNI Global Union in alliance with leading NGOs, the Clean Clothes Campaign and the Workers Rights Consortium issued a new version of the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreement now renamed the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh. The major brands and retailers were asked to endorse the Accord with deadline 15th of May (Clean Clothes Campaign 2013). It was formally signed between the international retailers, the global and Bangladeshi unions on May 23th 2013, with the NGOs Clean Clothes Campaign, International Labor Rights Forum, Maquila Solidarity Network and the Worker Rights Consortium as witnesses (Clean Clothes Campaign 2013).

2.3.2. The Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety

The Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety came together as an alternate proposal to the Accord mainly consisting of North American retailers. The reason for alternative initiative was objections to the Accords legally binding nature, as the Accord, according to Walmart, “doesn't recognize the way the U.S. legal system works, which is why the vast majority here in the U.S. didn't join.” (Palmer and Wohl 2013)³. The plan was initiated at the 10th of July 2013. The Alliance is a binding, five-year commitment to improve safety in Bangladeshi ready-made garment factories. The Alliance represents the majority of the North American RMG companies who import from Bangladesh and it holds the members and their factories accountable the workplaces being safe and ensuring building and fire safety. The aim of the Alliance is to substantially improve worker safety in the ready-made-garment industry by upgrading factories, educating workers and management, empowering workers, and building institutions that can enforce and maintain safe working conditions throughout Bangladesh (Alliance for Bangladesh worker safety official website). The Alliance has partnered up with

³ Palmer, D., Wohl, J. 2013. UPDATE 1-North American group sets Bangladesh factory safety plan. Reuters. <http://www.reuters.com/article/bangladesh-factories-northamerica-idUSL1N0FG0S220130710>. Accessed 27.09.2016

governments and trade unions, and is backed by the American Apparel & Footwear Association, Canadian Apparel Federation, National Retail Federation, Retail Council of Canada, Retail Industry Leaders Association, and the United States Association of Importers of Textiles & Apparel (Palmer and Wohl 2013). In the table below (Table 1) you will find a comparison of the main difference and similarities between The Accord for Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh and The Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety. The table is from University of Washington Advisory Committee on Trademarks and Licensing and not the authors own.

Executive comparison of the two plans

	Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh	Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety
Key Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreement is between brands, trade unions, and NGOs. - Agreement is legally binding - Companies pay an equitable share to cover repair and renovation expenses - Companies pay remediation to workers for lost income during any period of closure - Companies that fail to meet safety standards within 6 months of inspection are subject to termination of business relations with signatories - Inspections conducted by consultancies not working with any signatories - Reports made publicly available and on a regular basis, including inspection reports <p>(Source: University of Washington Advisory Committee on Trademarks and Licensing)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreement is between brands - Little of the agreement is legally binding - Companies pledge to pay \$42 million and some are offering low-cost loans totaling \$100 million - 10% of the \$42 million Worker Safety Fund will go toward worker remediation - Companies that fail to meet safety standards must receive the approved training program within 30 days; relevant stakeholders will be notified; and signatories have pledged to work only with safe factories - Inspections conducted by qualified and recognized authorities but not necessarily independent - Reports made publicly available on a regular basis, but not including inspection reports <p>(Source: University of Washington Advisory Committee on Trademarks and Licensing)</p>
Signatories and Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over 120 brands and retailers - 10 international and Bangladeshi trade unions - 4 international NGOs/NPOs - Chaired by the ILO - Around 1600 factories - 4 American universities - 5 university retailers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 25 North American brands and retailers - 6 trade associations - 1 NGO (BRAC) - Around 500 factories <p>(Source: University of Washington Advisory Committee on Trademarks and Licensing)</p>

	(Source: University of Washington Advisory Committee on Trademarks and Licensing)	
Inspections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An independent Safety Inspector not currently working with any signatories will lead factory inspections - Safety Inspector determines whether factories pass safety requirements - A factory that does not pass the requirements within 6 months of inspection will be subject to notice, warning, and ultimately termination of business relations with companies <p>(Source: University of Washington Advisory Committee on Trademarks and Licensing)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Committee of Experts will develop and implement the Alliance Fire and Building Safety Standards and inspection process - The Committee of Experts will approve qualified safety inspectors, develop a remediation plan, and audit and validate inspection reports - A factory that fails an inspection will be required to receive the approved training program within 30 days with stakeholders being notified - Members have pledged to work only with factories that ensure a safe working environment <p>(Source: University of Washington Advisory Committee on Trademarks and Licensing)</p>

(Table 1 Source: University of Washington Advisory Committee on Trademarks and Licensing)

2.4. Company profiles

The companies chosen for this research study are Hennes & Mauritz AB, Wal-Mart Stores Inc, Primark Limited and Loblaw Companies Limited. They are chosen on the background of their diversity when it comes to geographic position, involvement in the Rana Plaza collapse and CSR positions. Two of the companies, Primark and H&M, are based in Europe and have their primary markets in Europe, while the two other companies are based in North America. All of the companies except Loblaw operate on a multinational level, with stores in several markets around the globe. Primark and Loblaw were openly admitting to their involvement in production in the factories located in Rana Plaza, while according to Walmart and H&M they had not any direct involvement with the production at Rana Plaza. Common for all the companies is that they are in the retail industry and has production of ready-made garment in Bangladesh. Bellow you will find a short presentation of each of the companies for the readers own comparison and reference.

H&M

Company name: Hennes & Mauritz AB

Headquarters: Stockholm, Sweden

Business concept: "Fashion and quality at the best price."

Products: Retail fashion segment, product range includes clothing, cosmetics, accessories, footwear, for men, women, children and teenagers, and home textiles, divided into six brands – H&M, COS, Monki, & Other Stories, Weekday and Cheap Monday.

Markets: Over 4,200 stores in 64 markets

Incorporated: 1947 Västerås, Sweden

Employees: Team of 148,000 colleagues

Sales: Sales in 2015 including VAT reached SEK 210 billion

(Source: H&M group official website)

Walmart

Company name: Wal-Mart Stores, Inc

Headquarters: Bentonville, Arkansas, USA

Business concept: "Saving people money so they can live better."

Products: Retailer segment, product range includes household goods, electronics, office supply, clothing, shoes, accessories, sports equipment, entertainment articles, furniture, garden utensils, tools, pharmaceuticals, nutrition, beauty products, automotive products.

Markets: 11,500 stores under 63 banners in 28 countries

Incorporated: 1969 U.S.A

Employees: 2.3 million associates around the world

Sales: fiscal year 2016 revenue of \$482.1 billion

(Source: Wal-Mart Stores, Inc official website)

Primark

Company name: Primark Limited (subsidiary of Associated British Foods)

Headquarters: Dublin, Ireland

Business concept: to offer customers quality, up-to-the-minute fashion at value-for-money prices

Products: Retail fashion segment, product range includes clothing, cosmetics, accessories, footwear, for men, women and children, and homeware

Markets: over 300 stores in 11 countries

Incorporated: 1969 Dublin, Ireland

Employees: 61,000 people

Sales: £5,347m in revenue 2015

(Source: Primark Limited and Associated British Food plc. Annual Report and Accounts 2015)

Loblaw

Company name: Loblaw Companies Limited

Headquarters: Brampton, Canada

Business concept: Live Life Well – supports the needs and well-being of Canadians

Products: Retailer segment, product range includes grocery products, pharmaceuticals, financial products and services, apparel, health and beauty products, general merchandise.

Markets: Canada

Incorporated: 1919 Toronto, Canada

Employees: Over 200,000 employees in Canada

(Source: Loblaw Companies Limited official website)

3. Corporate disclosure practices before the collapse of Rana Plaza

Research question

How were the companies' disclosure practices and view on CSR before the Rana Plaza collapse?

3.1. Theoretical framework

3.1.1. Legitimacy theory

Social contract

Legitimacy is a socially constructed theory, meaning that it is the society that provides the organization with a legitimate status. In return the organization is building their activities on the moral, ethical and social norms of the society. "Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman 1995:574).

Corporations are no longer only concerned with what is legal or illegal. On the contrary a corporation strive to follow the society's norms, values and beliefs and it is vital for the survival of the company to show legitimacy through its actions and outcomes. The organizations' legitimacy is primarily build on a social contract that is established between corporations and society. This contract is not static and does change with time according to the society's values and beliefs (Brown & Deegan 1998). In a way legitimacy is an operational resource, which organizations extract from their environments and use in the pursuit of their goals (Suchman 1995). Just like other resources, such as money or assets a

business requires legitimacy in order to operate. Still, some situations can increase legitimacy while other situations would reduce legitimacy. A low level of legitimacy could have major consequences for the organization and eventually lead to losing the right to operate (Tilling 2004). A company's survival is threatened if the society perceives that the company has breached the social contract. When the society is not satisfied with a company's operation the society will revoke the company's contract to continue to operate. Examples of a such revoking is decline in consumers interest, decrease in demand of the product, lobbying government for increase of taxes, fines or laws that will prohibit actions performed by the company that do not conform with the expectations of the community (Deegan 2002). That said it is important to remember that legitimacy is subjective rather than objective. Legitimacy is formed by the general perception the public or society has of a corporation. A company can in fact stray drastically far from social norms and yet maintain legitimacy, if the difference goes unnoticed. Or that some of the values differ greatly from some individuals, but yet retain legitimate because the action do not create public disapproval, since legitimacy depends on a collective audience approval (Suchman 1995). In other words legitimacy is a very subjective matter, and it is almost impossible to measure the amount of legitimacy an organization has. Because legitimacy is by itself such an abstract concept, it will only be given importance by the actors in the social environment subjective opinion and values, these values give the organization licence to operate or not (Tilling 2004).

Corporate communication

Corporate social reporting is an organization's tool to show their stakeholders and the society that they are behaving as good corporate citizens. Corporate social reporting disclosure is the most effective way to change the perceptions of external parties since this is where a company can show that their actions are legitimate according to the social bonds and norms.

According to the organizational legitimacy theory, the foundation of legitimacy reflects around the idea of societal perceptions and values. A company's legitimacy depends on a collective audience's approval; this motivates the management as a desire to legitimize aspects of their organization through sustainability reporting (Deegan 2002). Disclosure through reporting is an opportunity to accentuate "good news" as environmental awards won or implementation of safety initiatives, while conceal the "bad news" related to negative news or poor performance as environmental disaster or high pollution rate, in order to influence the stakeholders and eventually society perceptions about the company (Hooghiemstra 2000).

Corporate identity and image

Corporate identity refers to the way the company presents itself to the public. In other words, it is “the strategically planned and operationally applied internal and external self-presentation and behavior of a company” (Hooghiemstra 2000:57). The corporate identity is how a company represents itself, which can be through its behavior, communication or symbolism. The company’s behavior is the most effective way to create or to harm a corporate identity. Since the public or groups will judge the company by its actions. Communication is a flexible medium and can be used tactically in order to assist a company’s relationship with the public, through shaping of external perceptions of the company (Hooghiemstra 2000). The importance of communication and symbolism is to create an image that the company’s activities are legitimate, the company can try through communication to alter the definition of social legitimacy so that it matches the company’s practices and values, as a company can try "through communication, to become identified with symbols, values, or institutions which have a strong base of social legitimacy" (Hooghiemstra 2000:58). Corporate social reporting plays an important part as it can be used as a self-presentational device with the objective of showing that the company is legitimate and that their actions and values of the society which they operate are consistent (Hooghiemstra 2000).

Corporate image refers to other people’s perceptions of the company. Corporate image defines “a set of meanings by which an object is known and through which people describe, remember and relate to it. That is the result of the interaction of a person’s beliefs, ideas, feelings and impressions about an object” (Dowling, 1986 cited by Hooghiemstra 2000:58). The corporate image is based on people’s perceptions which comes from information transmitted from media and other communication sources, put in other words a company’s image relies on information people think is true and feel is important. Companies can try to influence their reputation and image by engaging in sustainability reporting, which again can contribute to a positive image (Hooghiemstra 2000). Good reputation has been seen as competitive advantage, as it could lead people to be more willing to a greater extent to do business with the company and to buy its products (Hooghiemstra 2000). The clear relationship between corporate image and identity is that the image of a company is a projection of its identity, meaning that the way a company presents itself to the public might influence the public’s perceptions of the company (Hooghiemstra 2000). Hooghiemstra (2000) notes that this relationship is not a one-way interaction, but rather influences each other. That is to say, the way the society perceives the company will also change the company’s self-representation.

3.2. Methodology

In order to answer the first research question, Annual reports and CSR or Sustainability reports⁴ the year *before the Rana Plaza collapse* were collected and analyzed. The thought behind using the companies' own reports was to use published material that could not be changed over time, instead of using their own CSR statements on their website. It had to be reports that were published prior to April 2013 so that the Rana Plaza collapse would not interfere with the report. Then the reports were analyzed and compared from a GRI perspective, using the GRI 3.1 technical protocol as guidelines. The reason for using the GRI as a guideline was to use a broadly accepted and much used method for reporting. Also it was an attempt to standardize for comparison what the companies reported as CSR objectives, actions and results. The most important aspect of using the companies' own reports was to use their own words and statement on CSR and see what aspects of CSR was the companies' main focus. Three of the companies already used the GRI guidelines when it came to CSR reporting; only one already included the rating against the GRI. The scores for GRI guidelines for the first company were filled in based on their own reporting and mapping. The reason for this is that the objective for the thesis was not to go through how well the companies own reporting mapping were consistent with the GRI guidelines, but rather analyze how the companies positioned themselves when it came to CSR activities. The second company had followed the GRI guidelines, but not included rating against the GRI. The third company only used the GRI guidelines as a benchmark in the selection of performance indicators and report content, but did not include rating against the GRI guidelines, in this case the reports was gone through and mapped with the GRI guidelines questions. The same applied for the fourth company that did not follow the GRI guidelines for the reporting at all. The matrix used for the analysis and comparison was a matrix based on the GRI 3.1 guidelines questions since it was the available version of the guidelines when the reports came out. The mapping was done using three different indicators on how well the GRI questions were covered. The matrix that shows how the coding was done is available in the appendix. Be aware that only the standard areas of GRI as Profile Disclosures and the Performance Indicators have been coded, the Disclosures on Management Approach are excluded.

