



# Integrating Corporate Social Responsibility Awareness Into a Retail Management Course

Journal of Marketing Education  
1–10

© The Author(s) 2018

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0273475318754933

journals.sagepub.com/home/jmed



Lauren Beitelspacher<sup>1</sup> and Vikki L Rodgers<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Both students and industry are demanding that marketing instructors incorporate discussions of environmental and social responsibility into their courses. Marketing educators play a critical role in developing the knowledge and skills students need to effectively integrate corporate social responsibility (CSR) into their future business endeavors. Yet many educators struggle with developing meaningful and effective strategies to incorporate CSR authentically into their curricula. The project discussed in this article outlines a learning tool that encourages students to consider CSR in the context of their own purchase decisions while also considering CSR from a broader macro environmental perspective. The main goal is to build a CSR awareness that extends beyond a student's initial purchase exchange. Using retail as the context, students are required to consider CSR challenges including labor laws, environmental regulations, sourcing issues, and so on from the retailer and supplier relationships as well as the retailer and consumer relationships. Based on preliminary results, students' awareness of CSR challenges throughout the supply chain increased and the project proved to be an effective way to engage students in real learning about CSR.

## Keywords

undergraduate education, surveys, teamwork/projects/issues, retailing, corporate social responsibility

Educating tomorrow's business leaders on the importance of good corporate citizenship should be a fundamental premise of all business pedagogy. According to the AACSB International (2004), "the time has come for business schools to renew and revitalize their commitment to the centrality of ethical responsibility at both the individual and corporate levels in preparing business leaders for the twenty-first century." In 2007, the United Nations created the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) initiative to raise the "profile of sustainability in schools around the world and to equip today's business students with the understanding and ability to deliver change tomorrow" (www.unprme.org). This initiative was created on the belief that business schools can play a critical role in the development of future leaders by providing them with the tools necessary to solve the world's biggest problems. The UN PRME has outlined six principles that are critical in driving this social change: Purpose, Values, Method, Research, Partnership, and Dialogue. Principle 3, "Method," involves "creating educational frameworks, materials, processes, and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership" (UN PRME, www.unprme.org). The purpose of the project presented here is to begin to incorporate educational projects and materials regarding social responsibility into courses that may not

typically be considered as a laboratory for social change and sustainability, specifically the retail management course.

Traditional studies of business suggest that the only purpose of a firm is to make a profit and return that profit to shareholders (Friedman, 1970). However, as studies of business evolved, scholars began to realize that a more comprehensive approach was needed, and a stakeholder theory emerged. Stakeholder theory suggests that corporations are responsible for not only meeting the needs of shareholders but also additional stakeholders including: employees, suppliers, customers, lenders, and society at large (Freeman, 1984). Often, for the consumer, an implied contract exists between a business and a society. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) implies that companies have a responsibility to society. There is growing evidence that implementing sustainability as a company goal and viewing its integration as an opportunity rather than a burden can be one of the main drivers for current innovation and future business success (Nidumolu, Prahalad, & Rangaswami, 2009). Furthermore,

<sup>1</sup>Babson College, Babson Park, MA, USA

## Corresponding Author:

Lauren Beitelspacher, Marketing Division, Babson College, Malloy Hall, Suite 212, Babson Park, MA 02457, USA.

Email: lbeitelspacher@babson.edu

there are an increasing number of reports and programs suggesting that consumers demand baseline CSR initiatives from firms and that integrating CSR is a necessity for firms to be competitive today. In fact, according to a recent report, 94% of GenZ consumers (the age of traditional college students currently) believe companies should help address social and environmental issues and 89% would rather buy from a company supporting social and environmental issues (Cone Communications, 2007). Additionally, a recent study by Nielsen Insights (2015), both Millennial and Generation Z consumers overwhelmingly agreed that they are willing to pay more for products and services produced by companies that are committed to social and environmental causes.

Traditional aged college students are now transitioning from being Millennials to Generation Z. The way that Generation Z shops is different from its generational predecessors. For Generation Z, many of their formative years were during the recession, making this generation financial insecure and money savvy. If they are going to spend their money, they expect the brands they associate with to engage in some social good. However, according to the National Retail Federation, “Gen Z still expects quality first, and won’t sacrifice that quality just to make a difference.” In other words, retailers and brands have to uphold the quality and structural integrity of their products, while also maintaining high CSR standards. While this generation of consumers demand CSR integrity of its retailers and the brands retailers sell, they often do not consider all the costs associated with development, implementation, and execution of these strategies. It is important to educate students on the choices that firms, in this case retailers and their supply chain partners, make in order to balance price offerings with maintaining CSR standards.

Consumers often blame the firms’ marketing efforts for societal problems such as pollution, sedentary lifestyles, overconsumption, and misappropriation of resources (Bridges & Wilhelm, 2008; Rountree & Koernig, 2015). However, some scholars and educators suggest that the “marketing discipline is well positioned to take the lead in this endeavor” (Wilhelm, 2008, p. 8) of incorporating CSR into business education. In order for marketing departments to continue to attract majors, marketers can no longer be seen as the culprit for sustainability problems, but rather as a catalyst and opportunity for positive change. In a recent special issue of the *Journal of Marketing Education*, guest editors Crittenden and Ferrell (2013), challenged marketing scholars to cultivate “scholarship that addresses how ethics, business, and society are intertwined in our classrooms and among our students” (p. 83). In this issue, researchers discussed unique strategies for incorporating social responsibility, sustainability, and ethical decision making into a marketing curriculum. With the increased focus on integrating CSR into the marketing curriculum, faculty must consider the best ways to facilitate this learning while also achieving learning objectives.

