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Corporate social irresponsibility and consumer punishment: A systematic review and research agenda

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers an integrative review of the past work on consumers' reactions to corporate social irresponsibility (CSI). The study summarises and integrates the existing research into two conceptual models: a punitive response to CSI and a nonpunitive response to CSI. In each model, the study reviews relevant antecedents, mediators, and moderators. The paper also identifies gaps in the literature and problematizes several key research assumptions that have gone unquestioned in earlier accounts of consumers' reactions to CSI. The paper contributes to the existing research by offering a parsimonious and yet comprehensive conceptualization of which, when, why and how consumers punish (or do not punish) firms following CSI. The analysis further leads to the identification of a research agenda to continue advancing our understanding of how consumers respond to CSI.

1. Introduction

Corporate social irresponsibility (CSI) comprises corporate activities that negatively affect the long-term interests of a wide range of stakeholders (Strike, Gao, & Bansal, 2006). Episodes of CSI are prominent in today's marketplace. Recent examples include the Boeing 747 MAX scandal, which killed 346 people and led to costs of over \$18 billion for the company (Gelles, 2020), and McKinsey's disreputable involvement in the opioid epidemic, for which the company agreed to pay \$573 million to US authorities (BBC, 2021). Irresponsibility is also increasingly scrutinised within academia, with leading journals dedicating attention and special issues/sections to the topic (e.g., Antonetti, Bowen, Manika, & Higgins, 2020; Putrevu, McGuire, Siegel, & Smith, 2012). Within this background, consumers' reactions to instances of CSI have received growing attention in the literature.

Relevant work, however, is scattered across different streams of research. The same phenomenon has been studied with different labels such as corporate social irresponsibility (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016a, b), corporate misconduct (Carberry, Engelen, & Essen, 2018; Kim, Krishna, & Dhanesh, 2019), corporate wrongdoing (Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2013), CSR concerns (Harjoto & Salas, 2017), negative CSR (García-de los-Salmones, Herrero, & Martínez, 2020) and unethical corporate

behaviour (Ingram, Skinner, & Taylor, 2005; De Bock, Vermeir, & Van Kenhove, 2013; Haberstroh, Hoffmann, & Brunk, 2017). Related studies, covering topics such as consumer boycotts (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2020; Friedman, 1995; Gardberg & Newburry, 2013; Hoffman, 2011), brand sabotage (Kähr, Nyffenegger, Krohmer, & Hoyer, 2016), brand hate (Fetscherin, 2019) and brand forgiveness (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019), have offered valuable insights that contribute to an improved understanding of how consumers react to corporate wrongdoing. This fragmentation across multiple research domains could hinder our global understanding of how, why and under which circumstances consumers respond to corporate wrongdoing (Snyder, 2019). This seems especially the case given that, despite the maturity of the research in this domain (Torraco, 2016), the literature to date has not offered an integrative synthesis of past studies taking stock of the current knowledge while also offering a novel framework that can stimulate new research on this topic (Paul, Lim, O'Cass, Hao, & Bresciani, 2021a). We aim to fill this research gap by providing the first structured theme-based review (Paul, Merchant, Dwivedi & Rose, 2021b) of consumers' reactions to CSI based on 131 papers and 197 studies published in leading international peer-reviewed journals.

Conceptually, the review is based on two competing models (Torraco, 2016) identified inductively in the pool of studies. The first model

Abbreviations: CSI, Corporate Social Irresponsibility; CSR, Corporate Social Responsibility.

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argues that punitive behaviour towards corporate wrongdoers is caused by appraisals of immorality and by negative emotions such as anger, contempt and disgust activated by these cognitive appraisals (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016a, b, 2017, 2018; Grappi, Romani, & Bagozzi, 2013a; Romani et al., 2013; Xie & Bagozzi, 2019). A second model emerges from the literature to show that consumers' punitive behaviour is not prevalent and examines the reasons for the lack of punishment. In reality, only a minority of consumers punish firms (Aktar, 2013; Delistavrou, 2010; Echegaray, 2016; Markowitz, Chapman, Guckian, & Lickel, 2017; Guckian, Chapman, Lickel, & Markowitz, 2020; Hoffman, 2014; Tilikidou & Delistavrou, 2018), and many consumers are willing to forgive companies for their unethical behaviour (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019). The review outlines these two conceptual models and, adopting the Antecedents, Decisions, and Outcomes model (Paul, Merchant, Dwivedi, & Rose, 2021b), explains which, when, why and how consumers punish (or do not punish) firms for their CSI.