⁴ Primark's Sustainability and Annual Report is the one for Associated British Foods since Primark is a subsidiary and has no own rapport.

3.2.1. Global Reporting Initiative – GRI

Global Reporting Initiative – GRI is an international NGO that assists businesses, governments and other organizations to report their CSR and other sustainability activities. GRI guidelines are the most widely used standard framework when it comes to sustainability reporting and disclosure, according to GRI own website over 9,000 organizations and companies register their reports in the sustainability disclosure database (GRI - Sustainability Disclosure Database). GRI was founded in 1997 in Boston, the United States; their mission was to provide guidance and support for sustainability reporting. In 2000, the first GRI guidelines were launched, representing the first global framework for overall sustainability reporting (GRI - Sustainability Disclosure Database).

Reporting framework

In 2011 the G3.1 Guidelines were released, this was an update to the G3 guidelines released in 2006 (GRI - Sustainability Disclosure Database). The purpose of using GRI guidelines is based on the internal and external pressure created by the stakeholders' needs to be informed about the company or organizations CSR activities, objectives and results. The GRI reporting framework is designed for use by organizations of any size, sector or location. The focus is to create a framework for balanced sustainability reporting with reasonable representation of the sustainability performance of the organization or company that is reporting. This includes both positive and negative contributions. The reports can be used for among other things, benchmarking, demonstrating and comparing performance and results from the CSR activities measurement taken from the different fields of the GRI framework. The reporting structure is illustrated in the figure bellow (Figure 3).

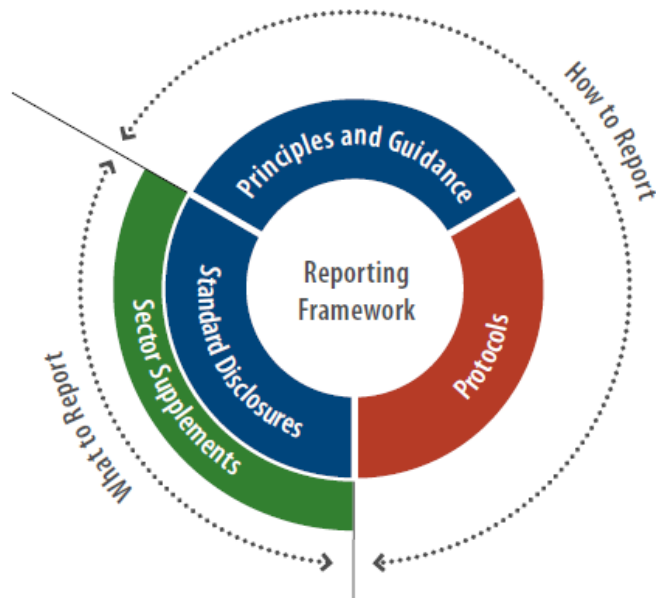


Figure 3
Source: GRI Sustainability Reporting Guidelines Version 3.1

Principles and Guidance

The principles and guidance will help organizations and companies to prepare the reporting and assist on determine what to report on. Application of the Principles with the Standard Disclosures decides which topics and Indicators to be reported.

Standard disclosures

Standard disclosures are the base content that should be included in the sustainability report. This includes sustainability data directly from the organization or company and additional information related to the organization and its business. It consists of three separate sections:

- Strategy and profile
- Management approach
- Performance indicators

Protocols

There is an Indicator Protocol for each of the Performance Indicators in the Guidelines. The Indicator Protocols provides definitions, compilation guidance, and other information to assist preparation of the report and to ensure consistency in the interpretation of the Performance Indicators.

Sector supplements

Sector supplements are variants of the GRI guidelines fitted for particular sectors, since some sectors have unique issues that are not covered by the original guidelines.

Report structure

The report is created by data from the principles, guidance and standard disclosures. The report format may be chosen according to the organization or companies own wishes, but is encouraged to follow a structure similar to the one showed on the figure below (Figure 4).

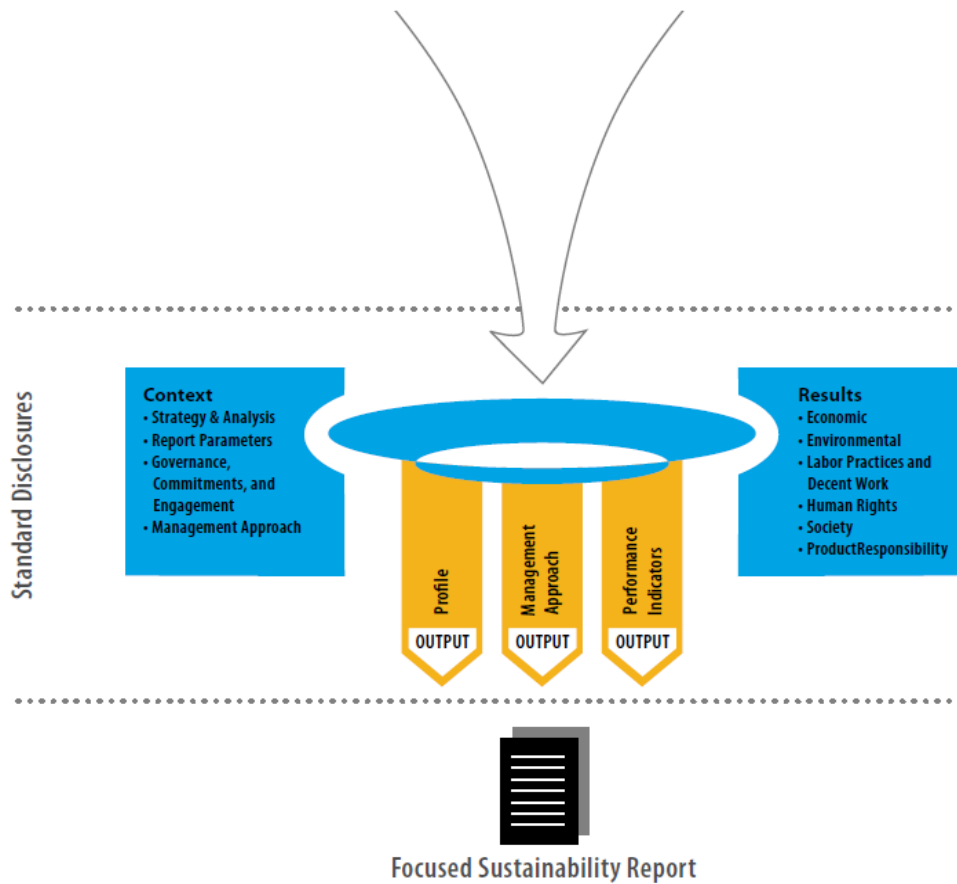


Figure 4
Source: GRI Sustainability Reporting Guidelines Version 3.1

3.3. The result from the companies

The graphs below (Figure 5 and Figure 6) give an overview of the GRI 3.1 framework coverage for the four companies. The explanation and comparison will be outlined for each sector.

3.3.1. Standard Disclosure: Profile

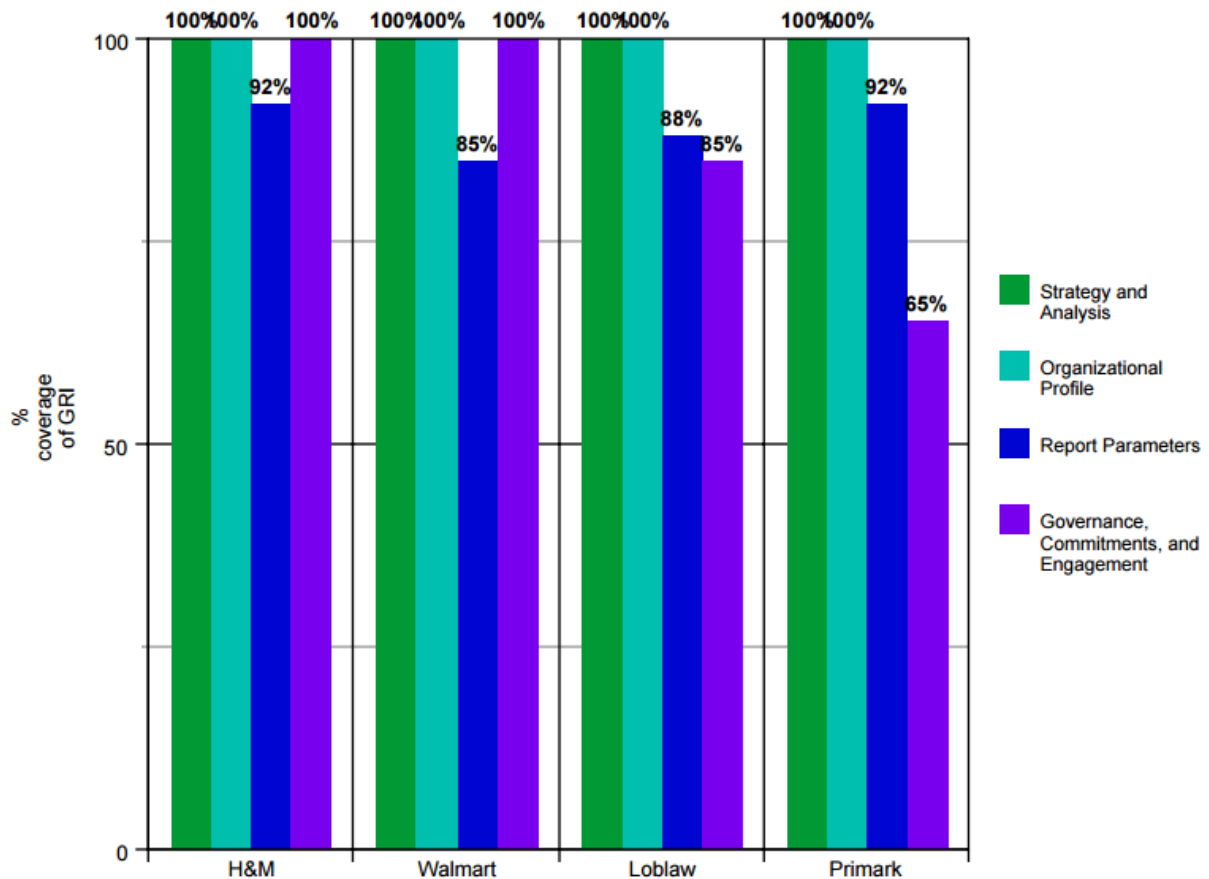


Figure 5 Source: Author based on data analysis

Strategy and Analysis

This section consist of two profile disclosures, which first is a statement of the CEO, that sets the tone of the report, the second disclosure is about the key impacts and the risk and opportunities. For all the four companies the report begins with an introduction from the CEO or Executive Chairman.

Organizational Profile

This section the profile disclosure is about the organization of the company, number of employees, location of headquarters, product services and other related disclosures. All of the four companies had this in place, most of the information was found in the Annual Reports.

Report Parameters

This section contains reporting parameters such as reporting period, reporting cycle, boundary of the report, if the company had external assurance on the report and so forth. H&M and Primark had all but one of the disclosures covered, as they did not identify the location of the standard disclosures in the report. For Primark this is because they do not report according to the GRI guidelines. Loblaw did just partly state their reporting cycle and did neither include the location of the standard disclosures in the report. Walmart scored the lowest and was the only company that did not seek external assurance for the report.

Governance, Commitments, and Engagement

This section is about the governance structure of the organization, with disclosures about the Chair, board structure, and diversity of the organization, shareholders, employees and stakeholder involvement and engagement. H&M and Walmart had all the disclosures covered, while Loblaw did not report the compensation for the members of their highest governance body, neither did they declare their process to avoid conflicts of interest. Both Loblaw and Primark had partly covered their mechanism for how shareholders and employees provide recommendations to highest governance body. Primark had the lowest percentage of disclosures covered, mostly lacking information about their stakeholders and stakeholder engagement.

