Bluewashing: assessment of the state of art

Bluewashing: apreciação do estado da arte

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Abstract
This research aims to evaluate the academic production concerning the term "bluewashing". To achieve this goal, bibliometric research was carried out, associated with a critical analysis, targeting the academic publications on the bluewashing term in the acknowledged scientific databases worldwide (Proquest, Web of Science, Capes, Scopus, Scielo and Spell). That allowed a general mapping of what has been produced on the subject, both quality and quantity, not only to consolidate what has been studied so far, but also to enable a critical analysis to advance the subject in the academy and practice. Therefore, it has been possible to realize that the bluewashing subject, despite responding for a relevant production, is still not very studied by the academy, especially in depth, or even in an integrated and consensus way. Considering this, several discussions were made, and new studies are encouraged.
Keywords: false marketing discourse; bluewashing; academic production.

Resumo
O trabalho teve como objetivo avaliar a produção acadêmica sobre o termo *bluewashing*. Para tanto, foi realizado um levantamento bibliográfico, associado a uma análise crítica, visando as publicações acadêmicas sobre o termo *bluewashing* nas bases de dados científicas reconhecidas mundialmente (Proquest, Web of Science, Capes, Scopus, Scielo e Spell). Isso permitiu um mapeamento geral do que foi produzido sobre o assunto, tanto qualitativa quanto quantitativamente, não só para consolidar o que foi estudado até então, mas também para possibilitar uma análise crítica para avançar o tema na academia e na prática. Assim, foi possível perceber que o tema *bluewashing*, apesar de responder por uma produção relevante, ainda é pouco estudado pela academia, principalmente em profundidade, ou mesmo de forma integrada e consensual. Diante disso, várias discussões foram feitas e novos estudos incentivados.
Palavras-chave: falso discurso mercadológico; bluewashing; produção acadêmica.

1 Introduction

Discussions about the scope of organizational responsibility, both in the social and environmental dimensions, started in the early 20th Century. Analyzing it through the management knowledge area, it is observable that it begins from the Structuralist Approach and

is consolidated with the Systemic Approach, a movement aligned with the changes that occurred in the organization´s business model, which are no longer seen as closed systems, to be understood as open systems.

Following this movement, the marketing area also incorporated such questions in its own discussions, with special attention to considerate the possible consequences of its practices, especially those of a negative nature (Kotler & Levy, 1969). Consequently, reflections regarding these points increased in the 1960s, contributing to the emergence of new terms, such as societal marketing (Kotler & Levy, 1971; Andreoli, Lima & Minciotti, 2018). From this, the need for greater attention and concerning their practices both in management and marketing gained strength in the organizations.

Markets and society also began to discuss these issues and, as a result, started to demand more responsible actions from organizations, corroborating the previously reported efforts (Andreoli & Batista, 2020; Cruvinel *et al.*, 2020). Thus, as a reaction to the new demands of consumers, market and society, organizations have begun an effort to review their current actions and engage themselves to ensure their intentions toward more responsible practices (Andreoli & Nogueira, 2021; Szilagyi *et al.*, 2022).

Despite this, not all organizations have been able to adequately respond to the new demands or even are willing to face this challenge (Acquier, Gonde & Pasquero, 2011; Andreoli, Costa & Prearo, 2022). In this sense, many organizations choose to take an easier path to be aligned with the market demands, by disseminating mistaken or erroneous discourses about their postures that do not match their current actions (Zhaefpeykan, 2021; Andreoli & Batista, 2020; Andreoli & Nogueira, 2021; Andreoli, Costa & Prearo, 2022; Sun and Shi, 2022).

In this context, several false marketing discourses started to appear, popularly branded with the suffix "washing" added to it, which resembles the meaning of cleaning, lifting, or making up something. Some of these occurrences are, for example, "whitewashing", the seminal one, related to reputation (Zhaefpeykan, 2021), "greenwashing" which is related to the environment or green aspect (Andreoli, Costa & Prearo, 2022; Sun and Shi, 2022), and "bluewashing", referring to society or social factors (Andreoli & Nogueira, 2021; Sailer, Wilfing & Straus, 2022).

It should be noted that a similar proposal for assessing the state of the art has already been made in relation to the theme of greenwashing (Andreoli, Crespo & Minciotti, 2017), remaining as a research gap, however, the scope of bluewashing. Based on what was presented at this moment, this research aims to evaluate the academic production concerning the term "bluewashing", carried out through bibliometric research, associated with a critical analysis, targeting the academic publications that include the bluewashing subject.

2 Social discussion, Corporate Social Responsibility and Bluewashing

The first discussions around Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) started in 1930, but in a very specific and dispersed way (Carroll, 1999; Carroll, 2021). These seminal studies shed light on the theme and contributed to awakening the need to discuss organizational accountability, albeit initially in a more comprehensive way. In 1950 the term was formalized when the first ideas about the concept and practice of organizational accountability were assumed as a modern construct (Carroll, 1999; Carroll, 2021).

It was during this period that the first book on the theme, considered a landmark, was launched, "Social Responsibilities of the Businessman", published by Bowen (1953). The book

discusses how businesses are vital centers of power and decision-making, and how decisions taken by managers substantially influence the life of society in general (Acquier, Gonde & Pasquero, 2011). In other words, attention is drawn to the fact that the consequences of the actions of companies and entrepreneurs go beyond the merely profitable dimensions.