In addition to synthesising the existing research, the study provides an identification of the existing blind spots, or “areas in which existing theories, methods, and perceptions actually keep us from seeing phenomena as clearly as we might” (Wagner, 1993: 16). As is expected of review studies aiming for theory development (Paul et al., 2021a, b; Paul & Criado, 2020), we offer a research agenda for scholars in this domain that comprises specific directions to introduce new constructs, mechanisms and methods that can invigorate this research area.

2. Method

Following the SPAR-4 SLR protocol (Paul et al., 2021a), we next report how the three-stage procedure was applied to (1) identify and acquire the pool of studies (assembling), (2) purify and organise the studies (arranging), and (3) evaluate and report the emerging themes (assessing).

2.1. Assembling

The existing research proposes multiple definitions of CSI. All definitions agree that CSI implies a violation of a moral or legal norm (Brown, Buchholtz, & Dunn, 2016; Davies & Olmedo-Cifuentes, 2016); however, some authors add more specific elements, thus narrowing down its scope. For instance, some defend that CSI occurs when stakeholders are harmed (Strike et al., 2006) or when the firm demonstrates a lack of concern for them (Lange & Washburn, 2012). Others restrict CSI to human rights abuses (Fiaschi, Giuliani, & Nieri, 2017); to instances where stakeholders intend to take action to punish the company (Barnett, 2014; Dufour, Andiappan, & Banoun, 2019); or to intentional, ongoing actions of corporations damaging stakeholders' interests (Riera & Iborra, 2017).

CSI was originally proposed as the opposite of corporate social responsibility or CSR (Alniacik, Alniacik, & Genc, 2011; Riera & Iborra, 2017), defined as the “company's commitment to minimising or eliminating any harmful effects [caused by its business] and maximising its long-run beneficial impact on society” (Mohr, Webb, Harris, 2001: 47). However, today, it is widely agreed that CSR and CSI are not semantic opposites but different constructs. CSR and CSI may coexist (Jackson et al., 2014), since organisations can “engage in controversial activities and, at the same time, adopt practices aimed at social responsibility” (p. 161). As Jackson et al. (2014) defend, and as we will discuss in section 5.2, the coexistence of CSR and CSI makes it more difficult for the public to hold an overall assessment of the firm and decide which course of action to adopt. Understanding CSR and CSI as separate conceptual and empirical constructs implies that each is explained by a different set of antecedents (Greve, Palmer, & Pozner, 2010; Plank & Teichmann, 2017) and will lead to different consequences (Fiaschi et al., 2017; Kang, Germann, & Grewal, 2016; Lin-Hi & Muller, 2013; Strike et al., 2006). Hence, we cannot assume that if consumers show a preference for socially responsible companies, they will exhibit a tendency to punish

those that are irresponsible.

Given the multiplicity of definitions, the past research also examines CSI along different dimensions, namely, (1) temporality, (2) attribution, (3) actor, (4) agency, (5) responsibility and (6) type of violation. Together, these six dimensions map out the CSI phenomenon and establish its boundaries. This mapping may provide more structure to the present, fragmented conceptualization of CSI (Giuliani, Macchi, & Fiaschi, 2014). For a thorough discussion of these dimensions, please refer to Web Appendix A.