3.3.2. Standard Disclosure: Performance Indicator

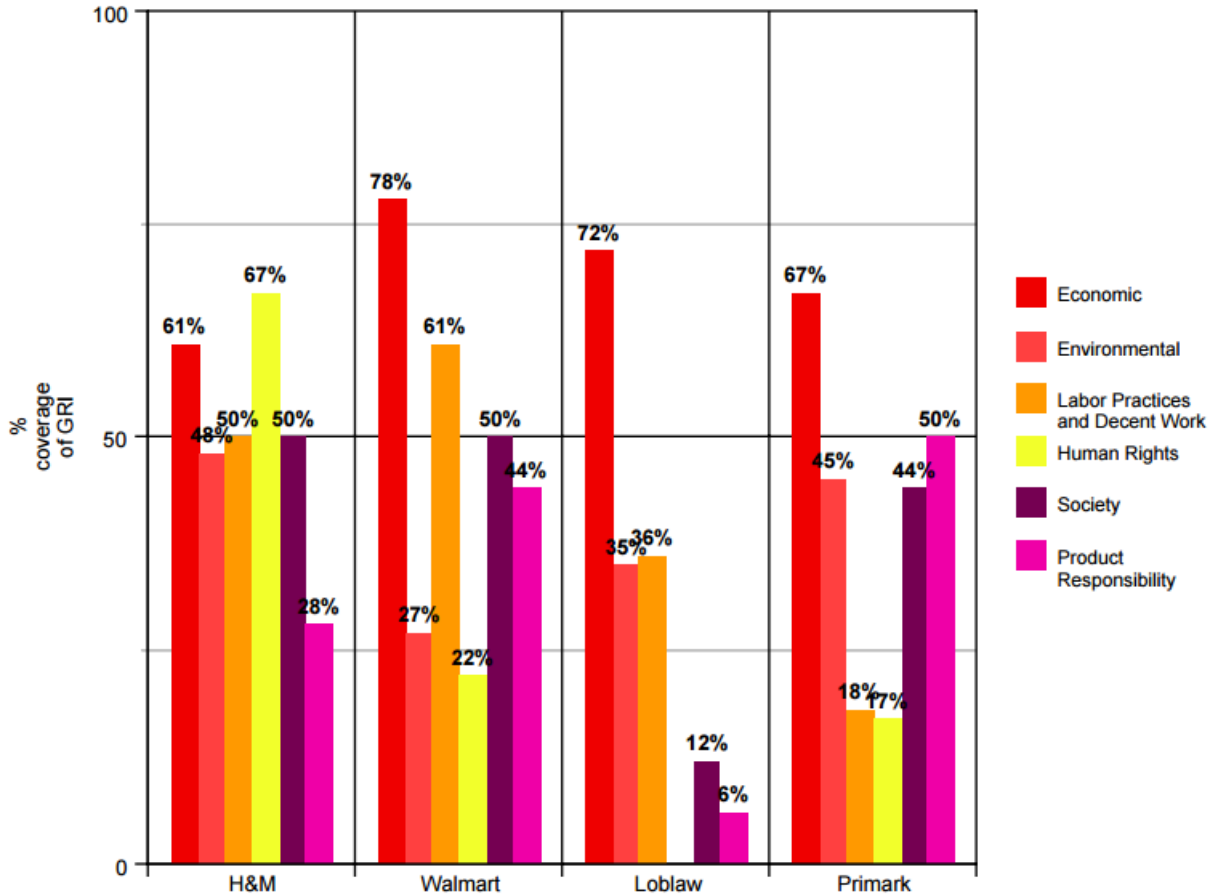


Figure 6 Source: Author based on data analysis

Economic Performance Indicator

This section is about the economic performance of the organization; the indicators cover disclosure of economic performance, market presence and indirect economic impacts. In this section, Walmart had most of the indicators disclosed, except when it came to procedures for hiring management from the local community. Walmart was the only company that reported the standard entry wage. Loblaw came second when it came to disclosure of indicators. They were the only company covering the procedures for hiring of senior management from the local community. They did not have the entry level wage disclosed and only partial policy, practices and proportion of spending on locally based suppliers. Primark disclosed third most of the indicators. They did not disclose the entire wage level and procedures for hiring management from local community. H&M had the least indicators disclosed of all of the four

companies, as they did not fully disclose entry level wage, practices of spending on locally-based suppliers, procedures for hiring management from local community. All the four companies had disclosed the performance indicators on direct economic value generated and distributed, financial risk due to climate change, coverage of benefit plan obligations, impact of infrastructure investments for public benefit and describing significant indirect economic impacts.

Environmental Performance Indicators

This section is about the environmental performance of the organization; the indicators cover disclosure focusing on materials, energy, and water used and recycled biodiversity impact, transportation, emissions, effluents and waste. This is the best covered performance indicator with the most indicators. There are 30 indicators of the Environmental performance indicators overall which goes from materials used, recycling, greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption to impact on biodiversity, strategies and current actions and environmental investments. While none of the companies disclosed more than 48%, H&M was more concerned about energy consumption and reductions. Walmart was the company that had the least disclosure, but the only one that covered number and volume of significant spills. Loblaw had the second lowest amount of indicators disclosure; with partly focus on energy consumption. Primark had the second highest disclosure, their reported focused on energy consumption and savings. All of the companies had disclosure about greenhouse gas emissions, but none of them disclose their water discharge or waste disposal. All of the companies had the initiatives to mitigate environmental impacts of products and services.

Labor Practices and Decent Work Performance Indicators

This section is about the labor practices of the organization; the indicators cover disclosure focusing on employment, labor and management relations, occupational health and safety, training, education, diversity and equal opportunity. In this section Walmart had the highest coverage, the report contained detailed disclosure of workforce by employment type, region and gender, turnover and benefits provided, additional focus on the career training and performance reviews given to the employees. H&M has the second highest coverage, they also focuses on the training and development plans for the employees. Primark has the lowest coverage, where only the rates of injury, lost days and absenteeism were fully disclosed. None of the companies mentioned any minimum notice period regarding operational changes neither ratio of base salary of women to men by employee category.

Human Rights Performance Indicators

This section is about the human rights practices of the organization; the indicators cover disclosure focusing on investment and procurement in human right practices, non-discrimination, freedom of association and collective bargaining, procedures to prevent child labor, procedure on prevention of forced and compulsory labor, security practices, and indigenous rights. The only company that excelled in this section was H&M, with all except two indicators fully or partly covered giving 67% disclosure. The other companies had very low coverage in this section, where Loblaw had 0% on the indicators.

Society Performance Indicators

This section is about the society performance of the organization; the indicators cover disclosure focusing on involvement in local communities, anti-corruption practices and procedures, public policy, anti-competitive behavior. H&M together with Walmart had the most coverage in this section. H&M is lacking disclosure on their anticompetitive behavior; monopoly and monetary value of significant fines were not fully covered. Walmart had no disclosure of response to incidents of corruption participation in public policy development and monetary value of significant fines. Loblaw had the least coverage which only partly responded to incidents of corruption and fully disclosure of operations with implemented local community engagement. None of the companies disclosed their legal actions anticompetitive behavior, anti-trust, and monopoly practices and their outcomes.

Product Responsibility Performance Indicators

This section is about the product responsibility of the organization; the indicators cover disclosure focusing on customers' health and safety, product and service labeling, marketing communications, and customer privacy. In this section Primark has the highest coverage, the reason for this is the focus and disclosure of their incidents of non-compliance and fines for non-compliance with laws and regulations. Walmart also covered many of the questions related to non-compliance, and was the only company that disclosed on life cycle stages in which health and safety impacts of products and services are assessed for improvement. H&M only fully covered the Programs for adherence to laws, standards, and voluntary codes related to marketing communications and the life cycle stages in which health and safety impacts of products and services are assessed for improvement. Loblaw did not have any questions fully covered, only practices related to customer satisfaction partly covered.

3.4. Discussion

According to legitimacy theory the four companies engage in corporate social reporting in order to communicate to their stakeholder on their CSR initiatives. The four companies try to present itself as trustworthy corporation who cares a great deal about the society they operates in.

The top performer is H&M, reflecting its image as the CSR leader in fast fashion industry; they try to connect themselves to sustainable values. It seems that they understand well the bases of the social contract and the shift in the society's demand towards more sustainable productions and supply chain. H&M also promote a product line, called "conscious" as they would like to associate this term with their brand, the green choice of fast fashion. The focus and marketing of sustainable fashion is a strategic differentiation from other brands in the industry. This is visible in the Sustainability Report, H&M strive to maintain an image as ethically responsible through fully disclosure. For 2012 H&M had generally good disclosures on all indicators, with over 60% or 50%, except on the Product Responsibility Indicator, with special focus on disclosure of Human Rights indicator. According to the theory the communication to the public that the company is serious when it comes to taking care of their workers and to establish a reputation as a company that takes care of its people. Disclosure is also an opportunity according to the theory, to accentuate the good news, while concealing the bad news. Some of the companies in the research used the opportunity to accentuate their awards for the previous year. H&M, Walmart and Loblaw lacked the disclosure on sanctions for noncompliance with laws and regulations, number of reported incidents and similar, while Primark made sure to have this included, could be read as showing their transparency not hiding the fact that there had been noncompliance with laws and regulations and minor accident the previous year.

The Sustainability Report from Walmart contained a lot of inconsistency. This could lead to the belief that they had an agenda in some areas of CSR, which they wanted to communicate to relevant stakeholder or the public, that they were excelling in. For example the labor practices indicator, where Walmart has emphasized their work for the community through employment for veterans, various training programs for employees and focus on women in the workforce. According to the Legitimacy theory it could be that Walmart has seen some criticism or legitimacy gaps when it comes to this area and tried to communicate its efforts in order to strengthen its image on these particular areas.

Reading Loblaw's result is trickier as their Sustainability Report addresses more the highlights of the year, but contains little actual disclosure. One reason for this could simply be that their relevant stakeholders know and trust Loblaw as a brand, that anything more than a reminder of the CSR highlights would be superfluous, which could be because their market is relative smaller than the others, as Loblaw mainly operates in Canada. This is because they have already established themselves as a responsible and conscious actor in its sector in the society it operates in and their stakeholders will automatic associate Loblaw as a symbol of sustainability, responsibility and ethical merchandise.

3.5. Conclusion

H&M is one of the front-runners when it comes to CSR in the ready-made garment. As the statistics and analysis in their reports show, they are the company of the four that had most questions fully covered; it seemed that H&M did an effort to cover as much as they could on all their aspects. They did however not compare their report to the GRI G3.1 reporting guidelines with what was covered and where to find the information in the report, which they did the previous year.

Walmart had the second highest portion of covered questions. Even though they were the lowest on environmental performance indicators, the fact that they compared their report to the GRI G3.1 reporting guidelines with what was covered and where to find the information in the report, which shows the company's willingness to be transparent or to show their stakeholders their development on certain areas.

Loblaw stated in their report that they had used the GRI guidelines as benchmarks, but did not compare their report to the GRI G3.1 reporting guidelines with what was covered and where to find the information in the report. The most surprising here is that this was the company with the least question covered. Particularly the Human Rights indicator had 0% coverage, according to their annual report not many procedures over their vendors or suppliers are in place. "Although contractual arrangements, sourcing guidelines, supplier audits and Corporate Social Responsibility guidelines are in place, the Company has no direct influence over how the vendors are managed" (Loblaw, Annual Report 2012: 28). Overall the report has a lot of success stories, detailed information about their CSR strategy, and promoting of their stakeholders. The report is generally lacking hard data, overviews and statistics over the CSR actions and results.

Primark had the second lowest coverage of the four companies. It was also the only company that did not report using the GRI guidelines. Still Primark covered a higher

percentage of the questions than Loblaw, who based their reports on the GRI guidelines. Some of the parts have a lot of coverage, such as economic and environment performance indicator and safety and health, especially when it comes to absenteeism, injuries and fines. There were a lot of statistics and diagrams to show both the progress in this area, but also the negative such as fines and injuries. The report was however lacking information when it comes to the stakeholder information and general stakeholder engagement.

4. News coverage after the Rana Plaza collapse

Research question

Did the media attention treat the companies differently depending on the companies view on CSR?

4.1. Theoretic framework

4.1.1. Agenda-setting, priming and framing

Agenda-setting theory will help us understand why we think that some events are more important than others and why some events seem fresher in our memory than others. The agenda-setting theory tries to explain how the public is exposed to an issue through the news and how this exposure increases the salience, meaning "making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences" of the issue to the public exposed (Entman1993:53). One of the two basic concepts in agenda setting theory is that the media does not reflect reality; they filter and shape the reality. According to McCombs (2002) our knowledge of the world around us is largely based on what the media decided to tell us. The other concept is that media focuses on a set of issues or subjects and leads the public to perceiving them as more salient than other issues. An increase in salience means that the probability that the public will perceive the information, give meaning, process it and remember the given topic are higher. Media can create salience by placing or repeating information, or by associating the information with culturally familiar symbols. More specific what media decide to accentuate, what is on the front page, the larger headlines, length of story and so on, in which way media has significant influence over what the public find important. According to agenda-setting scholars there has been a strong correlation between topics in the news and what the public think is important. Not only is the media able influence

what people think about, but also *how* people think about certain issues. This is called first and second level agenda setting (Carroll 2004).

The first level agenda-setting is any media or news topics that receive coverage by the media, this can also be aspects of objects that are central for a news story, such as healthcare or education, political candidates. The second level agenda-setting concerns the attributes of the objects, meaning how the media describes it and how the public perceives a certain topic (Carroll 2004). According to Carroll (2004) there are two dimensions of second-level agenda setting; affective and cognitive. In affective second-level agenda setting the news or story is not portrayed by the media in a fully objective way, but has a certain tone or feeling on how favourably an object is portrayed; this might be positive, neutral or negative. Cognitive meaning that in terms of making large pools of information easier to manage it is often divided in to sub-divisions by a common theme. For example in studies about presidential election data, researchers can classify descriptions of political candidates and their campaigns into several categories: political and ideology view, personality and image, qualifications and previous achievements and integrity. Together affective and cognitive second agenda setting are used to facilitate the analysis of correlation between how the media portrays and how different categories are described and the influence between them, which will give a more sophisticated and nuanced picture of media and the public opinion (Carroll 2004).

One of the consequences of the media's effects on the public opinion in the agenda setting theory is called "priming". According to McCombs (2002) the psychological foundation of priming is the public's selective attention, since people cannot and do not pay attention to everything. It means that people seldom do a comprehensive analysis based on the whole picture of the information given, but rather draw conclusions on the pieces of information that are particularly notable or memorable in the time of need. This means that people will recall the information that is most readily available to them, information that is, to a considerable degree, shaped by the mass media; since the media has dictated what issues should be important making them salient by exposure and attention.

The concept of framing is related the agenda setting theory and is much like the second level agenda setting theory; the essence of framing theory is how something is presented to the public. The theory focuses on how the media presents topics to the public which influence the choices people make about how to understand or evaluate that information. The media provide a focus and environment on events or issues and then place them within a field of meaning called a frame. There are two sets of frames, audience frames and media frames. Audience frames are the pre-existing filters which guides the individual

conception when reading a news story. The frames are formed by characteristics such as demographics and media literacy. The media frames refer to the way in which the news story is framed through its presentation or content (Rill & Davis 2008). Media and audience frames have shown to overlap, where media frames can find its way into the audience frame.

The basis of framing theory is when mass media sources, political or social movements, political leaders, or other actors and organizations focuses the attention on a certain events and then places that within a set field of meaning. According to Entman (1993:52) to frame is

"to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described."

This can give the media or organizations big influence as how information is portrayed by emphasizing specific values, facts, or promoting particular definitions, interpretations, evaluations or recommendations, through highlight certain parts of the news in order to make them more salient. The more frequent information is highlighted and repeated in the media, the more salient the issue will become. According to Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) framing describes how media portray news stories, and how the characterization can have certain impacts on how the audience precept and interprets the information. Framing happens on a macro level and a micro level, a macro construct framing refers to how journalist present information conscious or unconscious to fit with already existing frames among their audience. This does not mean that journalists deliberately try to create stories in order to deceive their audience, but use framing as a tool to reduce the complexity of the story efficiently and in a way that makes the information accessible and easy to understand for the audience, because it already refers to an existing cognitive frame. Micro construct framing "describes how people use information and presentation features regarding issues as they form impressions." (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007: 12).