As a result of this argument, Bowen (1953) proposes the first definition of corporate social responsibility, referring to the obligations that must permeate policies, decision-making, and the follow-up of business actions, desirably in terms of the objectives and values for society. Thus, the author is emphatic when stating that social awareness, or organizational accountability, should be essential for business performance.

Despite this, the organizational reactions to this new market scenario were not adequate (Acquier, Gonde & Pasquero, 2011; Andreoli, Costa & Prearo, 2022). In this sense, several cases of false organizational discourses with no correspondence in practical actions were disclosed, a practice that started to be disseminated under the name of washing (Zhaefpeykan, 2021; Andreoli & Batista, 2020; Andreoli & Nogueira, 2021; Andreoli, Costa & Prearo, 2022; Sun and Shi, 2022).

The "washing" terms had their origin with the seminal expression of whitewashing, which means a process of concealing one's errors and deceptions, causing one's reputation to remain clean (Zhaefpeykan, 2021). It can also be understood as a corporate deception that remains hidden, in other words, washed (Hu, Dou & Wang, 2019). Another connotation comes from the habit of painting walls with white color, obtained at low cost with calcium oxide (lime), to superficially hide imperfections (Andreoli, 2022). The Cambridge dictionary (2020) includes the terms hide or attempt to hide facts about a situation or even wrong or illegal actions. Another understanding is related to window-dressing, with a similar meaning, but in reference to the showcase or façade (Hu, Dou & Wang, 2019).

After that, other applications of the term whitewashing started to emerge, such as greenwashing and bluewashing, this last, the focus of this study. Bluewashing is the term used when products, brands, or even the company itself are shown to be socially correct when they are not (Andreoli & Nogueira, 2021; Sailer, Wilfing & Straus, 2022).

The bluewashing issue becomes stronger with the evidence that many organizations´ social actions publicized and broadcasted in the media are not backed up or proven (Amer, 2018; Pope & Wareaas, 2016). Questions about this issue involve what is disclosed in terms of organizational discourses (Wagner, 2014; Andreoli & Nogueira, 2021), corporate social responsibility - CSR (Pomering & Johnson, 2009; Pope & Wareaas, 2016), sustainability reporting (Manetti & Toccafondi, 2012), cooperation with NGOs – non-governmental organizations (Linton, 2008 Krause & Haunschild, 2018), and, more prominently, the organization's adherence (and linkage or association) to the Global Pact of United Nation (Berliner & Prakash, 2014; Abdelzaher, Fernandez & Schneper, 2019).

In other words, according to the aforementioned authors, the action of bluewashing stands out when the organization uses any feature or highlights some benefit related to social issues but fails to prove their veracity in terms of actions. Thus, bluewashing can be seen as a marketing trick, an intentional action to mislead or deceive consumers with false claims about organization's social posture, by polishing, painting, or masking the product, brand or organizational image (Lehntonen, 2013; Abdelzaher, Fernandez & Schneper, 2019; Andreoli & Nogueira, 2021).

3 Method

To achieve the proposed goal, bibliometric research was carried out, associated with a critical analysis, targeting the academic publications that include the bluewashing subject. That allowed a general mapping of what has been produced on the subject, both quality and quantity, not only to consolidate what has been studied so far, but also to enable a critical analysis to advance the subject in the academy and practice. A similar methodological procedure adopted by the related literature was replicated here, who's aimed to assess the state of the art of the theme of greenwashing (Andreoli, Crespo & Minciotti, 2017).

There are different recommendations for conducting a bibliometric review of the literature, such as PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyzes), which is composed of 27 assessment items (checklist) and a flowchart with three main strategic blocks – 1. Identification; 2. Selection; and 3. Inclusion. Kitchenham (2004) proposes a similar structure summarizing the revision steps in three main phases: 1. Planning the Review (describe the need for a review and develop a review protocol); 2. Conducting the Review (a stage in which the search, selection, evaluation, extraction, and elaboration of the synthesis of the collected data are carried out); and Reporting the Review (with the presentation and analysis of results). The present work adopted the steps proposed by Kitchenham (2004).

3.1 Planning the Review

Bluewashing, as well as all the 'washing' themes, configures a relatively new area of discussion in academia. Since there is no consolidation of the bluewashing term, the different forms or variations of the term were considered for search, namely, 'blue washing', 'bluewash', and 'blue wash'. The databases used for the search were Proquest, Web of Science, Scopus, Scielo, Capes Journal Portal and Spell platforms, as they represent the most complete academic databases.

The inclusion criteria were publications in journals of business management or related areas. The Qualis 2019 rating was considered to evaluate the publications, considering the study period (end of 2019). It was also considered publications where bluewashing was used as a theory or related to market and societal practices. Only publications available on the internet and written in English, Portuguese or Spanish were considered. The timespan for the search was until 2019. The exclusion criteria were all the other forms of publications such as reports, conference articles, book chapters, dissertations, and theses. It is worth noting that all search options provided by each platform above mentioned were performed.