To capture the manifold labels used for the CSI construct, we constructed a network of CSI synonyms (i.e., “corporate irresponsibility”, “business irresponsibility”, “corporate misconduct”, “corporate scandal”, “corporate wrongdoing”, “business wrongdoing”, “corporate unethical behaviour”, “corporate or organizational deviance”, “negative CSR”, “CSR concerns” and “boycotts”) and did not search for specific transgressions (e.g., child labour). We also added other keywords to include studies that have specifically dealt with consumer punishment and forgiveness of brand transgressions (i.e., brand sabotage, brand retaliation, brand hate and brand forgiveness). The search strings (Web Appendix B, Table B.1) were used to search titles, abstracts or keywords published any time until March 2020. Searches were conducted in the Web of Science Core Collection, which provides access to the most influential scholarly journals and conference proceedings (Paul & Criado, 2020). Table B.1 in Web Appendix B shows the studies found for each of the search strings.

The inclusion criteria comprised (1) type of document (only journal and conference papers were included); (2) language (papers in English, Spanish, French, Italian or Polish); and (3) consumers' reactions to CSI—regardless of the measure used. More specifically, we included only studies that focused on (1) value-based transgressions (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019; Kübler, Langmaack, Albers, & Hoyer, 2020) and (2) transgressions that affect a broad segment of society and not a particular consumer (thus excluding service failures from the analysis). Product-harm crises, although they can in some cases constitute CSI, were excluded from our framework because they have already been extensively studied and systematically reviewed (Cleeren, Dekimpe, & van Heerde, 2017; Khamitov, Grégoire, & Suri, 2020). Furthermore, the focus on product failures typical of product-harm crises is very different from the focus on immorality and irresponsibility which is core to our analysis. Similarly, we exclude reputational crises as they may be provoked for reasons other than corporate transgressions that go beyond our scope (e.g., the misbehaviour of a CEO in their private life). We also excluded papers that exclusively focused on corporate mitigation strategies following CSI. Finally, anti-consumption or consumers' reactions to capitalism, neoliberalism or corporations in general (Kozinets & Handelman, 1998) are not considered as part of the CSI construct.

Reading the title and abstract, two authors coded the entries and decided whether they met the inclusion criteria. The few disagreements were resolved by revising the abstract together. Additionally, 15 papers were excluded after reading the full text as they did not fit the inclusion criteria. This procedure yielded a set of 131 papers (after duplicates were removed).

2.2. Arranging

In the next step, the papers were divided among the authors. Each author coded the assigned papers for 18 fields: type of paper, research question(s), theory used, methodology, type of CSI, country, sample size and type (student vs. nonstudent sample), mean age, percentage of women, manipulation check, control check, independent variables, mediating variables, moderators, dependent variable, main findings, and limitations. Conceptual and review papers were not coded, but their theoretical contributions were included in the reported results. A coding protocol was established, and frequent discussions among the authors ensured homogenous coding criteria (Paul et al., 2021a). A short summary of each paper was added to a document shared by the authors.

The document and the database with the coded papers were independently reread several times by each author, and the authors then jointly agreed on a set of themes on which to base the synthesis. The themes reflected the stages that consumers follow when faced with an incident of CSI, namely, awareness, appraisals, emotions and outcomes. These themes were added as codes to the pool of papers. Each author focused on one of these themes and elaborated the synthesis, which was later shared and discussed with the entire author team. We noticed that the past studies explained a dual trajectory or model, one explaining consumers' punishment of CSI, and one explaining nonpunishment. Since these two sets of studies proposed distinct mechanisms to explain consumers' responses, we present them separately. This integrated synthesis was graphically depicted in an initial model. Furthermore, the analysis showed that several boundary conditions characterise each of the stages identified. This led us to synthesise these moderators and collapse them into four main types.

Once the synthesis was finalised, an iterative procedure was carried out by reading the integrated synthesis and other studies covering issues such as moral decision making (Schwartz, 2016), informal social control (Fonseca, Brauer, Moisuc, & Nugier, 2013) and the bystander problem (Fischer et al., 2011). This procedure allowed the identification of blind spots in the existing research. These blind spots were first listed and then integrated into four and added as grey boxes to the integrated model.