The theories explain that how media coverage some issues will seem more important and why some events seems fresher in the public's memory than other issues as well as it explains how the public will develop an opinion about the event based on the type of coverage the news gives to those specific attributes. "By covering attributes in either a positive, negative, or neutral tone, the media influence the public not only to decide on the importance of the issues being covered but also how to feel about the issues." (Rill & Davis 2008: 611).

4.2. Methodology

The purpose for this research question was to see how the four different companies; H&M, Walmart, Loblaw with their Joe Fresh clothing brand and Primark were treated by the media. A qualitative content analysis was conducted for this research question. The main focus was to measure the frequency the different companies were mentioned and to determine the tone used by the media in the selected newspaper article sample. Content analysis can be used as a research tool for many types of studies and fields and as it is an effective tool to achieve various research goals when analyzing written, verbal or visual communication messages (Elo and Kyngäs 2007). Content analysis as a method is unique in that it has both qualitative and quantitative methodology, that it can be used on all types of written texts no matter the original material (Bengtsson 2016). Content analysis is a broad concept which contains many different methods of analysis, but the common denominator is that it allows the researcher to systematically and objectively describe and quantify themes or phenomena. As content analysis can be used to summarizing any form of content by counting various aspects of the content, for example it is possible to collect words into fewer content related categories, once the data is classified in to the same categories, words, phrases and the like are assumed to share the same meaning. This enables the researcher to do a more objective analysis of the data rather than comparing content based on the impressions of a listener (Elo and Kyngäs 2007).

4.3. Data collection and Coding

For the data collection newspaper articles that mentioned the collapse of Rana Plaza were collected from the biggest English speaking newspapers from Canada, Great Britain and United States of America. The newspapers chosen were Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph, The Guardian from United Kingdom, The New York Times, USA Today and Wall Street Journal from the United States, The Globe and Mail and Toronto Star from Canada. According to Pew Research Center these were the top newspaper by digital traffic (Barthel 2015) from United Kingdom and the United States, and Cision for Canada (Rubec 2016)⁵. In order for the media pressure to have the most effect, the data analysis had to be done by the most read newspapers. The data collection was retrieved using the newspapers own archives supplemented by Google advance search. The search parameter was from 23/04/2013 where the first cracks in the Rana Plaza building were detected to the 13/07/2013 where the CSR

⁵ Washington Post is one exception, because of the difficulty to collect media because of missing database newspaper database and unreliable search from Google.

initiative the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety came to place. Words like “Bangladesh”, “Rana Plaza”, “Collapse”, “Factory”, “Sweatshop”, “CSR”, “Walmart”, “Loblaw”, “Joe Fresh”, “Primark” and “H&M” were used to search for the articles to ensure that only relevant articles were collected, but also articles that dealt with the industry and the company practices published in that time frame were collected. A total of 419 articles were collected in the database.

In order to answer the research question with use of the media agenda setting theory, the focus is first on first level agenda media settings, the reason was to find how much media attention the different companies got and if this differed geographically. The media attention measured how many times the company has been mentioned, divided by different newspapers and location. All the articles were loaded into a CAQDAS software called Quirkos. Then attribute coding was used for the first part (Saldaña 2009), where the importance was to find how many times the company has been mentioned related to the Rana Plaza incident. They can be defined as objective values. In the CAQDAS software it was set as Properties and Values. The Properties was Newspaper and the values connected to the newspaper property were the different newspaper names. The other properties that was used was Geographic limit, here the values was "Canada", “United States” and “United Kingdom”.

In order to answer the rest of the research question, not only how much media attention, but also how was the media attention, what was the tone used, was it focused on the second level agenda setting and framing theory, to determine how the tone of voice was used by the media when mentioned the companies in relation to the accident. If the tone was negative, neutral or positive. The finding from the first coding was used here, then every paragraph that contained one of the company names H&M, Primark, Walmart or Joe Fresh was analyzed. Then it was determined if the tone of the paragraph was negative, neutral or positive. The coding was done per paragraph instead of articles, since much of the articles are written about several different companies at a time and are not solely negative, neutral or positive. The context that surrounded the situation and where the articles were written was of a negative form which influenced what would be viewed as positive and neutral since they all were of a negative aspect. The positive paragraphs any action to investigate, make agreements, give aid, and do extra effort, CSR initiative as the alliance and the accord and the compensations of the victims. Positive paragraphs contained positive loaded words as “Responsibility”, “Compensation”, “Signed”, "Commitment" and “Improve”. The Neutral codes where the paragraphs were described as merely fact based, without positive or negative tone against the company or their practices. Negative paragraphs were the ones that blamed

the companies or industry for the accident, talked about the business models of the company in a negative sense, or the companies' unwillingness to take actions or join CSR initiatives, the companies had not done enough in order to prevent the collapse, or where their procedure was significantly lacking, words that illustrated this were "Holdouts", "Refuse", "Boycott", "Sweatshop", "Unsafe factory condition". The total number of articles included in the sample is 419.

4.4. Coding table

The table (Table 2) shows some excerpts with raw data and respective codes in order to make it more clear how the content analysis is used.

Paragraph coded	Codes used
The Bangladeshi workers will join striking Walmart staff at the company's annual meeting on June 7 to call for a change of course by top management. "After Rana Plaza the conversation has changed and there is more attention than ever before on horrible labour conditions inside the factories that produce clothing for major global brands like Walmart," Akter said. "Unfortunately as other retailers start to take responsibility, Walmart and the Gap continue to turn a blind eye."	Walmart negative
Walmart has confirmed it will not sign up to a legally binding agreement on worker safety and building regulations in Bangladesh supported by retailers including H&M, Zara, Primark, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Marks and Spencer, Next, C&A and several others.	Walmart negative H&M positive
Wednesday's disaster in the Dhaka suburb of Savar is the worst ever for Bangladesh's booming and powerful garment industry, surpassing a fire less than five months earlier that killed 112 people. Workers at both sites made clothes for major brands around the world; some of the companies in the building that fell say their customers include retail giants such as Walmart.	Walmart neutral
H&M currently is the largest buyer from the country, followed by Wal-Mart, according to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.	Walmart neutral H&M neutral
Wal Mart said Tuesday it will conduct in depth safety inspections at all of the factories in Bangladesh that supply it with goods. The reviews of all 279 supplier factories will be completed within six months, and the names and inspection results will be publicly released, according to a statement from the Bentonville, Arkansas based company.	Walmart positive
As Washington targets trade policy, Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Gap Inc. and other large U.S. retailers that import low-cost clothing and other goods from Bangladesh, are close to an agreement to set up a \$50 million fund to improve safety conditions in Bangladesh's garment factories over five years, The Wall Street Journal reported	Walmart positive

Thursday.	
U.K. clothing retailer Primark, which has 257 stores across Europe and is a unit of Associated British Foods, confirmed that one of its suppliers occupied the second floor of the building.	Primark neutral
Mr. Ali, who didn't source any of the T-shirts, estimated that the Primark shirt cost \$1.60 to produce, the Hilfiger shirt \$5 and the G-Star Raw pocket tee \$6 or a shade more. Primark and G-Star declined to comment on their production costs. Hilfiger didn't respond to requests for comment.	Primark neutral
Ruth Tanner, campaigns and policy director at the anti poverty charity War on Want, said: "If UK high street chains like Primark had put in place proper measures to ensure the workers who make their clothes are safe, these deaths could have been avoided.	Primark negative
Bangladesh trade union leaders accuse Primark of compensation delays Trade union leaders in Bangladesh have accused Primark, the British retailer, of dragging its feet over agreeing compensation for relatives of those killed or injured in the collapse of Rana Plaza.	Primark negative
Swedish retailing giant H&M, the biggest purchaser of garments from Bangladesh; British companies Primark and Tesco; C&A of the Netherlands; and Spain's Inditex, owner of the Zara chain, said they would sign a contract that requires them to conduct independent safety inspections of factories and cover the costs of repairs.	Primark positive H&M positive
Meanwhile, Primark's ethical trade team is working to collect information, assess which communities the workers come from, and to provide support "where possible."	Primark positive
The horrific events in Bangladesh have given apparel retailers a jolt, prompting some major players to pledge to work for changes. Loblaw Cos. Ltd., whose Joe Fresh clothing line was made in the building, moved swiftly to offer compensation to victims and develop a new building standard for any plant producing one of its private labels, including its apparel line. Loblaw and others, such as Sweden's H&M Hennes & Mauritz AB and Britain's Primark Stores Ltd.(which, like Loblaw, is controlled by the Weston family) have agreed to sign a global fire and building safety accord. Those initiatives, of course, will likely add costs.	Loblaw positive H&M positive Primark positive
H&M said potential increased costs from labor reforms—such as an increased minimum wage—wouldn't dissuade it from manufacturing in Bangladesh. "H&M will accept the price increase that might arise as a consequence of the salary revision," the company said.	H&M positive
The availability of low-cost workers have sent mass-market clothing labels of all stripes—H&M, Gap, Wal-Mart, Zara and others—into Bangladesh's \$20 billion garment industry.	H&M neutral
I've seen factories where the windows were sealed and the industrial fumes were	H&M negative

<p>strangulating. The workers, mostly women, sewing clothes for H&M and Nautica and all the other stores in the West make a few dollars a day, working 12- hour days. A despairing friend who says she struggles to pay the price of Canadian made clothes, or shop only at the Maritime secondhand chain Frenchy’s, asked me this week if she had to “go naked” in order not to feel guilty. But our cheap clothes have helped fuel a social and economic revolution in Bangladesh, and Bangladeshis do not want that to end.</p>	
<p>Joe Fresh’s parent company, Loblaw Cos. Ltd., released a statement Wednesday that said a “small number” of Joe Fresh items were made at the Bangladeshi factory. “What constitutes ‘a small number of ... items?’ Does sourcing slave labour on a small scale make you less responsible than those who do it on a large scale? Put on your humanity hat, dig into those massive Joe Fresh profits, grab your corporate shareholders and head over to help the recovery,” wrote Kelly Penman of Brampton.</p>	Loblaw negative
<p>Loblaw is the only Canadian company that has publicly acknowledged buying clothes from the now destroyed Rana Plaza in Savar, Bangladesh. But Ether Tex Ltd., a Bangladeshi company that produces clothes at the site, also identifies Wal-Mart Canada, Fairweather Ltd. and Atlantic Sportswear among its clients, according to its website.</p>	Loblaw neutral Walmart neutral
<p>Loblaw president Galen Weston doesn’t think that it is a good idea to stop making cheap clothes overseas. Loblaw Cos. Ltd. should instead have “properly inspected, well built, wellrun factories to play an important role in the development of countries like Bangladesh.”</p>	Loblaw positive

(Table 2 Source: Author based on data analysis)

4.5. Results

Overall 419 articles were included in the sample. A total of 164 articles were omitted from the 419 total articles because these articles did not contain any mention of H&M, Primark, Walmart or Loblaw (Joe Fresh) or because they were not related to the Rana Plaza collapse, manufacturing procedures, the Accord, the Alliance or company’s involvement in Bangladesh.

From the 255 articles that were coded (table 3), there were 224 paragraphs coded on H&M, 351 on Walmart, 218 on Loblaw and 319 on Primark. The sample mentioned came from articles in 8 different newspapers from the English speaking countries in the western world, Canada, United States and United Kingdom (table 4).

Frequency of company attention in News Coverage

	Total collected	Not coded	Coded
Daily Mail	24	6	18
Daily Telegraph	51	18	33
The Guardian	92	36	56
The New York Times	86	46	40
The Wall Street Journal	57	22	35
USA Today	35	11	24
Toronto Star	53	20	33
The Globe and Mail	21	5	16
Total	419	164	255

(Table 3 Source: Author based on data analysis)

Frequency of paragraphs mentions of company per country

	H&M	Walmart	Primark	Loblaw
Canada	25	51	27	162
United States	143	225	45	37
United Kingdom	56	75	247	19
Total	224	351	319	218

(Table 4 Source: Author based on data analysis)

Table 4 show the frequency of paragraphs where the companies are mentioned per country or the overall media attention broken down per country. The frequency is much higher in the country where the company has its headquarters, except for H&M as the most media attention was from the United States and their headquarter is in Sweden and therefore not part of the data collected in this analysis. Walmart got more attention than the other companies with 354 coded paragraphs altogether, the second most mentioned company was Primark with 326 coded paragraphs. After that comes H&M with 224 and Loblaw with 221 coded paragraphs as the companies with least media attention.

Frequency tone of mentions per country

H&M

Country	Total	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Canada	25	36%	4%	60%
United States	143	26%	22%	52%
United Kingdom	56	18%	16%	66%

(Table 5 Source: Author based on data analysis)

Table 5 shows the frequency of tone the paragraphs where H&M was mentioned per country. It also shows how the company was displayed in each country. Overall the tone was quite positive; H&M got mostly positive media attention, mostly in the newspapers from the United Kingdom, where 66% of the media attention was positive. The most negative news coverage was in the newspaper articles from Canada with 36% negative as opposed to 26% in the United States and 18% in the United Kingdom. In the articles from the newspapers in Canada was the ones that was most defined either negative or positive with a percentage of neutral coded paragraphs on only 4%.

Walmart

Country	Total	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Canada	51	49%	24%	27%
United States	225	44%	29%	26%
United Kingdom	75	59%	12%	29%

(Tabell 6 Source: Author based on data analysis)

Table 6 shows the frequency of tone the paragraphs where Walmart was mentioned per country. It also shows how the company was displayed in each country. Walmart was the company who got the most negative media attention of all the companies in the research. Most negative news coverage was in the newspapers from United Kingdom, where 59% paragraphs were coded negative, while the most amount of the negative news coverage where from United States where 44% of 228 paragraphs where coded negative giving 101 negative paragraphs. Also most of the media attention came from here, the least positive media attention were also from the United States with just 26% of the paragraphs where coded positive. While in percentage most of the negative attention came from the United Kingdom with 58 % negative coverage, this was also where the article coverage was most defined meaning that it was less neutral coverage, only 12% of the paragraphs where neutral where 29% were positive.