The data extracted were consolidated in an Excel Spreadsheet for further analysis. All the duplicated articles were discarded, and initial analysis was done to define the set of publications that would be used for the analysis. Several points of interest were used to conduct and consolidate the results, such as title, year of publication, journal, authorship, keywords, objective, conceptual bases, methodological procedure, mentions of the term, among others. Additionally, some programs for data analysis were used, especially in terms of generating illustrative representations, such as yEd Live and Wordle.

3.2 Conducting the Review

The selection of articles for final inclusion in the study followed the previously defined exclusion criteria. To perform the search in the selected databases the same search engine was ran with the term 'bluewashing' and similar ones. The search was done in September/2019. Applying the search engines in the selected databases, the total number of publications was271, divided into Capes (172), Proquest (86), Scopus (6), and Web of Science (7). There were no occurrences in Scielo and Spell database. Table 1 shows the detailed distribution among the databases.

Table 1
Results by search and platform

	Bluewashing	Bluewash	Blue washing	Blue wash	Total
Capes	84	52	31	5	172
Proquest	36	20	20	10	86
Scopus	3	1	2	0	6
Web of Science	4	1	2	0	7
Total	127	74	55	15	271
				Total without duplication	192

Source: Developed by the author.

Despite the 271 results found, several duplicity cases were noted, which were eliminated later, resulting in **192 articles**. Then, a reanalysis was performed in two main points: first, if the results found were in fact academic articles published in business journals or related fields, and second, if the search terms were checked in all filtered articles. By doing so, it was possible to eliminate more 34 results: 21 for not being academic publications, 7 that were only available in German language, and 6 more that were impossible to track. Also, 24 were academic articles without any citation of the terms in the text (although some have included as reference an article whose title had one of the searched terms). So, those 58 results were discarded, resulting in 134 articles related to bluewashing themes**,** that were published in 96 different academic journals.

Of those 134 articles, 60 of them were published in 53 academic journals that were not ranked in Qualis 2019 criteria. Although not the subject of analysis of this study, it should be mentioned that from these 60 articles, almost all only mention one of the searched terms, either once (47) or twice (12). Only one article works with the theme, mentioning the terms several times in the course of work. The range of these publication was from 2002 to 2019.

After applying all the including and excluding criteria, a total of **74 articles published in 43 different academic journals, all ranked in Qualis 2019 classification, were selected for the final analysis.**

4 Analysis of the results

Concerning the 74 analyzed articles publication date, it has been noted that Bluewashing theme is a relatively recent subject, with its research being intensified over the years. So, the oldest publication dates from 2003, and the latest from 2019. 2016 presented the greatest publication number, with 9 articles, followed by 2018 and 2013, both with 8 articles each. The results evidenced the bluewashing timeline, which production progresses indeed from 2013 on.

Image 1

Publication Evolution
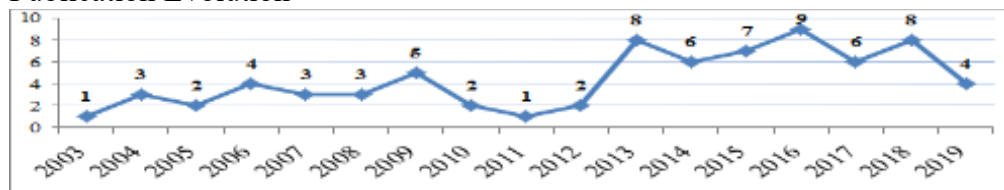
Source: Developed by the author.

Moreover, the subject relevance can be seen when one realizes the largest portion of articles (50) was published in 23 journals, rated, according to the 2019 Qualis list, as A1. Nine articles were published in seven journals rated as A2, besides ten published in nine journals rated as A3, and two published in two journals rated as A4. Another three publications are divided in two journals with B1 and B3 rating. Thus, bluewashing and related discussions seem to be notorious.

Image 2
Articles and journals 2019 Qualis

Qualis 2019	Articles	Journals
A1	50	23
A2	9	7
A3	10	9
A4	2	2
B1	1	1
B3	2	1
Total	74	43
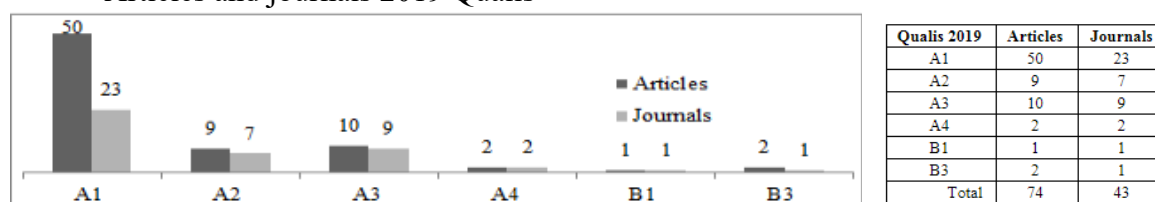
Source: Developed by the author.