2.3. Assessing

Web Appendix A provides a detailed description of the studies, employing the categories typically used in bibliometric analysis (Chakma, Paul & Dhir, 2021). The research is widely dispersed in leading management, marketing, consumer behaviour, ethics and sustainability journals; 53% of the papers were published in the last three years, which shows that this is an area of growing interest; more than half of the studies are based on experiments (54%); and there are relatively few studies based on student samples (20%). The cases of CSI under examination are manifold, although most studies refer to environmental or social incidents (notably labour abuses).

Fig. 1 depicts the integrated model that structures and synthesises our review. The grey boxes include perspectives and constructs that have been overlooked in the existing research and that we theorise here

in our analysis of “blind spots”; the white boxes depict the two overarching models that emerge inductively from the analysis of existing debates. The first model (113 papers) identifies the studied mechanisms that drive consumers' punitive behaviour, namely, appraisals of harm, blame, unethicity, and intentionality (Lange & Washburn, 2012) and the emotions of anger, outrage, contempt and disgust activated by these appraisals (Antonetti, 2020). The second model, studied in fewer papers (18 papers), reveals three mechanisms that may explain nonpunishment: moral disengagement, moral decoupling and brand forgiveness.

3. Consumers punish CSI: Theoretical perspectives and emerging evidence

3.1. Consumers' appraisals of a CSI incident

Most existing studies consider appraisals of the CSI incident to be the major antecedent of consumers' responses. Following appraisal theories (e.g., Smith & Lazarus, 1990), it is argued that these cognitions activate emotions that lead consumers to either avoid or attack the company (Antonetti & Anesa, 2017; Antonetti & Baghi, 2021; Antonetti & Maklan, 2016 a, b; 2018; Grappi et al., 2013 a, b; Hoffmann, Yin, & Hoffmann, 2018; Neilson, 2010; Russel, Russell, & Honea, 2016; Trautwein & Lindenmeier, 2019; Xie & Bagozzi, 2019). The CSI literature assumes that an individual who encounters information on a questionable behaviour spontaneously assesses the incident based on appraisals of harm, blame, unethicity and intentionality (see Web Appendix C for a description).

One of the most frequently examined appraisals concerns the damage caused by a company, referred to as brand harmfulness (Rotman, Khamitov, & Connors, 2018), transgression relevance (Haberstroh et al., 2017), perceived egregiousness (Yuksel & Mryteza, 2009), the magnitude of harm (Ingram et al., 2005; Kübler et al., 2020), or perceived severity (Antonetti & Maklan 2016 a, b; Hartmann & Moeller, 2014; Omar, Nazri, Zainol, Ali, & Alam, 2019; Smith & Rhiney, 2020; Zhu & Chang 2013). In addition to activating a range of emotional reactions (see section 3.2.), perceived severity motivates consumers to understand the incident (Kim et al., 2019), decreases the evaluation of the company (Zhu & Chang, 2013), enhances the perceived hypocrisy of the company (Smith & Rhiney, 2020), reduces moral decoupling (Haberstroh et al.,