Primark

Country	Total	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Canada	27	7%	37%	55%
United States	45	13%	49%	38%
United Kingdom	247	33%	31%	36%

(Table 7 Source: Author based on data analysis)

Table 7 shows the frequency of tone the paragraphs where Primark was mentioned per country. It also shows how the company was displayed in each country. Most of the attention came from the newspapers in the United Kingdom, the media attention here was also the most negative with 32%. The newspapers from the United Kingdom were also more divided with almost equal percentage of paragraphs where coded negative, neutral and positive. The newspapers in Canada had the most positive coverage of Primark, with 55% coded positive, while the newspapers in the United States had the highest percentage of neutral coverage.

Loblaw

Country	Total	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Canada	162	32%	28%	40%
United States	37	11%	51%	38%
United Kingdom	19	0%	26%	74%

(Table 8 Source: Author based on data analysis)

Table 8 shows the frequency of tone the paragraphs where Loblaw was mentioned per country. It also shows how the company was displayed in each country. Most of the negative media attention came from Canada 31% of the paragraphs coded were negative. The media attentions in the newspapers from United Kingdom were the most positive; none of the paragraphs were coded negative and all of 73% where positive. United States had the most neutral coverage of Loblaw with 51% of the paragraphs were coded neutral.

Frequency and tone of mentions per newspaper

Daily Mail

Company	Total	Negative	Neutral	Positive
H&M	28	32%	29%	39%
Walmart	10	40%	50%	10%
Primark	56	41%	29%	30%
Loblaw	3	0%	33%	67%

(Table 9 Source: Author based on data analysis)

Table 9 shows the frequency of tone the paragraphs in the sources from the newspaper Daily Mail divided per company. Primark got the most negative attention of all the companies during the coverage after the Rana Plaza collapse by the Daily Mail, with 41% negative coded paragraphs of a total number of 56. Right after the collapse, Rana Plaza was constantly referred to as "Primark factory" associating the collapsed factory solely to Primark. "Primark factory in Bangladesh collapses killing at least 275 people" (Daily Mail 04.24.2013.10.30).

"The last survivor of Bangladesh's devastating Primark factory collapse burned to death after rescuers sparked a fire with the very power tools they were using to free her" (Daily Mail 04.29.2013.09.26). H&M received a lot of positive attention, especially when coming to signing of the Accord, Walmart got mostly neutral coverage and some negative, the negative press was received for not signing the same Accord as H&M. Loblaw were almost not mentioned only three paragraphs were coded, no negative coverage and mostly mentioned as a side note.

"... reflect on the recent clothing factory collapse in Bangladesh that killed over 1,000 workers. Thought the factory in question was not used by H&M, it is among the brands to have signed an agreement to help suppliers pay for better factory safety standards" (Daily Mail 05.30.2013.12.04)

The Daily Telegraph

Company	Total	Negative	Neutral	Positive
H&M	4	0%	0%	100%
Walmart	7	14%	0%	86%
Primark	79	29%	38%	33%
Loblaw	6	0%	0%	100%

(Table 10 Source: Author based on data analysis)

Table 10 shows the frequency of tone the paragraphs in the sources from the newspaper The Daily Telegraph divided per company. H&M received very little attention, only 4 paragraphs were coded, mostly in a descriptive tone, the coverage was only positive as the company was mentioned in relations to the Accord. Walmart received very little attention just around 7 paragraphs mentioned, the coverage was mostly positive. Loblaw also received very little attention; the paragraphs were descriptive, due to compensation of victims. Primark got the most coverage. The tone was slightly positive. The negative coverage was mostly turned to the industry as Primark were brought up as an example by the newspaper.

"Ruth Tanner, campaigns and policy director at the anti-poverty charity War on Want, said: "If UK high street chains like Primark had put in place proper measures to ensure the workers who make their clothes are safe, these deaths could have been avoided." (The Daily Telegraph 04.29.2013.22.55)

The Guardian

Company	Total	Negative	Neutral	Positive
H&M	24	4%	4%	92%
Walmart	58	67%	7%	26%
Primark	112	33%	27%	40%
Loblaw	10	0%	40%	60%

(Table 11 Source: Author based on data analysis)

Table 11 shows the frequency of tone the paragraphs in the sources from the newspaper The Guardian divided per company. Primark received the most media coverage 112 paragraphs in total, 33% where negative and 39% where positive. The negative feedback was more prominent, as seen in this example:

"Primark – owned by Associated British Foods – confirmed that it is currently being supplied by New Wave. The retailer has a total of 257 stores worldwide and in the UK has become symbolic of cheap, "throwaway" fashion which is sold and worn in high volume. It has opened 15 new stores in the past six months, including six in Spain, four in the UK, two in Germany, two in Austria and one in the Netherlands. It is also set to make its first foray into France by the end of the year." (The Guardian 04.25.2013.06.59)

The positive coverage was concerning the Accord and was more in a descriptive tone. Loblaw seems almost forgotten with only 10 paragraphs in total, Mango and Benetton mentioned more than Loblaw's Joe Fresh brand. Walmart received a lot of negative media attention; of 58 paragraphs 67% were negative. The major part of the negative attention was on the Alliance, not being legally binding. Another big part of the negative coverage was Walmart refusal to sign the Accord along with the European brands. There were also criticisms around Walmart's practices and operation as can be seen in this example. "Campaigners suggest Walmart is ideologically opposed to unions. Walmart has not signed the Bangladesh agreement, but will conduct its own inspections of suppliers." (The Guardian 05.17.2013.20.25). H&M received the most positive coverage, with 92% of the 24 paragraphs coded. Most of the coverage was when it came to sustainability and not that much their connection to the collapse of Rana Plaza.

The New York Times

Company	Total	Negative	Neutral	Positive
H&M	58	33%	12%	55%
Walmart	94	55%	26%	19%
Primark	13	15%	31%	54%
Loblaw	13	23%	23%	54%

(Table 12 Source: Author based on data analysis)

Table 12 shows the frequency of tone the paragraphs in the sources from the newspaper The New York Times divided per company. H&M received mostly positive coverage. Walmart and H&M were often mentioned together as industry leaders.

“Big garment buyers like Walmart, H&M and Gap have tremendous power to improve conditions in that market. Industry officials and labor groups have been discussing a legally binding agreement requiring Western brands and retailers to conduct independent factory inspections and to help pay for factory renovations, like adding external fire exits and smoke alarms. Some labor groups estimate it would cost \$3 billion over five years to bring Bangladesh’s roughly 4,500 factories into compliance with building and fire standards. That is a small price to pay given the country’s \$18 billion in annual clothing exports, or \$90 billion over five years.” (The New York Times 05.04.2013)

Primark and Loblaw were mentioned in 13 paragraphs each, which was descriptive and neutral, toned all together. Walmart got the most attention 94 paragraphs were mentioned, 55% of which were negative, many times the name Walmart was mentioned by the newspaper as a representative for all the retailers in the industry, as in this example:

"The collapse followed a fire in November that killed 112 workers making shorts and sweaters for export and that led importers, including Walmart, to vow to do more to ensure the safety of factories where goods they sell are manufactured. The building collapse on Wednesday quickly revived questions about the commitment of local factory owners, Bangladeshi officials and global brands to provide safe working conditions. The Bangladeshi news media reported that inspection teams had discovered cracks in the structure of Rana Plaza on Tuesday." (The New York Times 04.24.2013)

The Wall Street Journal

Company	Total	Negative	Neutral	Positive
H&M	59	20%	36%	44%
Walmart	99	36%	29%	34%
Primark	14	21%	36%	43%

Loblaw	17	6%	65%	29%
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(Table 13 Source: Author based on data analysis)

Table 13 shows the frequency of tone the paragraphs in the sources from the newspaper The Wall Street Journal divided per company. The Wall Street Journal had a major focus on Walmart, most negative attention, with 36% negative coverage. The focus was on Walmart not signing the Accord with the European brands. The tone was also negative towards the Alliance initiative as it was not legally binding for the companies. The Wall Street Journal covered more about the CSR initiatives than the other newspapers.

"There is a big difference in asking labor to act as an advisor, versus sharing power with people who represent labor's interests," said Scott Nova, executive director of the Worker Rights Consortium, a labor group. "Walmart, Gap and the corporations that have chosen to join them, are unwilling to commit to a program under which they actually have to keep the promises they make to workers and accept financial responsibility for ensuring that their factories are made safe," a group of labor unions, including the Worker Rights Consortium, Clean Clothes Campaign and International Labor Rights Forum, said in a statement." (The Wall Street Journal 07.10.2013.18.17)

The majority of coverage of H&M was positive; H&M was often used as opposite to Walmart, especially when concerning CSR practices. Loblaw and Primark were not mentioned much, Loblaw was mentioned in a strictly neutral tone.

USA Today

Company	Total	Negative	Neutral	Positive
H&M	26	23%	15%	61%
Walmart	32	38%	41%	22%
Primark	18	6%	72%	22%
Loblaw	7	0%	71%	29%

(Table 14 Source: Author based on data analysis)

Table 14 shows the frequency of tone the paragraphs in the sources from the newspaper USA Today divided per company. Loblaw was almost not mentioned by USA Today only 7 paragraphs were coded, the coverage was neutral and positive, as none of the 7 paragraphs were negative. Primark also got a very neutral coverage. H&M got most coverage, 61% of which was positive.

"The labor-backed global pact has been signed by some companies including Swedish retailer H&M and Italian clothing company Benetton. It requires companies to pay up to \$500,000 per year toward administrative costs of the program and the companies also are responsible for ensuring that "sufficient funds are available to pay for renovations and other safety improvements." (USA Today 05.14.2013.23.19)

Walmart coverage was mixed but mostly negative, Walmart got most negative attention of all the four companies by USA Today, Walmart was associated with the factories placed in Rana Plaza, even if Walmart went out and said that they had nothing to do with the factory, newspaper still kept to associate Walmart with the factory.

Toronto Star

Company	Total	Negative	Neutral	Positive
H&M	18	39%	6%	56%
Walmart	42	52%	26%	21%
Primark	19	11%	42%	47%
Loblaw	95	32%	23%	44%

(Table 15 Source: Author based on data analysis)

Table 15 shows the frequency of tone the paragraphs in the sources from the newspaper Toronto Star divided per company. Loblaw got the most media attention from Toronto Star, much mixed press, even if the positive press was 44% compared to the negative on 32%. The tone was very neutral, descriptive and objective. There were a lot more focus on what Loblaw would do better, to improve and deal with the current situation than rather condemn them for unacceptable and irresponsible business and processes.

"More should follow the example of Loblaw, owner of the Joe Fresh clothing brand. Loblaw is calling for reforms, compensating the victims, demanding that its suppliers' factories meet local safety and building codes and sending in auditors to ensure compliance. It has encouraged other companies to do the same. Collectively, foreign purchasers can effect positive change by working with Bangladeshis to raise standards, and by bankrolling improvements." (Toronto Star 05.03.2013)

Walmart got significant amount of negative coverage, 52% of the coded paragraphs were of a negative nature.

The Globe and Mail

Company	Total	Negative	Neutral	Positive
H&M	7	29%	0%	71%
Walmart	9	33%	11%	56%
Primark	10	10%	20%	70%
Loblaw	67	31%	34%	34%

(Table 16 Source: Author based on data analysis)

Table 16 shows the frequency of tone the paragraphs in the sources from the newspaper The Globe and Mail divided per company. Loblaw got the most media attention from The Globe

and Mail. The coverage was almost equally divided between negative, neutral and positive press, with 31%, 34% and 34%. Loblaw got positive press for being honest and admitting using one of the factories in Rana Plaza for production. However Loblaw was challenged when it came to involvement in the factory and practices in Bangladesh. The Globe and Mail gave a defined view on the situation, and gave interviewed sources from both sides of the story.

"Many of the clothes they were sewing were for European and North American consumers, including some being made for Joe Fresh, owned by grocery giant Loblaw Cos. Ltd. That leads to uncomfortable questions: If you're wearing Joe Fresh, do you have hundreds of deaths on your hands? Are our clothing bargains creating poverty, misery and death in poor countries? Would the world be better off if we didn't buy clothes made in Bangladesh? Those questions are understandable, but they miss the larger context. Garment-factory workers in Bangladesh, China, India, Mexico and other corners of the developing world are not victims. They have sought out this work, and they want to be agents of their own fate. They often get a raw deal, but they're enduring" (The Globe and Mail 04.27.2013.06.00)

The coverage of H&M and Primark was very neutral, merely descriptive, not coverage given. The same goes for Walmart, except that the tone was a bit more of a negative character.

4.6. Discussion

The collapse of Rana Plaza got massive media attention, and the procedures of the companies in the industry involved were questioned by the media. According to the agenda-setting theory the more attention an issue gets in the media the more salient it becomes for the reader. Over the course of the data gathering the media did not let go over, but kept reporting about the collapse, the dead toll, then the reason for the collapse, people rescued, companies involved, working conditions in Bangladesh and so on, making the case highly salient for the public for months. The four companies were frequently linked to the collapse by the media, making the public associating to these companies' names when thinking of the collapse, according to the theory. The media has been framing the companies differently, having clear frames for H&M and Walmart, but less clear when it came to Primark and Loblaw. The media portrait of Walmart was mostly negative, most negative media coverage covered the refusal on joining in on the first CSR initiative, but the negative coverage was marked by little trust in the intentions of the company from the beginning. Since the media frame is playing on an already existing frame, which means in Walmart's case that the disbelief in the company was already there before the collapse of Rana Plaza and was only confirmed and reinforced by their actions in the aftermath of the collapse. The same base theory counts for H&M but in a

completely different way, H&M received rather positive reviews for their proactively when it came to CSR initiatives after the collapse. H&M received much more positive and less negative media coverage than all the other companies in the research leading to think that the audience already had a premeditated frame which was rather positive, and relative easy to pick up for the journalist to spin further. If we are to believe what the media agenda setting theory calls priming, H&M and Walmart were often used as symbols on the industry practices, how it should be done and how it shouldn't be done. Since people do not pay attention to everything and therefore seldom do a comprehensive analysis based on whole picture of information given, but rather draw conclusions on the pieces of information that are particularly notable or memorable at the time of need, they will recall the information that is most readily available to them. This information is to a considerable degree shaped by the mass media; since the media has dictated what issues should be important by making them salient by exposure and attention. In this case it is the portrait of H&M as the good guys and Walmart as the bad guys, amplified Walmart already frayed reputation in the public.