Analyzing the recurrence of the journals, 'Journal Business Ethics' stood out, with 14 publications. It is interesting to point out that the same result was found in relation to the greenwashing theme, somehow related, as reported by Andreoli, Crespo and Minciotti (2017). Next, was 'Business & Society' with four articles published, and both 'Development' and 'Globalizations', with three articles each. Other eleven journals had published two articles each: 'Community Development Journal', 'Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management', 'Geoforum', 'Global Governance', 'Journal of Business Research', 'Journal of Cleaner Production', 'Management Decision', 'Organization', 'Organization & Environment', 'Social Responsibility Journal' and 'Third World Quarterly'. In view of this, it becomes clear the adequate association between the bluewashing theme and the scope of the journals in which the selected articles were published, i.e., journals that aims to discuss business theories and practices in more systemic or integrated way, concerning their impacts in all society and environment.

The propagation capacity was also examined, by looking for the citation number informed by both ResearchGate and Scholar Google, in September 2019. First, searching in ResearchGate, 2.489 citations were summed, ranging from 0 to 196, with an average of approximately 34 citations. The highlight was an article published in 'Long Range Planning' journal, in 2007, with 196 citations (named "Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility and Value Creation among Large Firms: Lessons from the Spanish Experience"). Followed by other four articles that achieved around 120 to 130 citations. Next, looking in Scholar Google, an easier and broader platform, 4.658 citations were summed, ranging from 0 to 513, with an average of approximately 63 citations. The first place remained, but with amazing 513 citations,

followed by three more articles that achieved from 210 to almost 300 citations, two of which were also in the previous result.

Table 2
Most cited articles

Article Title	RG	SG	Journal	Year
Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility and Value Creation among Large Firms: Lessons from the Spanish Experience	**196**	513	Long Range Planning	2007
Manufacturing amnesia: Corporate Social Responsibility in South Africa.	**127**	222	International Affairs	2005
The De-Radicalization of Corporate Social Responsibility	**127**	211	Critical Sociology	2004
Conserving wild fish in a sea of market-based efforts	**125**	156	Oryx	2009
The Construction of Corporate Social Responsibility in Network Societies: A Communication View	**120**	170	Journal of Business Ethics	2013
*Putting sustainability into supply chain management	3	**294**	Supply Chain Management	2014

Source: Developed by the author.

Most of the articles (32) were written by two authors, followed by 26 written by a single author. Other 8 articles were written by three authors, and the remaining 8 by four or more. 155 different authors were accounted for, among which only seven are repeated, being two authors with three articles each (Iñaki Heras-Saizarbitoria and Olivier Boiral), and five other authors with two articles each (Ans Kolk, Fabienne Fortanier, Francesco Testa, Jennifer Jacquet and John Hocevar). It is interesting to mention that Iñaki Heras-Saizarbitoria, Olivier Boiral and Francisco Testa co-authored two articles, and the two first wrote three articles together. The same happened to Fabienne Fortanier and Ans Kolk, and Jennifer Jacquet and John Hocevar, co-authors in two articles, the second along with several other authors. These interactions are shown in the network above.

Image 3
Most prominent authors and their interactions
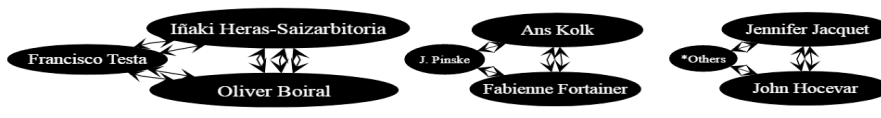
Source: Developed by the author, using yEd Live.

Among these seven more prominent authors, according to ResearchGate information, five of them work in universities, being four in the business area and one in environmental studies, as well three in European countries (Spain, Netherlands and Italy) and two in North America (United States and Canada); the other two work in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Greenpeace International. A balance was noted about the gender of these researchers: four men and three women. These authors were graded in a range of 12.37 to 37.41, according to ResearchGate Score, with an average of 27.18 (in September 2019). This suggests, firstly, a certain plurality in the bluewashing theme development, a little more concentrated in the university sphere and business, especially in North America and Europe; and secondly, the authors' ability as researchers of relevance and impact in the academic setting.

From the 74 analyzed articles, 60 of them had <u>keywords</u>, adding a total of 330 keywords, which were analyzed in terms of frequency. The most recurrent keyword, found 33 times, was Corporate social responsibility (15), or its abbreviation, alone (5) or with another word (8), like CSR performance or CSR standards. Also, similar terms were included in this counting (6), like Social responsibility, Corporate responsibility or Taking responsibility. Next, the most recurrent keywords (18) were United Nations Global Compact and related (14), or United Nation (4). In third place, were those related to Sustainability or Sustainable (14), alone or with similar terms, like Sustainable development (4) or Sustainability report (3). Thereafter were found Human rights and associated terms (11). The other keywords that were repeated at least four times were: Legitimacy (5), Global governance (5) and Governance (4), Voluntary and related (5), like Voluntary initiatives, and Stakeholder and related (5), like Stakeholder pressure. It is interesting to mention that the bluewashing terms only appeared twice.

Image 4
Most frequent keywords

Corporate social responsibility (33)
United Nations Global Compact (18)
Sustainability or Sustainable (14)
Human rights (11)

Source: Developed by the author.

In addition, each word was analyzed separately, and not each keyword, i.e., if a keyword had more than one word, each of these words ended up being accounted individually. For instance, the social responsibility keyword was accounted for as two single words, social and responsibility. Thus, the 330 identified keywords totaled 662 different words, as exposed in the cloud below, created on the Wordle software.