The purpose of this article is to address the need for incorporating CSR learning into a retail management course. Furthermore, this article highlights a specific project designed for CSR and retailing that provides a unique lens for teaching systems thinking, while increasing awareness of CSR also encouraging students to evaluate their own product evaluations in their purchase behaviors. This article also encourages students to consider life cycle analysis as well to begin to understand the creation of products from inception to consumption (Curran, 1993). It is imperative that today’s student be able to not only decipher the implications of a firm’s CSR strategy but also be able to recognize the environmental and societal consequences of the choices firms make today and in the future. Furthermore, while students must understand the macro consequences of CSR, they must also understand their role as a consumer in affecting change.

The goal of the project was to nurture an awareness of macro-environmental factors that have social, environmental, or economic consequences. Specifically, students were encouraged to look beyond the proclamations of brands and retailers and investigate how items are made and the costs and tradeoffs associated with those decisions. This learning takes place in the context of an undergraduate retail management course. This is an appropriate laboratory for student learning on CSR because students can use this process to see how their actions as a consumer of retailing might have CSR consequences that affect the entire production process. The belief is that once students build an awareness of all the environmental, economic, and social resources that go into the manufacturing of goods, in this instance apparel, it will encourage them to start to rethink their shopping behaviors in the future.

## Systems Thinking

Organizational research suggests that managers often assume a cause and effect relationship between activities and outcomes, assuming a linear relationship between antecedents and consequences (Bolman & Deal, 1994). In the early 1990s, organizations begin using systems thinking as a “language for communicating about complexities and interdependencies,” (Bardoel & Haslett, 2004, p. 113). Systems thinking requires students to concentrate on understanding underlying structures and problems rather than just looking at a direct causal relationship. Systems thinking requires analysis of various components of a system to address a larger issue. Rather than looking at independent relationships and aspects of a problem, systems thinking encourages a more comprehensive look at multiple relationships by addressing each relationship and issue as a component of a larger system. There are a number of features in a system. “As an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something, a system consists of elements, interconnections, and a function or purpose,” (Kelley & Nahser, 2014, p. 636).

We can begin to understand how systems work once we comprehend the relationships between the structure of the system and the associated behaviors.

Systems thinking is important in education as it encouraged students to “think outside the box” (Patel & Mehta, 2017, p. 518). This process encourages reflection on the entire system involved in a complex problem in order to identify opportunities for interventions that ultimately lead to systemic change. A systems approach is especially effective for addressing social challenges, with multifaceted systems (Patel & Mehta, 2017) and fosters meaningful and thoughtful insights into issues of CSR (Kelley & Nahser, 2014).

## Consumerism

The consumption habits of consumers in industrial countries is one of the leading reasons for environmental degradation (Fuchs & Lorek, 2005). In order to minimize these deleterious effects, many governments are focusing on sustainable consumption. Sustainable consumption is

the use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardize the needs of further generations.

In order for countries to engage in more sustainable consumption practices, there needs to be a change in overall consumption patterns and a reduction in consumption levels in industrialized countries (Fuchs & Lorek, 2005).

While most of the efforts toward sustainable consumption take a more high-level approach by focusing on policy initiatives, changes in individual consumer consumption can also be an interesting classroom discussion. Many students consider themselves experts on consumer shopping and spending because they are themselves consumers. However, students, like many consumers, might not often think of the big picture implications of their shopping and how their purchases send ripples throughout the supply chain. Recent research in the role of CSR in consumer purchase decisions indicates that the consumers’ perceptions of a retailer’s CSR activities are important for developing customer loyalty as well as positively influencing consumer purchases (Schramm-Klein, Zentes, Steinmann, Swoboda, & Morschett, 2016). Yet when polled in the classroom, students are often unaware of the different manufacturing and transportation components of creating products that cause prices to increase. It is the same thing with CSR initiatives. Often, students do not consider the origin and distribution of products and services in the development of a CSR strategy. Students may only consider the CSR initiatives of a particular brand or retailer that they engage with directly, but very rarely do they study the companies that those brands or retailers might partner with. Students, as most

consumers, take CSR efforts at face value and believe brands when they tell them of their CSR initiatives. Few actually take the time to investigate the legitimacy of these claims. For example, while one firm might claim that they use only organic materials, their manufacturing partners might violate child labor laws or pay below livable wages. It is important for students to consider as many aspects of CSR in their purchases as possible. In order to encourage real learning, faculty have to offer complex problems that might not always have a clear-cut answer, like how do you compare the impacts of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to that of paying workers a fair and livable wage. Presenting students with complex and realistic problems facilitates problem-based learning (Dochy, Segers, van den Bossche, & Gijbels, 2003).