Loblaw and Primark had similar media coverage; both had massive coverage because they more than any other company were mentioned with direct link the collapse, because they went out admitting their involvement with the factories in Rana Plaza. The frequently mentioning of Loblaw and Primark with the collapse would, according to the media agenda theory, effectively associate the collapse of Rana Plaza with Loblaw and Primark for the audience, so, when the public recall the collapse, the two company names would theoretical pop up in their memory in association. An example of this is Daily Mails frequent use of "Primark Factory", presenting the collapsed factory as solely to Primark.

4.7. Conclusion

The companies got the most media attention from the newspapers from their home region, except H&M since their home region would be Sweden. Overall the most attention was from the US newspapers. H&M was by most newspaper praised for their strong CSR focus and proclivity. Most of the coverage was received for their swift reaction to the collapse and being the first to sign the Accord. Walmart received mostly negative coverage from the newspapers. They were quickly linked to the collapse itself, and then brought up as a representative when it came to poor working condition on the RMG factories in Bangladesh. The newspapers did not take it lightly when Walmart announced that it would not sign The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, neither were the newspapers convinced when Walmart went

together with the other North American companies in order to create The Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, which was deemed to be a scam and an initiative self-regulation done by the industries' companies, it was also criticized for not being legally binding. Primark and Loblaws got significant amount of positive coverage, they were the only two companies who openly admitted that they had production at the factories at the time of the collapse. The coverage was more focused on the swift reaction to the companies and proactive than they were actually involved.

A lot of articles gathered were not coded as they had no direct mentioned of one of the four companies who was part of this research. The reason why some articles are not coded is not that they were not relevant but not targeting a specific company, as many of the articles were discussing the industry as a whole without mentioned of specific companies. The reason for this could be that just two companies out of more or less thirty that had production in Rana Plaza at the time of the collapse, admitted their involvement and therefore it would be more productive to treat the incident as an industry problem rather than a specific company issue.

5. Corporate disclosure practices after the collapse of Rana Plaza

Research question

Did the media attention affect the companies CSR disclosure or their CSR initiatives?

5.1. Theoretical framework

5.1.1. Legitimation strategies

A company's legitimacy is provided by the society in return said company's actions have to correspond to the moral, ethical and social norms of the society. A legitimacy gap occurs when there is inconsistency between the company's actions and society's expectations. A legitimacy gap could potentially threaten the company's image and reputation and eventually lead to revoke of license to operate, since the society does not see the company as a legitimate member of the business society any longer. It is therefore in the company's own interest to see to it that the legitimacy gap is as little as possible, one tactic that can be adopted to reduce the legitimacy gap is corporate disclosures (O'Donovan 2002). In a way legitimacy can be seen as an operational resource, which organizations extract from their cultural environments and employ in pursuit of their goals (Suchman 1995). Just like other resources such as money or assets, a business require legitimacy in order to operate, some situations can increase

legitimacy while other situations would decrease legitimacy. In order to manage the company's legitimacy, it is important to know how their legitimacy can be gained, maintained or lost (O'Donovan 2002).

According to Tiller (2004) a company will always be in one of four phases when it comes to its legitimacy as explained below (Figure 7).

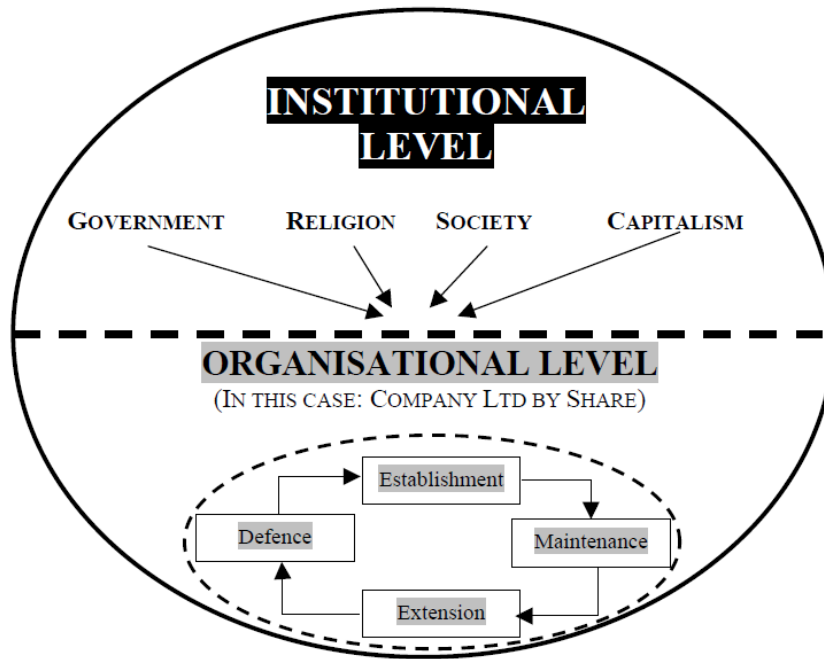


Figure 7 Source: Tilling 2004

Establishing Legitimacy This is the first phases, which is the phase in which a new company starts. This is where they development and this tends revolve about issues of competence, particularly financial, but involve also socially constructed standards of quality and desirability as well that the company follows what is seemed as accepted standards of professionalism (Tiller 2004).

Maintaining Legitimacy This phase is the daily operation for most companies, where they will be concerned about the main activities, primarily the ongoing performance and assurance that everything is business as usual, secondly to proactively prevent potential risk to their already achieved legitimacy. This however might not be as easy as it seems, since the society's perception of what is acceptable is not static and changes over time; this requires companies to develop accordingly. Activities that previously appeared acceptable can change and will let a company lose their legitimacy if they do not respond to this change (Tiller 2004).

Extending Legitimacy This phase is when companies enter new markets or make changes to the way they relate to their current market. This can create a need to extend the legitimacy to the new market or requires adaptation to be proactive in order to gain confidence and support in the new market (Tiller 2004).

Defending Legitimacy This phase is when a company's legitimacy is threatened by an internal or external incident and therefore will require defence. Legitimacy threats can emerge for several reasons. According to Suchman (1995) the most common reason why a corporation faces a legitimacy threat or gap is because the company fails to follow the norms and ethics society expects of them, one reason for this can be that the society's norms and values have changed, but that the company has failed to recognize this. Another reason can be that the company has made changes in their corporate performance, while the norms of society have not changed. Or it could simply be that both the corporate performance and societal expectations have changed, but that they have moved in different directions, or that they both are moving in the same direction both not at the same time or speed (O'Donovan 2002). There are several ways a company can restore its legitimacy; one way is trying to normalise the accounts. Normalising accounts means that they are constructing a firewall between the company and the legitimacy-threatening situation, with use of communication strategies such as excuses, apologies, justifications and explanations (Beelitz & Merkl-Davies 2011).

According to O'Donovan (2002) there are several tactics to respond to legitimacy threats.

Avoid

Either by not entering a public debate on the effects or aftermath of the incident that caused the legitimacy threat or by not publicizing what may be perceived as negative information.

Attempt to alter social values

Educate the public on the risks associated with their operations and the benefits of using their product and services

Attempt to shape perceptions of the organization

Reiterate past social and environmental achievements of the company. Or indicate the company did not breach any current legislative guidelines with their operations

Conform to conferring public values

Announce an immediate inquiry into the incident that caused the legitimacy threat and assure the public that any measure necessary to ensure this type of accident does not happen again will be undertaken.

The choices of legitimation tactics will depend on in which phase the company is located, if the purpose for the company is to establish, extend, maintain or defend its legitimacy.

According to Deegan (2002) disclosure, such as found in annual report and sustainability reports, is motivated by a desire from management to legitimize aspects of their organization, which can be a valued strategy for a company facing legitimacy threats. It has been argued that the inclusion of voluntary information is used deliberately by management, in order to persuade the public to accept managements' view of the society; that these types of disclosures are used for legitimization purposes (O'Donovan 2002). Earlier studies have shown that this kind of reporting has been used to send a message to society and other stakeholders about the company's social and environmental activities and that the management used this to respond to public pressure especially responding to negative media coverage (O'Donovan 2002).

5.2. Methodology

The methodology for research question three is the same as for the first research question. In order to answer the third research question the companies' Annual Reports and CSR or Sustainability Report *after the Rana Plaza collapse* were collected and analyzed. Then the reports were analyzed and compared from a GRI perspective, using the GRI 3.1 technical protocol as a guideline. The reason for using the GRI as a guideline was the same as for the first research question; to use a broadly accepted and used method for reporting, also in an attempt to standardize the companies CSR objectives, actions and result for comparison. The most important aspect of using the companies own reports was to use their own words and statement on CSR and see what aspects of CSR were the companies' main focuses. One of the companies was already using the GRI 4, which has some differences compared to the GRI 3.1. The differences were translated and scored according to the guidelines for GRI 3.1 in order to better compare the differences in disclosures from before and after Rana Plaza collapse. Three of the companies used the GRI guidelines in one fashion or another when it came to CSR reporting; two of them already included the rating against the GRI. The reason for using the GRI guidelines was the same as for the first research questions; that the objective for the thesis was not to go through how well the companies own reporting mapping consisted with the GRI guidelines, but rather analyze how the company positioned themselves when it came to CSR activities. The third company did not have information on any reporting guidelines at all. The fourth company used the GRI guidelines along with AA1000 principles

of inclusivity, materiality and responsiveness, but did not include rating against the GRI guidelines, in the case of the third and fourth company the reports was gone through and mapped with the GRI guidelines questions.

5.3. The result and comparison

The graphs below (Figure 8 and Figure 9) give an overview of the GRI 3.1 framework coverage for the four companies. For each sector there will be an explanation and comparison of the coverage from the previous reports.

5.3.1. Standard Disclosure: Profile

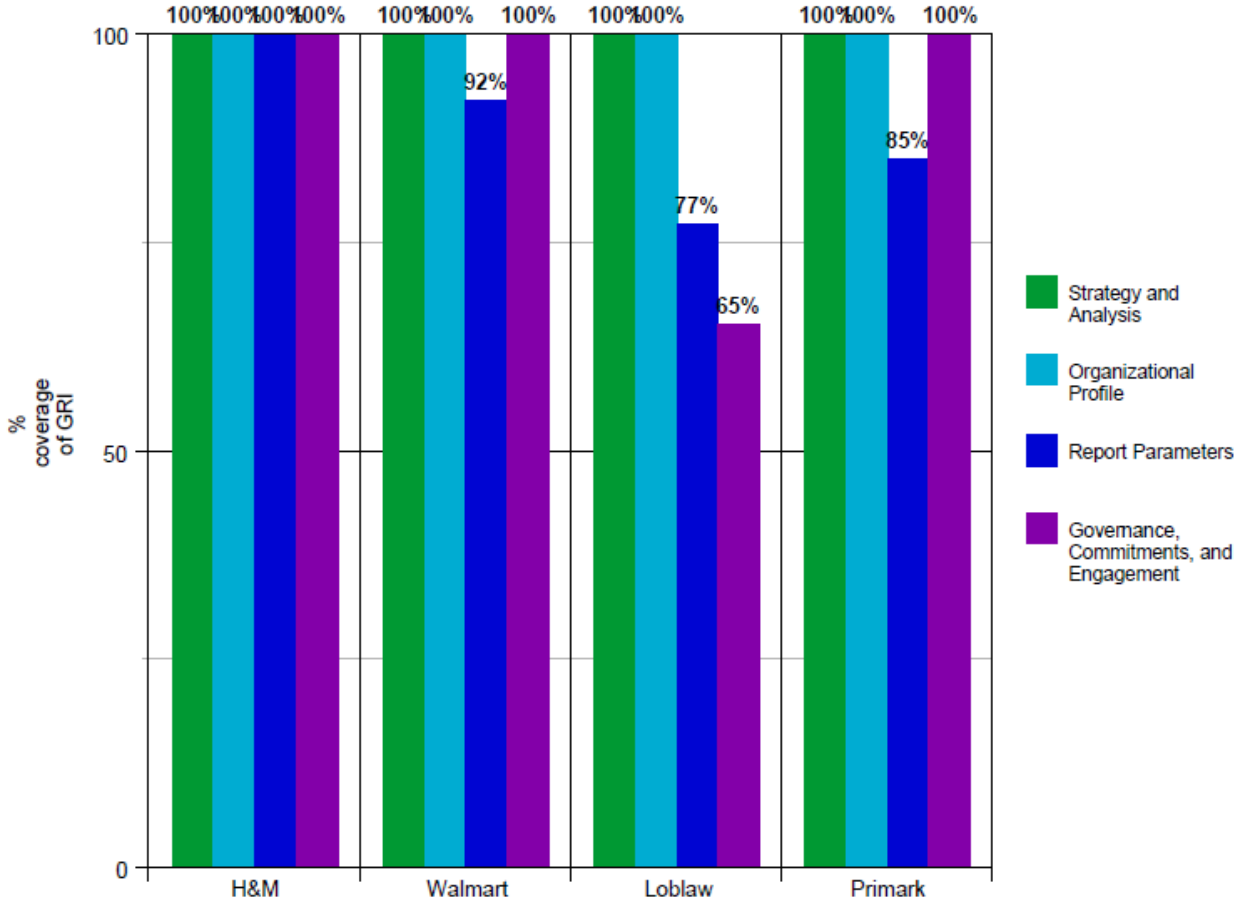


Figure 8 Source: Author based on data analysis

Strategy and Analysis

This section consists of two disclosures, statement from the most senior decision maker and description of key impacts, risks and opportunities. The report started with a statement or interview from the CEO or Executive Chairman, going through the key impacts, risk, opportunities and a look back on last year’s performance and challenges. All of the opening

statements and interviews mentioned the collapse of Rana Plaza and the focus on retailer's responsibility for the supply chain.