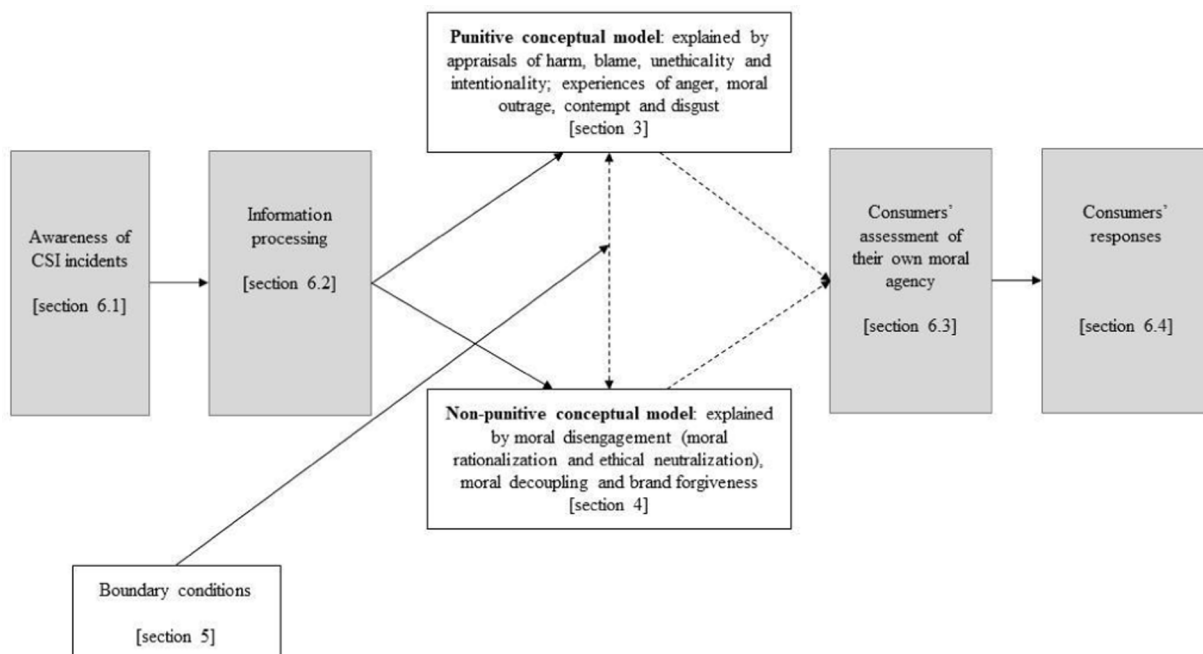


Fig. 1. An integrated model of consumers' responses to CSI and blind spots.

2017), decreases brand forgiveness (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019; Tsarenko & Tojib, 2015), reduces household investments in risky assets (Niu, Yu, Fan, & Zhang, 2019), and enhances punishment intentions (Rotman et al., 2018) or the intention to participate in a boycott (Omar et al., 2019; Yuksel & Mryteza, 2009).

Another key appraisal of the CSI incident is blame attributions, also referred to as corporate culpability (Scheidler & Edinger-Schons, 2020), brand blame (Grappi, Romani, & Barbarossa, 2017) and responsibility (Hamilton & Sanders, 1996), and defined as “the degree to which customers perceive a firm to be accountable for the causation of an undesirable event” (Grégoire, Laufer, & Tripp, 2010: 742). Several conceptual papers have theorized that the antecedents of blame attributions are perceived severity, judgements of causality, stability and controllability (Gailey & Lee, 2005; Lange & Washburn, 2012; Voliotis, Vlachos, & Epitropaki, 2016). Empirical studies have confirmed the relationship between the perceived severity of a CSI incident and blame attributions (Antonetti & Maklan 2016a; Grappi et al., 2017; Hartmann & Moeller 2014; Robbennolt, 2000). Studies also provide evidence for the significant role of the locus of causality (Hartmann & Moeller, 2014; Pizzetti, Gatti, & Seele, 2019; Scheidler & Edinger-Schons, 2020), corporate behaviour stability (Hartmann & Moeller, 2014; Scheidler & Edinger-Schons, 2020), and controllability (Pizzetti et al., 2019; Scheidler & Edinger-Schons, 2020) in blame attributions. Blame attributions not only evoke moral emotions (see section 3.2) but also affect consumers’ reactions to CSI incidents. Specifically, blame attributions have been found to worsen consumers’ attitudes (Grappi et al., 2017) and to enhance intentions to boycott the company (Lim & Shim, 2019; Scheidler & Edinger-Schons, 2020) or to spread negative word of mouth (Antonetti & Baghi, 2021).

Notably, most studies present participants with information about cases of CSI where the corporation is the clear culprit (e.g., Antonetti & Maklan, 2016a, b; Grappi et al., 2017). Under these conditions, blame becomes a methodological artefact of the experiment. Some research questions this assumption by showing how responsibility for the event may be shared between the firm and the employees (Antonetti & Baghi, 2021; Guckian, Chapman, Lickel, & Markowitz, 2020) or may be diluted in the supply chain (Hartmann & Moeller 2014; Hoffmann, Yin & Hoffmann 2020; Pizzetti et al., 2019).