Furthermore, as business educators, we are charged with developing future business leaders. It is important to educate tomorrow’s leaders on the tenets of CSR as well as the actual execution and “costs” associated with CSR. The retail and textile industry provides a unique opportunity for reflection on consumption habits and sustainable consumption, from a CSR perspective. Recently, the public and the media has increased their attention on the textile industry. For example, the collapse of the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh in 2013 that killed more than 1,100 garment workers created a worldwide media frenzy that caused increased attention to the working conditions of the textile industry. Furthermore, many environmental experts consider the textile and clothing industry to be one of the most polluting industries in the world (Choudhury, 2014). The textile industry was chosen as the focal point for this project because changes in consumer practices can positively affect changes in this important industry. Additionally, it is an industry that most students have participated in as consumers and understand the transactions associated with purchases in this industry. One of the most powerful way to initiate changes within the textile industry is through changing how consumers shop (Austgulen, 2016).

## Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) suggests that our actions are usually outcomes of personal attitudes and beliefs supported by our individual experiences (Ajzen, 1985). Moreover, our behaviors are also outcomes of our subjective norms that motivate us to behave in a way that is perceived favorably by others. This suggests that external influences like peer groups and societal factors shape our individual behavior. The TPB also includes perceived behavioral control. Perceived behavior control is the degree to which people believe that they can enact behaviors successfully. For example, a person high in perceived behavioral control experiences enhanced confidence in his or her ability to perform a specific behavior successfully (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Research in ethical consumption or green practices suggests that while individuals are motivated to purchase ethical or green products, their actual behaviors reflect something different. Chatzidakis, Hibbett, and Smith (2007) suggests that TPB can predict ethical consumerism as ethical consumers are motivated by moral norms and personal ethics. However, additional research argues that even though consumers are inspired by ethical values, their changes in consumption behaviors are less obvious (Auger & Devinney, 2007; Belk, Devinney, & Eckhardt, 2005). While people want to make ethical purchases, when it comes down to it, they do not always follow through.

The aspiration of this classroom project was to try to give students the necessary educational tools to increase awareness about CSR beyond the initial retailer–consumer exchange. The expectation is that by arming students with information, this will increase their awareness, and hopefully, over time, change their beliefs and attitudes about sustainable and ethical products (primarily apparel in this case), thus changing their future consumption behaviors.

### **Project Description Incorporating CSR Into the Retailing Classroom**

To facilitate a more systems thinking approach and encourage students to consider the broader CSR implications as merchandise is moved throughout the supply chain, a project was designed to educate students about the aspects of retailing, production, sourcing, and transportation, that many students may have been unaware of or incorporated into their consideration set in their purchase decisions. The learning tool was developed through the collaboration of an ecology and marketing professor to consider a business-focused project that highlights the economic and environmental impact of production on resource depletion and waste management. Using the ecological lens of examining products through their life cycle, we encouraged students to consider multiple stakeholders in the retail supply chain including, but not limited to “(1) raw material extraction, (2) manufacturing and packaging, (3) consumer use, and (4) decomposition or end of life.” (Rodgers, 2015, p. 401). The major learning goal of the project was to create awareness for students of the CSR implications of the entire go-to-market process for apparel.

Students were told that the purpose of this project was to evaluate the social, environmental, ethical, and economic impact of a retailer of their choosing. Students were required to fully research the retailer (including a complete SWOT analysis). Then students were also asked to diagram 20 upstream channel relationships. This could be 20 unique channel relationships with individual suppliers (e.g., Macy’s to Nike is one relationship, Macy’s to Tommy Hilfiger is another relationship). In addition, they could take a supplier relationship and continue to travel upstream with that particular relationship. For example, students

could trace Nike’s relationships back through manufacturing facilities to sourcing of components to sourcing of raw materials, with each touch point counting as one relationship. Students were also required to identify five unique downstream relationships. These typically involved the ways in which retailer distributed merchandise or connected with consumers. The purpose of the diagram is to facilitate big picture thinking and allow the students to create a visual representation of how all the relationships work together to create a more holistic view of the firm. The bulk of the project, however, required students to identify one CSR issue for each relationship diagrammed. This required them to investigate such issues as transportation challenges, environmental issues, production problems, labor practices, wage practices, sourcing problems, and so on. Students had to use a variety of resources to obtain this. The appendix includes full details of the project including timelines, supporting materials, and a grading rubric.

The final piece of the project required students to write recommendations for how their focal retailers could improve their CSR practices based on their findings. Many of the students made lofty recommendations about moving manufacturing to the United States or completely redoing their supply chains to be more environmentally friendly. However, students did not consider the costs associated with this. In the classroom discussion following the completion of this project, students provided their recommendations. We then considered the costs, both financial and time, associated with executing these strategies. This yielded interesting discussion as students had to consider the cost tradeoffs associated with these CSR initiatives.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Students, in the beginning of the course, were asked about their shopping habits and the importance of CSR in their purchases. This is more abstract thinking and the majority of the discussion centered on the students “idealized” version of themselves, meaning that they thought CSR was very important to them when making apparel purchases. During the project, students had to investigate the actual CSR strategies of retailers and their channel firms, allowing them to engage in more active learning. After the project was over, students were invited to reflect on how this exercise might change their shopping behaviors and perceptions of retailers. This last component encouraged reflection from the students as to how their own shopping behaviors might have CSR implications throughout the retail supply chain. Reflection includes the “intellectual and affective activities that lead to exploring experiences in order to develop understanding and appreciation” (Colomer, Pallisera, Fullana, Burriel, & Fernandez, 2013, p. 364). Reflection is an important component for cognitive development and a catalyst for change in future experiences and behaviors (Lindh & Thorgren, 2016). Including



personal reflection into this exercise allowed students to evaluate their place in the larger economic picture.