Organizational Profile

This section contains disclosures about the organization profile, operational structure of the organization, primary brands, products and services, number of employees, net revenue and ownership. All the four companies had this covered, most of the information was found in the Annual Report, some companies for example Walmart had most of the question easy to find in dedicated Corporate Governance chapter.

Report Parameters

This section contains reporting parameters as reporting period, reporting cycle, boundary of the report, if company got external assurance on the report and such. H&M was the only company that had 100% in this section, followed by Walmart that had everything except policy and current practice with regard to seeking external assurance for the report, giving a score of 92% compared to 85% from last report where basis for reporting on joint ventures and subsidiaries were also missing. Loblaw went from 88% to 77% from the last report, fully stated reporting cycle this report compared to last, but missing things like data measurement techniques and the bases of calculations and did not seek external assurance for the report this year. The table identifying the location of the Standard Disclosures in the report was missing in both reports due to the fact that Loblaw in 2012 only used the GRI guidelines as a benchmark and in 2013 their reporting criteria was unknown. Primark went from 92% to 85%, as it did not clarify the date of most recent previous report.

Governance, Commitments, and Engagement

This section is about the governance structure of the organization, with disclosures about the Chair, board structure, and diversity of the organization, shareholders, employees and stakeholder involvement and engagement. H&M, Walmart and Primark had all this fully covered, which was a change from 65% for Primark from their last report, with much more focus on stakeholder involvement and engagement. Loblaw went from 85% to 65%, much due to the lack of coverage of their Corporate Governance as governance structure of the organization, linkage between compensation for members of the highest governance body, processes to ensure conflicts of interest are avoided, processes for evaluating the highest governance body's own performance, even if the CSR report contains a part about their corporate governance, is lacking a great deal of the information stated in the GRI guidelines.

5.3.2. Standard Disclosure: Performance Indicator

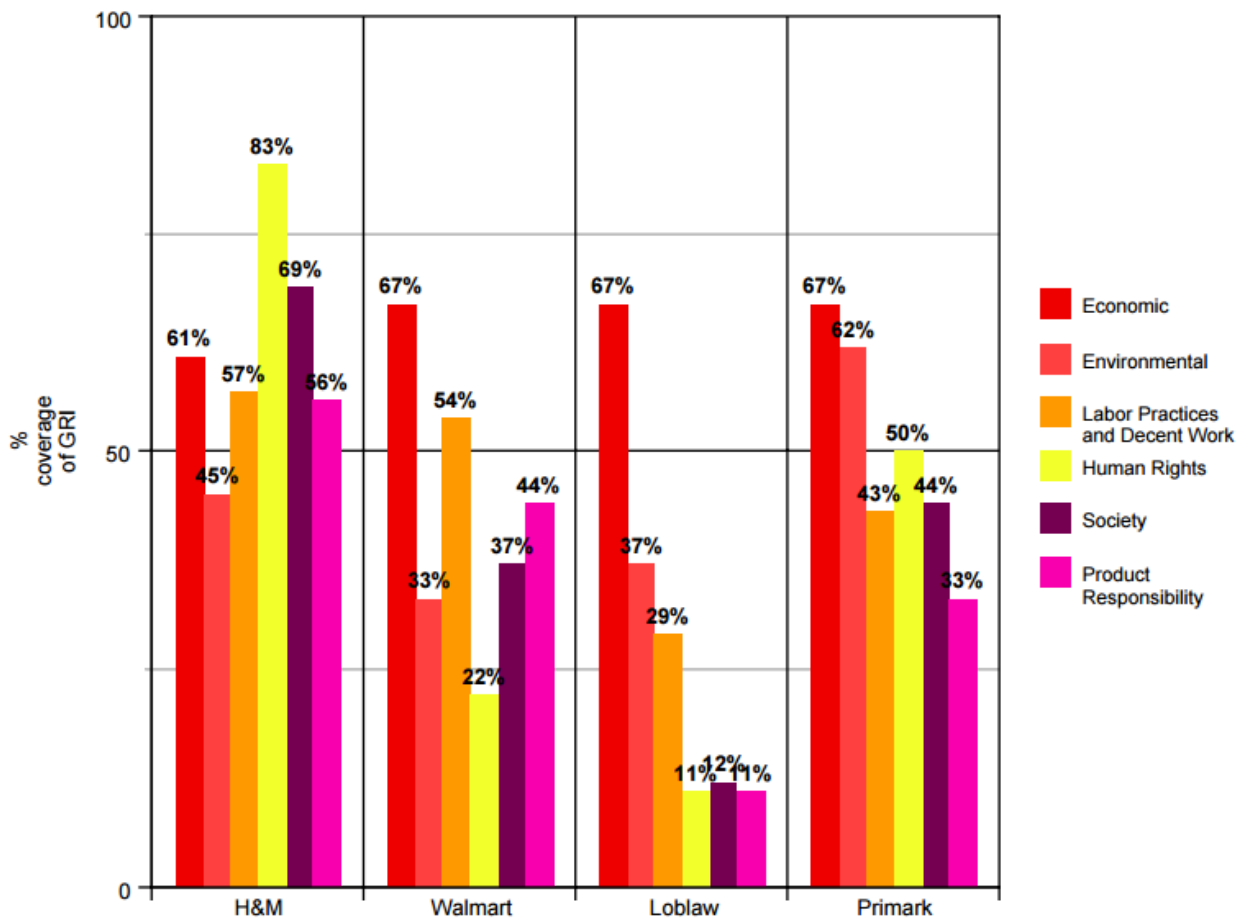


Figure 9 Source: Author based on data analysis

Economic Performance Indicator

This section is about the economic performance of the organization; the indicators cover disclosure of economic performance, market presence and indirect economic impacts. In this section Walmart, Loblaw and Primark all had 67% covered, which is down from 78% for Walmart and 72% from Loblaw from their previous reports. None of them had reported any significant financial assistance received from government, neither standard entry level wage by gender compared to local minimum wage at significant locations of operation, which Walmart was the only one to do so in the previous report. Walmart and Loblaw were lacking reporting on procedures for local hiring and proportion of senior management hired from the local community at locations of significant operation. H&M had the lowest percentage of disclosures, failing to disclose if any significant financial assistance received from government, policy, practices, and proportion of spending on locally-based suppliers, and

procedures for local hiring and proportion of senior management hired from the local community at locations. The disclosures in this indicators were the same as the once from the previous report, no changes seemed to be made. Primark had the same percentage covered from last report as well, but had disclosure Procedures for local hiring and proportion of senior management hired from the local community at locations, but not disclosure policy, practices, and proportion of spending on locally-based suppliers as they had in their previous report.

Environmental Performance Indicators

This section is about the environmental performance of the organization; the indicators cover disclosure focusing on materials, energy, and water used and recycled biodiversity impact, transportation, emissions, effluents and waste. This is the best covered performance indicator with the most indicators. There are 30 indicators of the Environmental performance indicators overall which goes from material used, recycling, greenhouse gases, energy consumption to impact on biodiversity, strategies and current actions and environmental investments. In this section H&M has only 45% coverage compared to 55% in previous reports. The main reason for this is that the questions about biodiversity are not reported; also even if the initiative is in place less concrete data about recycling of packing material and the environmental impact on transport is given. The other companies as Walmart and Loblaw disclosed more of their environmental initiatives and impacts than they did in the previous report. Walmart and Loblaw went from 27% and 35% to 33% and 37%, making small changes in the report as giving more details and statistics. Primark had the highest percentage of disclosures, with 62% and they also had the highest increase, compared to 45% from previous report. The reason for this that more details about water source and discharge and impacts on biodiversity were covered in the report. Since the report included details about water withdrawal by source, water sources significantly affected by withdrawal of water, weight of waste by type and disposal method and description of significant impacts of activities, products, and services on biodiversity in protected areas.

Labor Practices and Decent Work Performance Indicators

This section is about the labor practices of the organization; the indicators covers disclosure focusing on employment, labor and management relations, occupational health and safety, training, education, diversity and equal opportunity. H&M had the highest coverage with 57%, an increase from the previous report, with focus on disclosure of total workforce by employment type, broken down by gender and the different training given to their employees and suppliers. Walmart had a decrease in the disclosure from previous report and had only

54% covered, main reason for this was that they did not report rate of new employee hires and employee turnover. Loblaw had also a decrease in their disclosure, from 46% to 29% since the previous report in this section, because of a lack of information concerning percentage of employees receiving regular performance and career development reviews and composition of governance bodies and breakdown of employees per employee category according to gender. Primark had an increase in their reporting with 43% compared to 18% in the previous report, the report contained more details concerning the education and training initiatives and procedures.

Human Rights Performance Indicators

This section is about the human rights practices of the organization; the indicators cover disclosure focusing on investment and procurement in human right practices, non-discrimination, freedom of association and collective bargaining, procedures to prevent child labor, procedure on prevention of forced and compulsory labor, security practices, and indigenous rights. This is the section that had the highest increase of disclosure for all the companies, except Walmart who had no change at all in their report. Biggest change was Primark who went from 17% to 50%, who had more focus on their suppliers when it came to human rights screening and training. H&M also had a lot of focus on human right activities when it came to their suppliers; this had significant coverage in their report. Loblaw only had one of the questions coverage which was coverage of their initiative and coverage concerning the collapse of Rana Plaza.

Society Performance Indicators

This section is about the society performance of the organization the indicators covers disclosure focusing on involvement in local communities, anti-corruption practices and procedures, public policy, and anti-competitive behavior. All the companies, except Primark had a decrease in their reporting in this sector compared to the previous report, while Primark had the same as previous report. All except H&M were missing information about business units analyzed for risks related to corruption, and all of them were missing information about legal actions for anticompetitive behavior and monopoly practices and their outcomes, and monetary value of significant fines and total number of non-monetary sanctions for noncompliance with laws and regulations.

Product Responsibility Performance Indicators

This section is about the product responsibility of the organization the indicators covers disclosure focusing on customers' health and safety, product and service labeling, marketing communications, and customer privacy. H&M had the highest coverage with 69% in this

section and also did the highest increase with 17% from their previous report. The reason for this is their disclosure on number of incidents of non-compliance, life cycle stages in which health and safety impacts of products and services are assessed for improvement. At the same time Primark had a decrease of reported details concerning their incidents of non-compliance and fines for non-compliance with laws and regulations, their disclosure went from 50% to 33% in this sector compared to the previous report.

5.4. Discussion

According to Legitimacy theory companies will use different methods in order to defend or close a legitimacy gap. The collapse of Rana Plaza can be seen as a major legitimacy treat, which companies need to recover from. Disclosure can be used deliberately in order to respond to a legitimacy threat, and can be used to respond to public pressure especially responding to negative media coverage. Two of the companies involved in the research support this theory, H&M and Primark. Compared to result from 2012, H&M made a bigger effort to have more disclosures. H&M went up 16 % on the Human Rights Indicators, they started to use the new reporting guidelines GRI 4 and they included tables identifying the location of the Standard Disclosures. Primark started to use the GRI guidelines, and had an overall jump in disclosures, except on product responsibility. Comparing Primark's disclosures from 2012 to 2013, 2013 do not include incidents and absenteeism, fines for non-compliance, which indicates less transparency. This could be because they would like to accentuate the "good news", while conceal the "bad news", in order to influence the stakeholders and society perceptions about the company.

On the other side the two other companies in the research, Loblaw and Walmart, showed less disclosure than the previous year. The decrease in disclosure could mean that they did not see the need for closing the gap or they did not regard the situation as legitimacy treat. Loblaw might not have seen the gap, because of positive reviews and because they operate in smaller societies than the others companies. Therefore they might have already closed the gap with their stakeholders, so Loblaw do not see more disclosure as necessary. Walmart operates in a bigger society and is under more negative spotlight, the reason for less disclosure could be the that they do not evaluate the situation as legitimacy treating since they were not direct involved in the factories producing clothes in Rana Plaza and they had already orchestrated a CSR initiative in order to prevent similar happenings in the future.

5.5. Conclusion

In the reports from H&M there is a clear improvement from the 2012 to the 2013 sustainability report. First of all they are including the GRI scores in their disclosure, which they have done previous in 2011, but for some reason not in 2012, this has now returned in 2013. H&M has also as the only one of the companies started to use the new GRI 4 guidelines, which shows progression in their reporting practices. There are a clear increase in the performance indicators that covers human rights and labor practices which indicates that they take the collapse of Rana Plaza and the discussion that came after had some indication on their CSR disclosure and practices.

Primark's reports had the most significant change of the four companies, the biggest improvement from the 2012 to the 2013 sustainability report. It was clear from the report that they had considered the GRI guidelines when making the report, even if they did not include the GRI scores in their disclosure. The biggest improvement was amongst other on the standard disclosure profile, where information about their stakeholders and stakeholder engagement were included. There was also a significant increase in the performance indicators that covered human rights and labor practices.

Walmart's reporting decreased according to the GRI guidelines from 2012 to 2013. They kept the same outline and also disclosed the GRI scoring for their report. The economical, labor practices and society performance indicators decreased as more subjects were deemed as not reported compared to the sustainability report from 2012.

Loblaw reporting also decreased quite a bit, their standard disclosure profile decreased report parameters as amongst other things had neither very few details on their reporting guidelines nor any external validation of the report. Another section that decreased was the one concerning Governance, Commitments, and Engagement, were a lot of details about their corporate governance were not disclosed. For the performance indicator there were decreases in disclosure when it came to the economic, labor practices, society indicators. While the performance indicator concerning human rights went from 0% to 11% because of their coverage of the collapse of Rana Plaza and their disclosure on the CSR initiative taken thereafter.