Image 5
Word cloud – all words of keywords

Source: Developed by the author, using Wordle software.

The most frequently found words (that were repeated at least eight times) were: Corporate and Social, with 27 repetitions each, Responsible (26), Global (24), Sustainable (16), Governance (14), CSR (14), Right (12), Human (11), Compact (11), Management (10), Nations

(9), Development (8) and United (8). Again, all words found were used to form a cloud, but now restricted to the 30 most frequent words.

**Image 6**
Word cloud – most frequent words of keywords

Source: Developed by the author, using Wordle program.

Concerning the central discussion of the articles, some subjects were recurrent. First, as expected, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was identified in 23 articles, specially related to macro or global themes (11), such as social justice or power, human rights, capitalism, to corporate perspective (5) or to stakeholders' view (4). CSR-washing (2) and consumer skepticism (2) were also among those. Second, also as predicted, the United Nation and its Global Compact (UNGC) were detected in 17 articles, with a plurality of related themes, such as CSR itself (5), ethical issues (4), global aspects (3), human rights (3) and others. In third place, themes related to sustainable were identified (11), subdivided in aquaculture, sustainable seafood and fisheries certification, as Marine Stewardship Council/MSC (5); Sustainable Supply Chain Management/SSCM (2); sustainable development (2), and, finally, sustainable corporation (1) and greenwashing (1). Next, some multi-stakeholders' discussions were noticed (4).

Image 7
Most recurrent main discussions
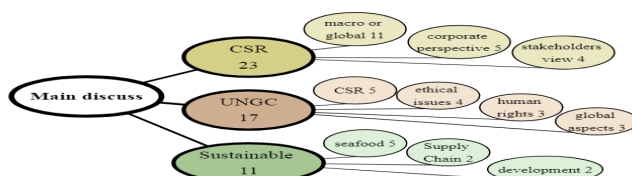
Source: Developed by the author, using yEd Live.

Regarding the method used in the articles, first, it was noticed that several studies didn't explicitly expose the design, method or approach of the work. In fact, less than half of them (34) did so. Second, it has proven very difficult to precisely classify them, especially among papers from a theoretical perspective So, it was impossible to distinguish more detailed approaches, such as "conceptual or theoretical paper" or "critical review or analysis".

As a consequence of that, the articles were classified in seven main groups related to method: (1) theoretical papers, being the majority, with 37 articles; (2) qualitative approach, subdivided in secondary data collection, such as content analysis of reports, with 15 articles, and primary data collection, such as semi-structured interviews, with 2 articles; (3) quantitative approach, also subdivided in secondary data collection, such as regression analysis, with 4

articles, and primary data collection, such as surveys, with 3 articles, and also a singular experimental study; (4) case studies, that used at least two different techniques, with 8 articles; (5) companies panel, with 2 articles; and, finally, (7) quali-quantitative (mixed) method, with a single article. The results are shown next.

Table 3
Method used in selected articles

1. Theorical - 37	2. Qualitative – 18 2.1 Primary data - 3 2.2 Secondary - 15	3. Quantitative – 8 2.1 Primary data - 4 2.2 Secondary - 4	4 Case studies – 8	5 Companies panel - 2	6 Mixed - 1

Source: Developed by the author.

Thus, it's reasonable to argue that bluewashing theme is not a developed and mature subject yet, with a large portion of its academic production concerned with theorical debates and critical reviews. Another way of observing that statement is through the scarcity of studies with secondary data collection. I.e., it is assumed that secondary data collection requires more extensive clearness and comprehension about the concerned theme, so that is possible to carry out different applications and investigations, linking theory and practice.

4.1 Classification according to the level of depth of discussions

By doing a more detailed general scan, it was possible to classify the 74 selected articles into four categories: those that only mention the bluewashing term in a single excerpt along the work (53), the ones that express it in different parts of the study (19), and those that really develop the theme (2). These categories will be explored separately next.

4.1.1 Articles that only mention in a single excerpt (53)

On closer examination, it was observed that most of the surveyed articles (53) only mention one of the bluewashing terms in a small excerpt throughout the work. Most of them only mentioned it one time (47), including one that only entered it as a keyword, followed by five articles that referred to it twice, also one as keyword, and one that alluded three times.

Among those articles, some interesting things can be mentioned. First, the term greenwashing was brought together in the discussion several times (in 33 articles), used as example, parameter or comparison of unethical business practice, in the sense of viewed as a variant to the social side, turned to ecological concern. Other related terms were also identified, albeit sparingly, such as "whitewash" (found in 4 articles), "window-dressing" (3 articles), "corporate spin/spinning" (2 articles) and also a singular "CSR-washing" and a singular "sweatwash", defined as the use of sweatshop labour as a try to divert attention from companies' factories.

A common form of exposing the bluewashing theme (found in 24 articles) seems to be linking it to the United Nations or its Global Compact, a voluntary initiative based on CEO commitments to implement universal sustainability principles. So, as stated in many articles, bluewashing is a way for organizations to publicize their images in association with the sustainable principles, guidelines of this global pact or even the United Nation.

Another recurrent thing found was the allusion to stakeholders, found in 20 articles, both in general and with specific reference to consumers. These allusions are made in the sense of

motivating agents of bluewashing practice, i.e., the reason why the responsible images of the organizations are disseminated, as well as possible regulators and inhibitors of it.