The students were able to uncover many unique and interesting CSR challenges facing retailers. Some of the most thought-provoking findings focused on labor practices. Many students found, in the companies they researched, that the facilities where the majority of apparel is manufactured often use child labor and have substandard working conditions. They were also surprised to find that these facilities were not held to the same environmental protection standards as facilities in the United States. Interestingly, students became very aware of sourcing challenges and conducted their own investigations on the sourcing problems of cotton in particular.

This project attempts to encourage students to consider CSR from a retailing perspective, managing CSR challenges both upstream and downstream. As this was the first time this project was used, both qualitative and quantitative data were used to assess the general effectiveness and the impact of the project. While the tone of this article is not to be a methodological paper, we wanted to provide both qualitative and quantitative data to support its effectiveness in achieving its goal of creating awareness.

### Assessment Instrument

In our initial discussions on CSR, before the students began the project, they were asked to complete a survey about their personal shopping habits, their overall CSR awareness, and the role that CSR plays in their decision to make a purchase. The survey applied to apparel only as that was the context for the project. The survey included open-ended questions as well as scaled items. For open-ended questions, students were asked the following two questions:

1. How important are the CSR initiatives of the retailer or brand to you when making an apparel purchase?
2. What are other primary drivers for your apparel purchases?

The scaled questions used a 7-point scale anchored with 1 (*being never consider*) and 7 (*being always consider*). As the goal of this exercise was to facilitate awareness of CSR issues, we wanted to determine a baseline awareness of critical CSR issues in apparel consumption. The following four questions were included in the scaled items:

3. How much do you consider the origin of a product when you are making a purchase?
4. How much do you consider the materials included in a project when making a purchase?
5. How much do you consider the environment in making a purchase?

6. How much do you consider the labor laws associated with the production of a product when you are making a purchase?

Using the same 7-point scale, the students were also surveyed on CSR considerations. These items were adapted from an existing scale by Sen, Bhattacharya, and Korschun (2006). This was used as a proxy for awareness as we were unable to find a measure of CSR awareness. While this is a multi-item scale, we only used one item regarding social responsibility to assess a baseline level of awareness.

### CSR Associations

7. When making a purchase, I consider whether the retailer is a socially responsible company.

The students were also given the same survey instrument after the project to measure the differences in awareness before and after completion of the project. The survey was sent to students via Qualtrics. Student names were collected with the survey to be able to match presurvey and postsurvey responses.

### Sample

This project was conducted with an undergraduate class at a private business school. The school is nonreligious, the average tuition is \$65,000/year, and over 30% of the student population is international. Students came from a variety of majors, with marketing being the most popular (55%). Of the 42 students in the class, 39 responded to the preproject survey. The survey was also given after the project as well, to see if there was a difference in perceptions and changes in CSR awareness. The second survey was given 5 weeks after the first. To retain continuity, only the initial 39 that responded were surveyed. Of those 39 students, 35 students responded for an overall response rate of 83%. Of the 35 students surveyed that were used for both the pretest and posttest, the respondents were 57% female and 43% male. The average age of the student was 20 years and 6 months.

## Results

### Qualitative

The professor for the course recruited two graduate students to assist in the coding of the qualitative data. While intercoder reliability was not assessed directly, the three coders did come to a unanimous consensus on categorizing the responses. For the first question, "How important are the CSR initiatives of the retailer or brand to you when making an apparel purchase?" students overwhelmingly said that CSR was very

**Table 1.** Supply Chain Issues Considered in Apparel Consumption.

	Pre, <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Post, <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Pearson's <i>r</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Materials	4.80 (1.11)	5.97 (0.71)	0.56	1.19
Environmental	5.71 (0.75)	6.49 (0.51)	0.45	1.17
Labor	4.51 (0.89)	5.40 (0.81)	0.40	1.04
CSR awareness	5.40 (0.74)	6.11 (0.63)	0.66	1.03
Sourcing	5.23 (0.81)	5.80 (0.68)	0.73	0.75

Note. CSR = corporate social responsibility. Cohen's *d* is computed for pairwise comparisons following Dunlop, Cortina, Vaslow, and Burke (1996). *N* = 35 for all measures. All differences (*d*) are significant at  $p < .01$ . Items sorted in descending order of Cohen's *d*.

important and they would choose a brand or retailer that was perceived as being having high CSR values over a brand that did not.

Interestingly, while students agreed that CSR was very important, they were varied in their responses of what that looked like. Based on the evaluation of the three coders, two categories emerged.

The first category suggested *sourcing and materials* as an important component of a firm's CSR initiative in driving a student's purchase.

When I make a clothing purchase, I want to make sure that the materials are organic and sourced in a thoughtful way.

When I buy clothes, I really care about where they get the material from. I am a total sucker for clothes that are made from other recycled materials.

I love to shop! I always look to see where stuff is made. I want to make sure it's made in a country that cares about the environment.

The second category that emerged involved more about the apparel *brand's commitment* to the environment and broader community.

I love Patagonia. They are the real deal. They care about the environment and I will always pay more for their product.