6. Overall Discussion

This thesis aims at exploring some of the reasons for companies to get involved in CSR initiatives and whether the global news media's attention has any effect on a company's CSR

disclosure and initiatives. In doing so the thesis is focused on the CSR disclosure of initiatives in sustainability reports and annual reports in the time frame before a significant disaster, the collapse of Rana Plaza in Bangladesh April 2013. In order to catch the media attention and discussion on CSR that followed, news articles from prominent newspapers were collected and analyzed following the collapse. Then the sustainability reports published the year following the Rana Plaza collapse were analyzed and compared to the previous year for any significant changes to the disclosure of the CSR initiatives. The thesis is based on deductive research and aimed at exploring relations between CSR initiative, disclosure and media pressure, not on confirming a hypothesis. The research is conducted into three parts; CSR before, during and after Rana Plaza. First part was done based on the companies' disclosure practices from before collapse of Rana Plaza; the second part from the media coverage and CSR initiatives were analyzed; the last part from the companies' disclosure practices after collapse of Rana Plaza where analyzed and compared to the disclosures before the collapse.

The result of the first research, H&M and Walmart were the ones with the highest disclosure according to the GRI guidelines. H&M is the CSR leader of the companies in the research conducted, as they had covered the largest portion of the GRI guidelines in their reporting. Walmart scored second highest, showing transparency by being the only one who had a table with their disclosures compared to the GRI guidelines. Loblaw disclosed the. Primark was the only company that did not use the GRI guidelines in any way, but compared to the GRI guidelines had more transparency than the other companies when it came to compliance with health and safety issues.

The results from the second research question show that according to media attention H&M got the most positive media attention for their CSR initiatives and pro-activity and they were in general brought up as an example on how to conduct business when it comes to CSR, while Walmart got most negative attention of all the companies in the research, most of which was related to their business ethics and lack of action when it came to CSR initiatives. Both Loblaw and Primark got a fair amount of media attention, mostly just mentioned in having production in Rana Plaza at the time of the collapse, but also positive coverage for being fast to respond to the tragedy with compensation and initiatives.

The results from the third research question proves that the reports for H&M and Primark got much more in line with GRI guidelines and suggest that they did put in effort and importance into improving their disclosure and transparency in their disclosure of CSR activities, while Walmart and Loblaw's reports deviated further from the GRI guidelines and were less transparent than in the previous reports. While there was an improvement in the

reporting of H&M and Primark compared to the companies the other two companies, Walmart and Loblaw who did not have any improvement, when comparing the reports, quite to the contrary.

The results do not conclusively confirm that increased media pressure influence a company's corporate disclosures. According to theory the more negative media attention a company gets, the more willing a company should be to incorporate disclosures in order to reestablish the legitimacy and reestablish its image in the eyes of society. This was not the case in the research conducted. Walmart got the most negative media attention, but did not improve their disclosure practices. Actually the research shows the opposite, as Walmart's disclosure decreased from 2012 to 2013. The reason for this could be related to how they responded to the collapse of Rana Plaza. Walmart responded to the legitimacy threat caused by the collapse by what O'Donovan (2002) describes as an attempt to shape perceptions of the organization. Walmart indicated that they did not breach any current legislative guidelines with their operations as they had no production at Rana Plaza at the time of the collapse. They also reiterated past social and environmental achievements of the company and tried to take the media pressure off the company by giving statements about their audits and how production factories that did not pass the audits got their contracts with Walmart ended.

Walmart's tactics for defending their legitimacy had negative reactions, together with their responds and decision not to sign the Accord, which they also received increased negative media attention for. The media began to question the company's integrity, questioning Walmart's actions as tricks and their legitimate structure as just a facade. Walmart responded by creating their own CSR initiative; the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, a sort of watchdog which would keep the company from doing similar actions in the future. The problem for Walmart was that their respond came too late; they waited too long to create their own CSR initiative giving the media opportunity to question their commitment. Additional problems with the Alliance was that it was self-monitoring, created without cooperation of the any labor organization nor NGOs, in addition to not being legally binding. The initiative was too little, a little too late and made the media question the initiative as a trick and the company's integrity when it came to the Alliance as a façade, especially when the European and a handful of the American retailers had signed the Accord seemingly without any concern for the legally binding aspect of the initiative. The disclosure for 2013 mirrors this approach from Walmart, that their evaluation of the situation as not being a legitimacy threat, as they were not directly involved in the factories producing clothes in Rana

Plaza and they were already involved in a CSR initiative in order to prevent similar events in the future.

In the same research H&M and Primark, who got mostly positive media attention did an effort in order to increase their disclosure, and the later increased their disclosure significantly. Primark was one of the only two companies who went out actively and admitted that they had production in one of the factories located in Rana Plaza at the time of the collapse. Contrary to what might be perceived most logical, the media attention did not turn overly negative on this fact; on the contrary, Primark got positive news coverage for their transparency. The company was, together with Loblaw the first to bring up the subject of compensation to the victims and families. H&M responded to the collapse of Rana Plaza with being the first to sign the first CSR initiative, the Accord, as the front runner of sustainability and improved working conditions in countries like Bangladesh. The Accord can be seen as the retailers' way of publicly improving the organizational flaws and limitations they have selectively admitted in order to restore their legitimacy. H&M received a lot of positive coverage from the media for their proactive behavior. When analyzing the disclosures from 2013 the results from the research suggest that positive media attention or positive pressure inspire more and better disclosure.

In the research, the CSR frontrunner did not get the most media pressure, as has been the case in other researches, i.e. the study of Van Cranenburgh et al (2013) on a case study of Carlsberg in Cambodia, where Carlsberg was targeted by social activism for beer brand practices in Cambodia, even though Carlsberg had the leadership positions on CSR in Asia. In this research H&M had the leadership position in CSR, not only among the four companies in the research, but in the entire industry. Previous studies suggested that they should get the most pressure to sign the CSR initiative and pay compensation to the victims. In this study, H&M did not get most pressure from the media, but was praised for their proactively. One could say that they were pressured into signing the Accord, as this would be expected from a company who profiles themselves off of being the frontrunner, even if they had no production at Rana Plaza. But H&M did not receive pressure in form of negative media coverage which could be expected, even though the research was based on the media pressure and not social activism campaigns. Instead the media targeted Walmart, most probably because of their existing bad reputation in the area of CSR; the company with the worst reputation received the most negative coverage.

The results from the research show that Loblaw had a decrease in their disclosure after the collapse of Rana Plaza, which could mean that the company did not see corporate

disclosure as necessary in order to close the legitimacy gap. This suggests that the more visible a company and its activities are in the society the company operates in, the easier it will be to close the legitimacy gap or eliminate the legitimacy threat. Loblaw is the only company that operates in a single market, namely Canada. All the other companies in the research operate on an international level, which increased their need to use the Sustainability Reports to disclose their CSR activities and profiles, as they had more need for corporate disclosure as a strategy to reach the relevant stakeholders.

Another interpretation of the results is to look at them more on a cultural level. The result shows that the two North American companies in the research did not improve their disclosures, while the European companies did improve their disclosures after the collapse of Rana Plaza. The reason for this could be that the European companies are more prone to media pressure than their North American counterparts. Another reason could be that the European customers are more sensitive to negative media coverage than the American customer, and therefore the European companies have to respond with more disclosures in order to show their customer that they are serious when it comes to CSR. Still, more research would be needed to explore these potential relationships.

The limitation of this research includes that the research is focusing on a specific event, the collapse of Rana Plaza in 2013, the focus is on four North American and European retail companies and the data collection is from 8 specific newspapers from the English speaking part of the same region. Even if the research gives some evidence to how companies handle their CSR, it cannot be generalized in any way as the environment is so specific. The research was only based on English written newspapers, even if H&M's home market is located in Sweden. This was a deliberate choice since the coding had to be done in the same language and translation of terms and findings would possibly have an effect on the results, making them more unclear. It is reasonable to believe that if a Swedish newspaper had been chosen as well it would have affected the media coverage in amount, but not in tone.

Interviews with employees and executives were not collected from the four companies for three reasons. Firstly, there is a three year gap between the collapse of Rana Plaza and the time this thesis was written. This means that the people in charge of the decisions made might not be in the same positions or/and not be able to recollect what happened. Secondly, the subject in the research is of a sensitive nature and answers in an interview have a high probability of being biased or deliberately avoided. Thirdly, some of the companies used in the research state on their websites that they do not have the resources to assist student papers.

The results from this study confirm that the legitimacy theory explains the motivation for environmental and social disclosure. According to Deegan (2002) the sustainability reporting is motivated by management's desire to legitimize aspects of their organization. This can be a valued strategy for a company when an event threatens the company's reputation and ongoing survival. The research also to some extent confirms that similarly to research done by Deegan and colleagues (1996, 2010) there is a distinct correlation between increased media pressure and the amount of environmental and social disclosures, while this research does not provide any evidence on the correlation between better disclosure and negative media pressure. Previous research in this area has been focused on the amount of media pressure and disclosure. This research contributes to existing research and practice by exploring the type of media pressure and goes in depth with what the corporate disclosures contains. It explores both quantitatively and qualitatively the impact a disaster such as the collapse on Rana Plaza has on a company's disclosure practices.

7. Conclusion

In a world of fast fashion where clothes goes from the drawing board to the rack in as little as three weeks and fashion pieces seems to be disposable, it is reasonable to ask if the methods are sustainable and what approach companies have to CSR in order to make their business more sustainable. This research explored some of forces behind why companies get involved in CSR initiatives. Drawing upon legitimacy theory and media agenda-setting theory the research was set to explore the link between CSR disclosure and news coverage. The legitimacy theory explored how communication and disclosure of CSR initiatives is used by companies to legitimize aspects of their organization and to close legitimacy gaps and repair their image after a catastrophe. The agenda-setting theory was used to explain how the global news media was able to influence companies' decisions when it came to CSR initiatives and disclosure by putting pressure, influencing the public's view and expectations of the companies. The research was focused on four different retail companies before, during and after the collapse of Rana Plaza. The research was done in three steps; first sustainability reports were analyzed before the collapse of Rana Plaza, second news articles were gathered and analyzed following the collapse, third sustainability reports published after the Rana Plaza collapse were analyzed and compared to the once before the collapse, in order to examine whether the global news media attention has an effect on a company's CSR disclosure and initiatives.

This research contributes to theory and practice in order that as first of its kind to closely explore relationship between media attention and corporate disclosure in the Ready-made garment industry after a catastrophe. Contrary to previous studies, this research examine how media attention affects disclosure practices on a qualitative level, as it examines the content of the disclosure before and after the media coverage following the collapse of Rana Plaza.

This research show, in the case of H&M and Walmart, how preexisting reputation can determine how a company is portrayed to the public by the media when it comes to major events as the collapse of Rana Plaza. A company's corporate disclosures will assist the influence on the society's opinion, as it sends a message to their stakeholders about the company's social and environmental activities. It is a company's reputation that mostly dictates how they will be portrayed in the media, either in a positive or negative way.

The research also suggests a difference between the North American and European based companies, the European being more inclined to increase their disclosure after the collapse and media attention following Rana Plaza, while the North American based companies had a decreased disclosure.

Another take away from this research is that negative media pressure does not necessary increase or improves corporate disclosures. As shown in the empirical data concerning Walmart, which received a majority of negative coverage, they did not improve their disclosure practices. The results lean more in the direction of the opposite, that positive media attention should bring forth an increase in disclosure.

Concerning future research, it would be important to conduct a longitudinal study in order to measure how disclosure changes over time depending on positive or negative media pressure of a company. In this way it would be possible to determine if negative or positive media coverage would give the most increase in corporate disclosures. Furthermore, culture and country of origin as a moderator of the relationship between media coverage and disclosure could bring some more light into the theoretical discussion and practitioners.

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Appendix

Matrix below shows the mapping done for data collection on research questions 1 and 2. Using three different indicators on how well the GRI 3.1 questions were covered. Only the standard areas of GRI as Profile Disclosures and the Performance Indicators have been coded, the Disclosures on Management Approach are excluded.



Green – Fully covered



Orange – Partially covered



Red – Not covered

The data from the reports was analyzed and qualitatively mapped to each disclosure and indicator using the three options above.

Profile Disclosure	GRI Components	H&M		H&M		Walmart		Loblaw		Primark	
		2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013
	Strategy and Analysis										
	Statement from the most senior decisionmaker of the organization (e.g., CEO, chair, or equivalent senior position) about the relevance of sustainability to the organization and its strategy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1.1	Description of key impacts, risks, and opportunities	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1.2											
	Organizational Profile										
2.1	Name of the organization	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2.2	Primary brands, products, and/or services	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Operational structure of the organization, including main divisions, operating companies, subsidiaries, and joint ventures	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2.3											
2.4	Location of organization's headquarters	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Number of countries where the organization operates, and names of countries with either major operations or that are specifically relevant to the sustainability issues covered in the report	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2.5											
2.6	Nature of ownership and legal form	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2.7	Markets served (including geographic breakdown, sectors served, and types of customers/beneficiaries)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Scale of the reporting organization, including:										
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of employees; • Number of operations; • Net sales (for private sector organizations) or net revenues (for public sector organizations); • Total capitalization broken down in terms of debt and equity (for private sector organizations); and • Quantity of products or services provided. In addition to the above, reporting organizations are encouraged to provide additional information, as appropriate, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total assets; • Beneficial ownership (including identity and percentage of ownership of largest shareholders); and • Breakdowns by country/region of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales/revenues by countries/regions that make up 5 percent or more of total revenues; • Costs by countries/regions that make up 5 percent or more of total revenues; and • Employees. 	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2.8	Significant changes during the reporting period regarding size, structure, or ownership including:										
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The location of, or changes in operations, including facility openings, closings, and expansions; and • Changes in the share capital structure and other capital formation, maintenance, and alteration operations (for private sector organizations) 	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2.9											
2.10	Awards received in the reporting period	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