The role of NGOs was also highlighted among the articles, mentioned by eleven studies, that argued about its importance as an agent of monitoring and criticism of bluewashing practices.

Some articles (11) also quote some possible causes of bluewashing, such as lack of accountability, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, lack of clear reporting requirements and transparency, and voluntary nature of the practices, with no control or regulatory agent, neither eventual penalty for breaking the promise. In other words, the social responsibility of organizations seems to be seen as a voluntary practice, whose disclosure is totally dependent on themselves. To date, there is no external mechanism or agent that can verify organizational claims of social nature, nor regulate or even punish cases found to be inappropriate. In similar sense, some articles (14) express some possible consequences of bluewashing practices, such as criticism, skepticism, question or even damage to credibility, general mistrust, diminished legitimacy, potential reputation risk and marginalization of sustainability.

Different terms were used to define bluewashing, found in 26 articles, such as an opaque strategy, a tactic or a tool, a creatively managed reputation, miscommunication and also a misleading communicative practice. The terms cover or cover-up, mask, painting and veneer, polish and wrap were commonly found among those studies as forms of bluewashing, that is, as the most recurrent action verbs to explain the bluewash given to the organization. Also, it was observed that bluewashing seeks to dissimulate motives and divert attention, by enhancing unduly favorable image and boosting reputation, in a superficial, cynical, illegitimate or pervasive way, through fake social commitments and an illusion of responsibility.

Image 8
Mindset – articles that only mention it in a single excerpt
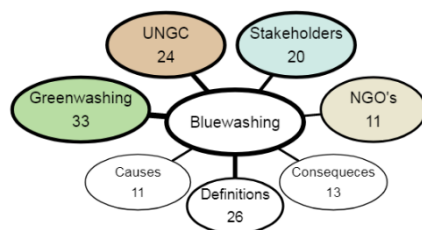
Source: Developed by the author, using yEd Live.

4.1.2 Articles that only mention, but in different parts (19)

Next, those articles that referred to one of the bluewashing terms in at least two different parts throughout the work were analyzed (19). This was precisely the case with most articles classified here (15), followed by those that referred in three excerpts (4). Regarding the frequency of the terms, 11 articles mentioned twice, followed by 4 that cited it three times, including one that only titled one of the conceptual bases worked in the theoretical referential and another where it was entered as a note, and, finally, 4 that referred to it four times, also including two where it was part of the article title.

Regarding some initial information, these publications seem to be more recent, almost all of them (with one exception) from 2010 on. Most of these articles were published in the best ranked journals according to Qualis 2019, with almost all (one exception) published in A

stratum. Three journals appeared with two of these articles published each, such as 'Business & Society', 'Journal of Business Ethics' and 'Journal of Business Research". Also, it was noticed that two of the most prominent authors identified answered for one of the two articles published in this category. Regarding the citation number, these publications answered for the lower average of repercussion, being 23 in ResearchGate, in a range of 0 to 68, and 33 in Scholar Google, in a range of 0 to 89.

Regarding the method used in articles, eight theoretical papers were identified, the major part, summed to three with qualitative approach and four with quantitative approach, plus two case studies, one companies panel and the singular article with a mixed method. Concerning the keywords, 89 were accounted, standing out 'corporate social responsibility' and the United Nation Global Compact, both mentioned for seven articles each, followed by 'global governance', exposed for four articles, as well variations of 'consumer', 'marketing', 'social' and 'sustainable', cited on three articles each. Analyzing each word separately, these 89 keywords totaled 188 words, that were used to form the cloud below, restricted to those that were repeated at least twice (27 most frequent words).

Image 9

Word cloud – all words of keywords from the 19 articles

Source: Developed by the author, using Wordle program.

As the previous analysis, similar frequent themes were found related to bluewashing; but, unlike it, the frequency order was different. So, among these articles, there was a predominance of references to United Union or its Global Compact, found in 14 articles. Again, bluewashing was described a way for organizations to associate their images to the sustainable principles guide lined by UNGC.

The allusion to greenwashing was found in seven articles. Also, the term "window-dressing" was noticed in a singular article, as well "art washing". It is interesting to notice that two articles referred to bluewashing as the wash related to oceans, in the sense of Marine context. This may cause some confusion, what makes difficult to have a consensus in the area. The reference to stakeholders was only identified in four articles, all in general sense. In similar way, the role of NGOs was only highlighted once, in a single article.

Some possible causes of bluewashing were mentioned on six articles, again exposing the lack of accountability, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, absence of clear and measurable reporting standards, lack of guidance and low entry barriers, what culminates in a low influence from the UNGC leadership. Despite that, two articles also cited some benefits of UNGC, such as the requirement of active and regularly reporting from the membership. In a similar sense, some possible consequences of bluewashing were expressed by two articles, such as public criticism, trust damage and undermining consumers' general confidence.

Different terms were used to define bluewashing, found in 14 articles, such as a marketing trick, a lip service, a cover story, a seal of approval and also spill-over effects. To

them, the association to social practices, in bluewashing cases, are ceremonial, cosmetic, symbolic, superficial and figuratively draped, only to create an impression, to proactively mislead, in a hypocritical and sully way. Again, the most recurrent action verbs to explain the bluewash given to the organizations were mask, polish, wrap and marked.