I only wear TOMS shoes if I can get away with it. I feel like I am buying cute shoes and helping out someone in need all at once.

I like brands and retailers that have a cause. It makes me feel less guilty about shopping.

For the second question, regarding what other things they considered when making a purchase, they overwhelmingly agreed on *price and fashion*.

The first thing I do is look at the price. If I can't afford it, I don't let myself get attached.

You want to buy things that are fashionable for going out with friends. It's a bonus when you can get a good deal on it.

The qualitative responses did not change much from before and after the project. The biggest difference was that students said they would consider CSR "more" than they did before the project.

### Quantitative

A general mean analysis shows differences in students' overall assessments before and after the project (see Table 1). To test for differences, a set of paired samples *t* tests were conducted between the before and after scores. As indicated in Table 1, the difference between the before and after results are all significant for importance of materials, environment, labor, general CSR awareness, and sourcing (origin), with the largest observed gains in materials and the smallest in sourcing. These results indicate positive changes in students' attitudes, or at least increases in awareness, of the importance of these issues associated with their apparel purchases. Importantly, general CSR awareness increased between times as well.

To test if age, gender, or major had an impact on the changes in attitudes about CSR, a difference variable was calculated for each of the variables tested before and after. Linear regression was used to test for age, gender, or major effects. As there was very little variance in age, age had no effect on changes in attitudes. Major choice had no impact either. The only significant result was the effect of gender on difference in CSR awareness. As noted in Table 2, gender appeared to play a significant role in the change in attitude or general CSR awareness. These results indicate that female students experienced stronger changes in their attitudes about CSR as a result of the project than male students. These results must be interpreted with caution, however, because of the number of statistical tests explored in this analysis and small sample size.

### Discussion

The purpose of this exercise was to find a thoughtful and interesting way to integrate CSR into a traditional business course, specifically retailing. Today's college student expects companies to engage in positive and ethical business practices. However, students, like most consumers, might fail to

**Table 2.** Differences in Corporate Social Responsibility Awareness Changes across Women and Men.

	<i>n</i>	Pre, <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Post, <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Difference	Pearson's <i>r</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Women	20	5.25 (0.64)	6.15 (0.59)	0.90	0.74	1.46
Men	15	5.60 (0.83)	6.07 (0.70)	0.47	0.66	0.60
<i>t</i>				2.24		
<i>p</i>				0.034		
Cohen's <i>d</i>				0.80		

Note. The *t* test comparing differences across gender groups assumed unequal variances.

consider the partner firms that retailers work with in order to manufacture and distribute the products we buy. Furthermore, by constantly demanding lower prices, as consumers, we are putting tremendous pressures on retailers and manufacturers to use inferior materials, engage in unethical practices, pay lower wages, or use inappropriate production strategies to maintain lower price points. Students were encouraged to take a more systems thinking approach to the production and distribution of apparel, encouraging them to think beyond the initial retail exchange and perceptions of the brand they purchased. Students had to consider the materials, sourcing, labor, distribution, and other variables that are included in the purchases that they make. This exercise extends beyond the classroom and the students' own purchase behaviors, but also influences (hopefully) how they will consider a broader consideration set when they are faced with these types of decisions throughout their careers.

This exercise attempted to increase CSR awareness and encourage students to consider the bigger picture of every day purchases, specifically apparel. Even students who considered themselves very knowledgeable about CSR experienced changes in their CSR awareness and hopefully future purchase behaviors. The results indicate that their awareness and consideration about sourcing, materials, the environment, and labor laws related to apparel purchases changed significantly before and after this project was administered. More important, students' general CSR awareness improved as well, with the biggest change coming from the male students. A data collection were attempted at a later point, 2 months after the project, to see if the results were enduring, especially through the holidays. Unfortunately, the response rate was too low to be usable. Future research could follow students for a longer period to determine if this project changes behaviors over an extended period.

This project is extremely versatile. It provides students a unique context for exploring CSR initiatives. It also encourages self-reflection on students about their own consumption and product behavior. Finally, the project allows students to see CSR in action, versus only reflecting on a company's own self-reporting of CSR.

Some specific examples of how this project could be applied to other courses are as follows:

### *Brand Management*

Building a brand requires multiple inputs. Sometimes firms are at the mercy of their channel partners and consumers in how their brand is developed. Students could apply this project to see how the CSR actions of a firm's channel partners affect the value of the focal firm's brand.

### *Supply Chain Management*

Supply chain classes often focus on the logistics or operations components of moving merchandise. By incorporating this exercise, students can see how CSR strategies get adopted or thwarted as merchandise flows down and up the supply chain.

### *Promotions*

While this might not be intuitive, a promotions (or integrated marketing communication) professor could adapt this project to see how the promotion of one partner's CSR initiatives get absorbed into another company's promotion or integrated marketing communication strategy.

As with any study, there are limitations. A major limitation of this study is that it was conducted in one class on one occasion. In order to prove the true effectiveness of this exercise, it needs to be conducted in multiple classes over time. Additionally, the student population at this particular college might approach apparel purchases differently than other student populations. It would also be interesting to see how the responses vary across different teaching type (online, in class, hybrid) as well as student level (undergraduate vs. graduate). Finally, because the survey included student names, there may have been a demand effect. The use of a within-subject design likely mitigated this threat to some degree.