A third appraisal concerns perceived unethicity or “an individual’s personal evaluation of the degree to which some behaviour or course of action is ethical or unethical” (Sparks & Pan, 2010: 409) because it transgresses important moral norms. This appraisal is also called perceived unfairness (Antonetti & Maklan 2016 a, b; Antonetti and Manika, 2017; Ingram et al., 2005; Kähr et al., 2016; Lindenmeier, Schleer, & Priel, 2012) or perceived moral inequity (Kim et al., 2019; Lindenmeier et al., 2012). Several factors shape the perceived unethicity of CSI incidents; these incidents are perceived as more unethical when more greed is attributed to the firm (Antonetti & Maklan 2016a; Dean, 2003), the perceived severity of the incident is greater (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016a; Ingram et al., 2005), or the ethical expectations of consumers are higher (Ferrell, Harrison, Ferrell, & Hair, 2019; Kim et al., 2019). Unethicity assessments decrease consumers’ satisfaction (Ingram et al., 2005) and brand attitude (Ferrell et al., 2019) and increase negative word of mouth, boycotting and participation in protests (Trautwein & Lindenmeier, 2019).

Finally, intentionality appraisals are defined as “the extent to which an outcome is attributed to deliberate as opposed to unintentional action” (Harvey, Madison, Martinko, Crook, & Crook, 2014: 136) and have been found to enhance blame attributions (Pizzetti et al., 2019). Intentionality is sometimes conceptualised as greed and can act as a mediator between blame attributions and unfairness appraisals of the CSI incident (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016a). In addition, greed attributions enhance feelings of sympathy towards the victims of CSI (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016b).

The literature has also examined a range of moderators that might increase or reduce the relevant appraisal when a specific CSI incident is

evaluated. Most of these boundary conditions refer to consumer characteristics. For example, the existing studies reveal that ethical expectations (Ferrell et al. 2019, Kim et al. 2019), preference for ethical products (Trautwein & Lindenmeier 2019), and female gender (Vermeir & Van Kenhove, 2008) enhance the perceived unethicity of CSI. In contrast, maintaining good relations with the company or having high economic expectations from companies lessens appraisals of unethicity. There is also some evidence that company features may affect CSI appraisals. For instance, Green and Pelozo (2014) demonstrate that consumers are more likely to blame larger and less trustworthy companies. Table 1 provides details on the boundary conditions of CSI appraisals.

3.2. Emotions activated by appraisals

Consistent with dominant appraisal theories (e.g., Smith & Lazarus, 1990), emotions mediate the effect of different appraisals on punishment. We exclusively consider integral emotions that are caused by the appraisal of CSI. This is different from incidental emotions, which are independent of the CSI event and yet could still skew consumers’ reactions to it (Septianto, Tjiptono, & Arli, 2020a). While incidental emotions are very influential (Cavanaugh, Bettman, Luce, & Payne, 2007), their analysis goes beyond the scope of this investigation. Similarly, given our focus on the process of CSI evaluation and responses to it, we do not consider emotion traits, which reflect personal variability in the experience of discrete emotions (Schriber, Chung, Sorensen, & Robins, 2017). Finally, only emotions tested in past studies are summarised, although we acknowledge that other emotions might be relevant but have not yet been empirically examined (see Dufour et al., 2019).

Table 1
Moderators of the appraisals of CSI incidents.