Image 10
Mindset – articles that only mention, but in different parts
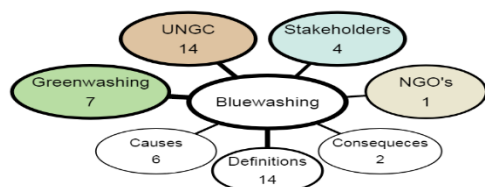
Source: Developed by the author, using yEd Live.

4.1.3 Articles that really development the theme (2)

From the 74 selected articles, only two referred to one of the bluewashing terms in many different parts along of all work. So, it's necessary to clear out that others (previous analyzed or not) studies could as well worked the bluewashing theme in deeply way, but without mentioned to it. I.e., it may be the case of a lack a consensus about the term adopted, what contributes to a lack of clear comprehension and robustness in the area, so, some standardization seems to be the necessary way.

These two articles were published in journals aimed at discussing the relationship between organizations/business and society and ethics, in 2016 and 2018, having both ranked in the first ranking (A1) of Qualis 2019 stratum, also confirmed in the official Qualis criteria 2017-2020

Table 4
Articles that really developed the bluewashing theme

Article	Keywords	Method
Pope & Waeraas (2016). CSR-Washing is Rare: A Conceptual Framework, Literature Review, and Critique. Journal of Business Ethics	Corporate social responsibility; Greenwashing CSR and decoupling; CSR communication; CSR performance; CSR literature review	Literature review
Amer (2018). The Penalization of Non-Communicating UN Global Compact's Companies by Investors and Its Implications for This Initiatives' Effectiveness. Business & Society	Socially Responsible Investment; Sustainability reports; United Nations Global Compact; Event study	Event study

Source: Developed by the author.

Pope and Waeraas (2016) carried out a conceptual review of bluewashing, naming it as CSR-washing. To them, CSR-washing is a broader concept, which encompasses greenwashing, bluewashing and pinkwashing. The bluewashing term is mentioned eleven times, in nine different moments of the article. They contextualize the need for and importance of such an effort for the dramatic growth of these false appeals, both academically and business speaking. Still, they emphasize that this movement happened in a fragmented way, lacking an integrated framework. It is interesting to say that the link to the United Nations Global Compact is hardly worked, mentioned only twice as a support for conditions. So, they investigated the CSR-

washing as the joint occurrence of five conditions, undertaking a literature review of the empirical evidence for and against each condition. Those are: (1a) Consumers desire CSR activity; (1b) Consumers will support CSR activity through purchasing behaviors. (2a) Firms advertise their CSR practices to consumers; (2b) Consumers are, actually, aware of firm-level CSR advertisements. (3) Firms do not put into practice the advertised CSR activities. (4a) Consumers can observe firm-level CSR performance; (4b) Consumers do observe firm-level CSR performance. (5) Consumers award reputation and patronage for CSR statements alone; they are not, rather, deeply skeptical and dismissive of CSR statements. The findings were that many of the conditions are highly contingent, rendering CSR-washing as a complex and fragile outcome.

Amer (2018) investigates the adherence to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), especially in terms of the possible negative repercussions resulting from the failure to submit the mandatory communication for this purpose, the Communication on Progress (COP). In this sense, he points out that the result was the penalization of these organizations in terms of financial markets, with an average cumulative abnormal return. To do this, the article conceptually focuses on the discussion about the said agreement, given its potential and weaknesses, as well as contextualizing it against the adhering organizations and the other agents of interest that can influence this process, especially investors. The bluewashing term is mentioned eight times, in five different moments of the article. Thus, unlike the previous article, Amer totally links the term bluewashing to the Global Compact, but, on the other hand, does not mention the term greenwashing or any other related ones. Several criticisms are made of the referred agreement, which, according to the author, make the phenomenon of bluewashing possible. For this reason, investors are investigated as potential agents of interest in minimizing this practice. Consequently, the author emphasizes that although the UNGC consists of a voluntary´s initiative, without external monitoring and sanction mechanisms, investors seem able to pressure UNGC business participants to increase their compliance with the requirements and force them to really act as proposed.

5 Discussion

Several discussions could be made after the literature mapping, review and evaluate.

First, the bluewashing discussion characterizes as a relatively recent subject in academic area, which production progresses indeed from 2013 on, and it's in full swing. This recentness is also confirmed by the relevance of publication, with most notorious journals. As consequence, the propagation capacity is impressive, with a high number of citations. Thereby, no one can argument that isn't a necessary and pertinent subject.

Second, in the same sense, by analyzing the method adopted in the studies, the lack of maturity of the area seems reasonable, with a large portion concerned with theoretical debates and critical reviews. So, the possibilities to further research are vast, especially those concerned with primary data collection.

Third, it's important to evidence the lack of standard in studying and mentioning the organization practice of divulging some social appeals, postures or causes, without the actual development. It is necessary to remember that the scope of this study is directly related to bluewashing, so there may be numerous other studies related to the false social discourse that does not adopt the term. Even so, several other terms were used as synonyms.