In conclusion, the project introduced here provides a novel method of motivating students to dig deeply into supply chains that they have benefitted from but may not yet have thought deeply about. In so doing, students not only deepen their understanding of retailing but they also enhance their awareness of that every day consumer decision have global ramifications. It is hoped that through projects like these, we can enhance our students' understanding of these issues and thus better prepare them to be business leaders in our increasingly connected world.

## Appendix

### Detailed Project Description

*Individual Retail CSR Analysis.* You will be required to evaluate the social, environmental, ethical and economic (CSR) impact of a retailer of your choosing. Importantly, you will also need to identify opportunities for this retailer to improve its CSR initiatives. You will need to engage in comprehensive research to capture a 360° view of the firm.

The components of the project are as follows:

1. Choose the retailer of your choice.
2. Diagram 20 upstream connections. This can be 20 different relationships with unique suppliers, or you could trace one relationship with a supplier several connections back through manufacturers and raw materials.
3. Diagram 5 downstream connections (e.g., to a distribution center, direct to consumer via store, through an app, through an online format, etc.).
4. For each of these connections, identify one potential CSR (social, environmental, economic, or sustainability) issue. Make sure it is clear which connection point you are referencing.
5. Based on this analysis, (a) articulate what the retailer is doing well from a CSR perspective and (b) make recommendations for how the retailer can improve from a CSR perspective.

*Purpose.* The purpose of the project is to encourage students to critically analyze the CSR impact of merchandise as it moves throughout the supply chain. Students are encouraged to consider how the actions of one channel partner influences other channel partners. The ultimate goal is to increase student awareness of all of the critical societal, environmental, and economic components included in every day purchases such as apparel. Ultimately, students should be more thoughtful in their own consumption and consider all of the CSR factors that go into the creation and delivery of products they buy.

*Preproject Work.* Case study “Patagonia’s Sustainability Strategy” by Szeleky and Dossa, “Seventh Generation: The Marketside Offer” by Raugglet and Stefanov, and “Zara Fast Fashion” by Ghemawat and Nueno.

*Deliverable.* As noted, students were asked to identify 20 upstream relationships form a focal retailer and 5 downstream relationships. For each of these relationships, students were asked to articulate one SEERS issue that the retailer might face with that channel partner. Issues could involve, economic, environmental, ethical, or social challenges. Many students focused specifically on sourcing and labor issues.

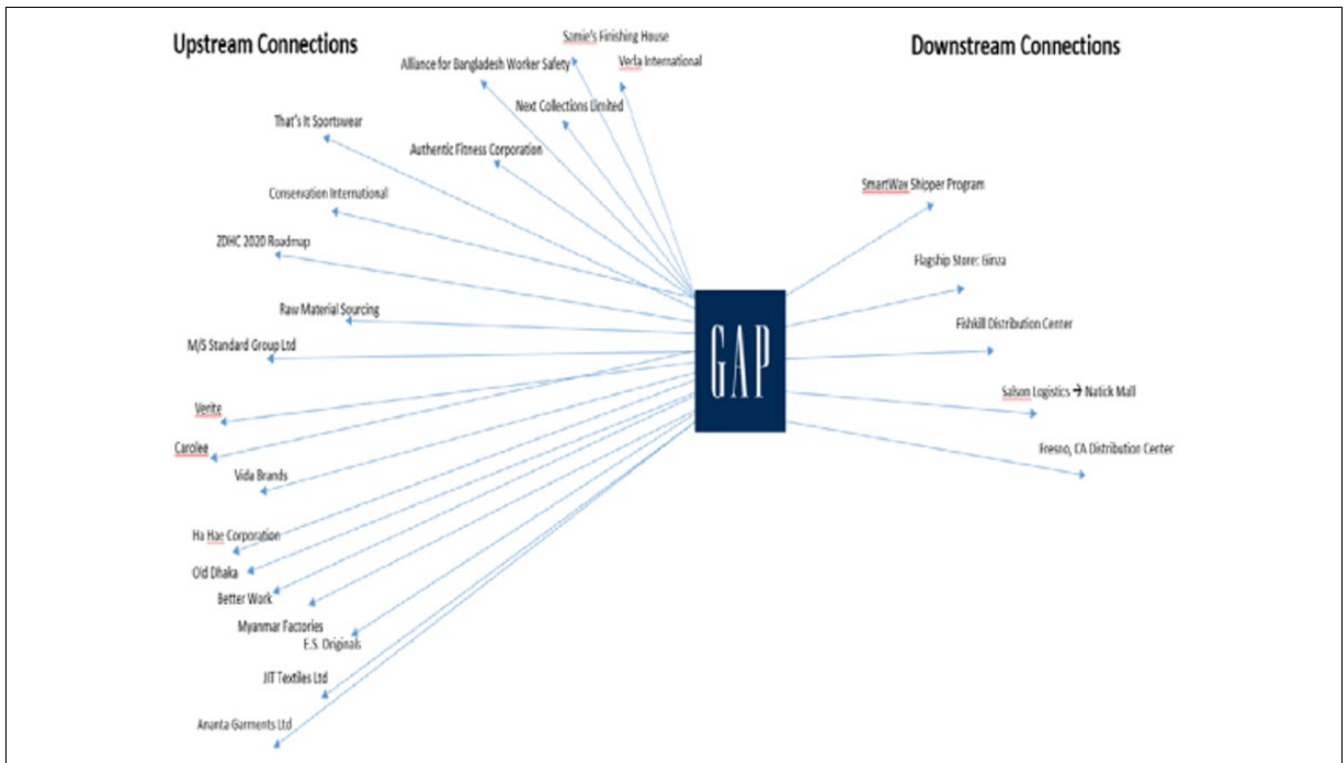
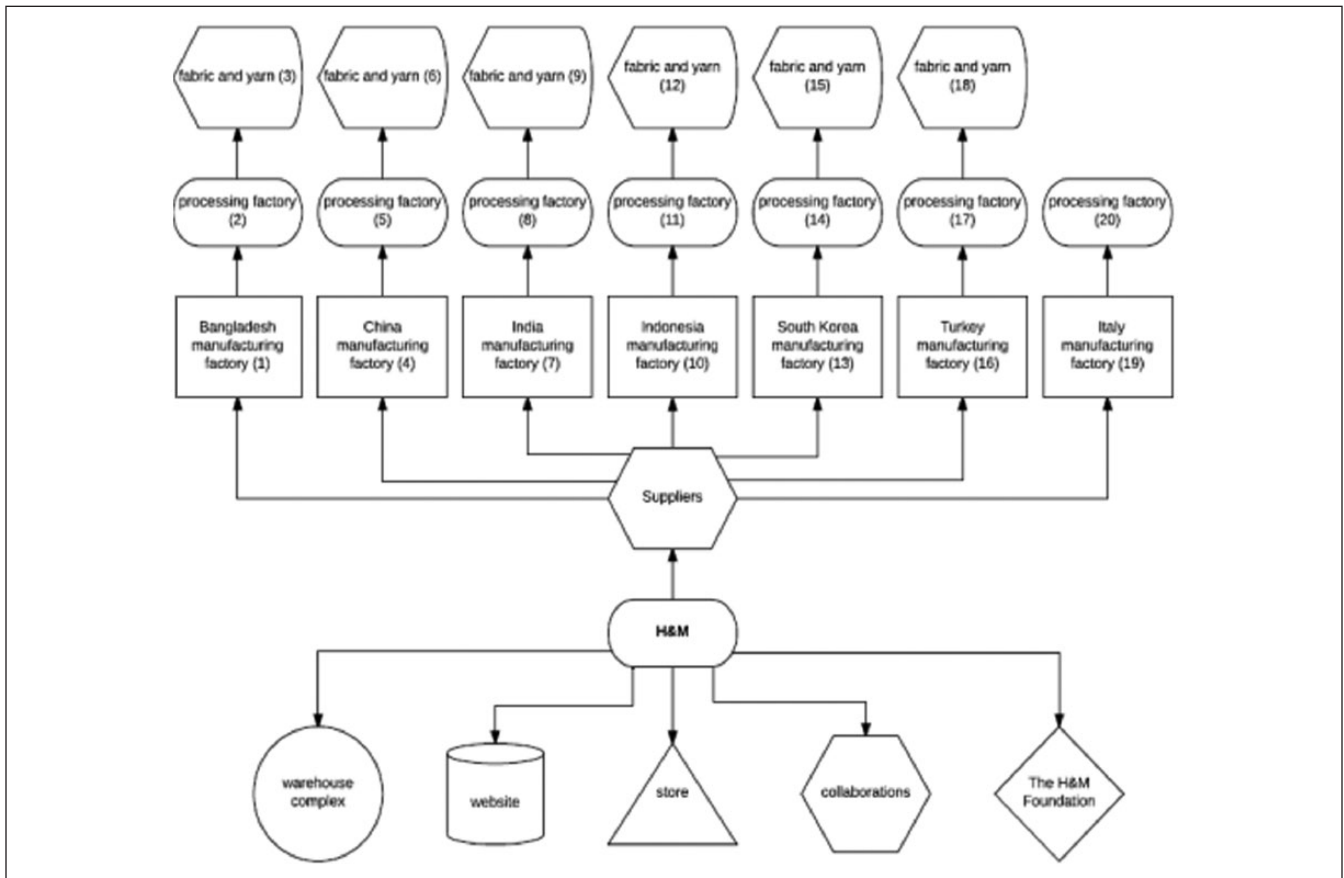
Students were asked to diagram the relationships as well as write about the specific SEERS issue associated with the relationship.

### Grading Rubric

Upstream relationships	Accurate diagramming (including appropriate research): 15%	Assessment of corporate social responsibility challenges in each relationship: 30%
Downstream relationships	Accurate diagramming (including appropriate research): 10%	Assessment of corporate social responsibility challenges in each relationship: 20%
Recommendations	Feasibility, appropriateness, relevance: 25%	



Below some examples of the diagrams students submitted with this project.