So, it seems to be the case of a lack a consensus about the term adopted, what contributes to a poor comprehension and robustness in the area. Thus, some standardization seems to be

necessary. This would allow the accumulation of different discussions in a broad line of research, with proper learning of advances, as well as easy identification of possible research gaps, facilitating the progress of the area.

Fourth, this becomes even more important by considering the poly synodal character of the studies related to bluewashing theme. In other words, the source of the studies is very broad and diverse, coming from different fields of knowledge or lines of study, as well from various journals and different authors. For this, once again, standardization is essential to aggregate all those efforts and promote advances.

Fifth, in the very definition of bluewashing, as there was a wide range of terms used. The most recurrent action verbs found were cover or cover-up, mask, mark, painting and veneer, polish and wrap. Regarding organizational intention, some terms were adopted, such as a marketing trick, an opaque strategy, a tactic or a tool, a lip service, a creatively managed reputation, a dissimulate or misleading communicative practice or even a miscommunication. Those discourse were considered as ceremonial, cosmetic, symbolic, cynical, superficial, figuratively, illegitimacy or pervasive, with spill-over effects, in a hypocrisy and sully way.

Despite that, some common discussions were present in the bluewashing studies.

The most common form of exposing the bluewashing theme was by linking it to United Nations or its Global Compact, i.e., as a way for organizations to publicize their images in association with the sustainable principles guided by the United Nation Global Compact. In the same recurrency, the term greenwashing was mentioned along, used as an example, parameter or comparison of unethical business practice, as a variant to the social side, turned to ecological concern. The allusion to stakeholders' importance, and also the role of NGOs was also highlighted, although in less frequency

The possible causes of bluewashing suggested can be summarized in the voluntary character of social discourses and acts. There's no standard of reporting and accountability, neither monitoring, controlling and enforcing mechanisms. Also, the possible consequences bluewashingsuggested can also be synthesized in general questionability of organizational claims and marginalization of social causes.

6 Final considerations

The bibliometric research and critical analysis performed enabled identifying interesting aspects concerning the publications on the bluewashing subject, especially among the articles with high academic relevance, all published in journals rated in Qualis. In addition to the relevance, according to the impact of the published newspaper, an expressive capacity for the propagation of the theme of bluewashing was verified, with significant rates of citations, both according to ResearchGate and Scholar Google.

Analyzing the recurrence of the journals, it becomes clear the adequate association between the bluewashing theme and the scope of the journals in which the selected articles were published, the more prominent being those that aims to discuss the business theories and practices in a more systemic or integrated way, concerning their impacts in all society and environment. In this sense, the central discuss of the articles were mainly about three subjects. First, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), specially related to macro or global themes, such as social justice or power, human rights, capitalism, to corporate perspective and to stakeholders' view. Second, the United Nation and its Global Compact (UNGC), with a plurality

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of related themes, such as CSR itself, ethical issues and global aspects. And third, themes related to sustainable, such in terms of broad development or specific practices.

The first publication identified dates from 2003, but the production seemed to progress indeed from 2013 onwards. It is evident, thus, the discussion and the subject study recentness within the academia. Due to that, the community that discusses this subject is still small, as such productions involved 155 authors, also with little recurrence, out of which only seven published two or three articles each. The research methods used were also shown to be limited, with a predominance of the theoretical perspective only. Those facts highlight the argument that bluewashing theme is not a developed and mature subject yet.

Indeed, the precariousness to which the subject has been approached could be viewed through a more detailed analysis. Most of the articles analyzed only mentioned bluewashing in a single excerpt during of all work (53), and another 19 expressed it in different parts of the study. It should be noted that these are mere mentions, without the real development of the theme, nor theoretical deepening. Therefore, only 2 out of 74 articles analyzed develop the bluewashing subject in depth.

Added to that, it's important to evidence the lack of standard in studying and mentioning the organization practice of divulging some social appeals, postures or causes. Some used the bluewashing term, but the CSR-washing term and similars were also found. Also, interesting to point out also that the term greenwashing was mentioned together, used as example, parameter or comparison of unethical business practice, as a variant to the social side, turned to ecological concern.

So, seems to be the case of a lack a consensus about the term adopted, what contributes to a poor comprehension and robustness in the area. Thus, standardization seems to be an essential way to aggregate all those efforts, accumulating all different discussions in a broad line of research.

Thus, it is strongly argued that despite bluewashing theme being – apparently – increasingly mentioned in the works, is still not widely studied in depth by the academia. Therefore, new studies are suggested concerning the subject, mainly in two strands. First, other terms could be investigated in the similar way as here, especially CSR-washing and socialwashing. Such an effort would contribute to further consolidate the academic production on the present theme, possibly adding different efforts and different approaches.

More importantly, about the bluewashing itself, a necessary path indicates a concern regarding the identification and / or investigation of this practice, mainly in order to contribute to its detection, with a view to possible actions to combat or inhibit it. Also, in turn, it is recommended a deeper understanding of its effects and consequences, whether in the market, in society or in the consumer public. In these, the collection and analysis of primary data is even more necessary, to achieve aggregation of empirical evidence to the theoretical body.

These research gaps highlight the importance of disseminating and deepening bluewashing. Finally, it should also be noted that the urgency regarding the discussion about bluewashing is justified not only by its relevance in the theoretical field, but also, as important as, by its overwhelming practical implications.

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