## Acknowledgments

The authors gratefully acknowledge Babson College for providing interesting opportunities for teaching and collaboration. The authors would also especially like to thank Don Bacon, editor of the *Journal of Marketing Education*, for managing the review and editorially process. We are indebted to the anonymous reviewers and editor for the thoughtful feedback.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## References

- AACSB International. (2004). *Ethics education in business schools: Report of the Ethics Education Task Force to AACSB International's board of directors*. Retrieved from <http://www.aacsb.edu/~media/AACSB/Publications/research-reports/ethics-education.ashx>
- Ajzen, I. (1985). *From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior*. Berlin, Germany: Springer-Verlag.
- Auger, P., & Devinney, T. M. (2007). Do what consumers say matter? The misalignment of preferences with unconstrained ethical intentions. *Journal of Business Ethics, 76*, 361-383.
- Austgulen, M. H. (2016). Environmentally sustainable textile consumption: What characterizes the political textile consumers? *Journal of Consumer Policy, 39*, 441-466.
- Bardoel, E. A., & Haslett, T. (2004). Teaching and learning: Success to the successful: The use of systems thinking tools in teaching OB. *Organization Management Journal, 1*, 112-124.
- Belk, R., Deviney, T. M., & Eckhardt, G. (2005). Consumer ethics across cultures. *Consumption Markets & Culture, 8*, 275-289.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1994). The organization as theater. In H. Tsoukas (Ed.), *New thinking in organizational behavior: From social engineering to reflective actin* (pp. 279-294). Oxford, England: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Bridges, C. M., & Wilhelm, W. B. (2008). Going beyond green: The "why and how" of integrating sustainability into the marketing curriculum. *Journal of Marketing Education, 30*, 3-46.
- Chatzidakis, A., Hibbett, S., & Smith, A. P. (2007). Why people don't take their concerns about fair trade to the supermarket: The role of neutralisation. *Journal of Business Ethics, 74*, 89-100.
- Choudhury, A. K. R. (2014). Environmental impacts of the textile industry and its assessment through life cycle assessment. In S. S. Muthu (Ed.), *Roadmap to sustainable textiles and clothing, environmental and social aspects of textiles and clothing supply chain* (pp. 1-39). Singapore: Springer.
- Colomer, J., Pallisera, M., Fullana, J., Burriel, M. P., & Fernandez, R. (2013). Reflective learning in higher education. *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences, 93*, 364-370.
- Cone Communications. (2017). *2017 Cone GEN Z CSR study: How to speak Z*. Retrieved from [www.conecomm.com/2017-conegen-z-csr-study-pdf](http://www.conecomm.com/2017-conegen-z-csr-study-pdf)
- Crittenden, V. L., & Ferrell, L. K. (2013). The editors' corner. *Journal of Marketing Education, 35*, 83-84.
- Curran, M. A. (1993). Broad-based environmental life cycle assessment. *Environmental Science & Technology, 27*, 430-436.
- Dochy, F., Segers, M., van den Bossche, P., & Gijbels, D. (2003). Effects of problem-based learning: A meta-analysis. *Learning and Instruction, 13*, 533-568.
- Dunlop, W. P., Cortina, J. M., Vaslow, J. B., & Burke, M. J. (1996). Meta-analysis of experiments with matched groups or repeated measures designs. *Psychological Methods, 1*, 170-177.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Marshfield, MA: Pittman.
- Friedman, M. (1970, September 13). The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits. *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.colorado.edu/student-groups/libertarians/issues/friedman-soc-resp-business.html>
- Fuchs, D. A., & Lorek, S. J. (2005). Sustainable consumption governance: A history of promises and failures. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 28*, 261-288.
- Kelley, S., & Nahser, R. (2014). Developing sustainable strategies: Foundations, method, and pedagogy. *Journal of Business Ethics, 123*, 631-644.
- Lindh, I., & Thorgren, S. (2016). Critical event recognition: An extended view of reflective learning. *Management Learning, 47*, 525-542.
- Nidumolu, R., Prahalad, C. K., & Rangaswami, M. R. (2009, September). Why sustainability is now the key driver of innovation. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2009/09/why-sustainability-is-now-the-key-driver-of-innovation>
- Nielsen Insights. (2015). *Green generation: Millennials say sustainability is a shopping priority*. Retrieved from <http://www.nielsen.com/in/en/insights/news/2015/green-generation-millennials-say-sustainability-is-a-shopping-priority.html>
- Patel, S., & Mehta, K. (2017). Systems, design, and entrepreneurial thinking: Comparative frameworks. *Systemic Practice and Action Research, 30*, 515-533.
- Rodgers, V. L. (2015). A SEERS approach to analyzing impact: Using a science research project to evaluate product life cycle sustainability. In V. Crittenden, N. Karst, R. Sleggers, & K. Esper (Eds.), *Evolving entrepreneurial education: Innovation in the Babson Classroom* (pp. 399-409). Bingley, England: Emerald.
- Rountree, M. M., & Koernig, S. K. (2015). Values-based education for sustainability marketers: Two approaches for enhancing student social consciousness. *Journal of Marketing Education, 37*, 5-24.
- Schramm-Klein, H., Zentes, J., Steinmann, S., Swoboda, B., & Morschett, D. (2016). Retailer corporate social responsibility is relevant to consumer behavior. *Business & Society, 55*, 550-575.
- Sen, S., Bhattacharya, C. B., & Korschun, D. (2006). The role of corporate social responsibility in strengthening multiple stakeholder relationships: A field experiment. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 34*, 158-166.
- Wilhelm, W. B. (2008). Marketing education for sustainability. *Journal of Advancement for Marketing Education, 13*, 8-20.