Outcome influenced	Moderator variable and its effect	References
Perceived harm	<i>Moderators that hinder perceived severity</i>	
	Negative information about a close competitor	Yuksel and Mryteza (2009)
Blame attributions	<i>Moderators that enhance blame attributions</i>	
	Large size of company	Green and Pelozo (2014)
	Lack of prior trust in the company	Green and Pelozo (2014)
	Company failure (vs. force majeure)	Hartman and Moeller (2014)
	High severity	Hartman and Moeller (2014)
	Company’s CSI decision (vs. individual decision)	Hartman and Moeller (2014)
	Individualising moral values	Lim and Shim (2019)
	Verified litigation	Nardella et al. (2020)
	Control over supply chain	Pizzetti et al. (2019)
	High intentionality	Pizzetti et al. (2019)
	Direct greenwashing	Pizzetti et al. (2019)
	<i>Moderators that hinder blame attributions</i>	
	Justified reasons for CSI	Grappi et al. (2017)
Unethicity	<i>Moderators that enhance perceived unethicity</i>	
	Individualistic national culture	Beekun et al. (2008)
	Low Power Distance national culture	Beekun et al. (2008)
	Ethical expectations of consumers	Ferrell et al. (2019); Kim et al. (2019)
	Preference for ethical products	Trautwein and Lindenmeier (2019)
	Gender of the consumer (female)	Vermeir and Van Kenhove (2008)
	<i>Moderators that hinder perceived unethicity</i>	
	Good relations with a company	De Bock et al. (2013); Schmalz and Orth (2012)
	Consumer’s economic expectations	Kim et al. (2019)
	Consumer commitment	Ingram et al. (2005)

There are three main approaches to the treatment of emotions in the literature. First, some authors investigate the role played by individual negative emotions in responses to CSI (e.g., anger or contempt; Romani et al., 2013). Second, the analysis is focused at the aggregate level to examine negative affect (Kalliny, Minton, & Benmamoun, 2018) or negative emotions (Makarem & Jae, 2016). Finally, in a somewhat hybrid approach, different emotions are measured, but they are collapsed together at the analysis stage (Xie, Bagozzi, & Grønhaug, 2015). Despite these differences, the underlying theoretical treatment is consistent. Since punishment is effortful and costly, negative emotions create the internal motivation needed to carry through with the desire to punish the wrongdoer (Kähr et al., 2016).

Studies that focus on discrete emotions go beyond this general focus on the motivational power of negative emotions and propose more nuanced theories that link a discrete emotion to specific outcomes (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016a; Romani et al., 2013; Xie & Bagozzi, 2019). The majority of papers in this stream focus on anger at the company responsible for CSI (e.g., Antonetti, 2016a; Hartmann & Moeller, 2014; Hoffman, 2011). Feelings of anger are caused by the perception of unfair behaviour that has caused serious negative consequences and can be attributed to the company (Antonetti, 2016; Romani et al., 2013). Researchers have argued that perceived unfairness and perceived severity are predominant causes of anger; blame is almost assumed, as demonstrated by evidence that consumers feel angry towards a company even when the responsibility actually lies with the supplier (Hartmann & Moeller, 2014). Anger causes a desire to punish the wrongdoer to re-establish a sense of justice (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016a) and to push the company towards some form of problem resolution (Antonetti et al., 2020; Romani et al., 2013). Anger has been shown to explain a range of behavioural outcomes such as intention to boycott/buycott (Romani et al., 2013), to spread negative word of mouth (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016a) and to sign online petitions (Antonetti & Manika, 2017).

The emotion of (moral) outrage has also been examined in a few investigations. There is disagreement in the literature on the difference between (moral) outrage and (moral) anger. Some have argued that outrage differs from anger and is specifically linked to the violation of a moral norm (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016a; Lindenmeier et al., 2012). However, there is contradictory evidence on this point (Batson, Chao, & Givens, 2009), and hierarchical models of emotions suggest that outrage is often used to refer to feelings of anger (Antonetti et al., 2020), leading to a situation in which the two feelings are indistinguishable. It is also not clear whether anger and moral outrage should actually lead to distinct outcomes. The psychological literature has argued that moral outrage is more closely linked to social exclusion, while anger is a problem-focused emotion that is more likely to leave the possibility for reparation (Salerno & Peter-Hagene, 2013). However, to date, this hypothesis has not been explored in the CSI domain.

Anger is often assessed together with contempt and disgust, which is consistent with the CAD (contempt, anger and disgust) triad model of negative moral emotions (Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999). It is not completely clear, however, what the unique role of these three emotions is in consumers' reactions to CSI. Xie and colleagues (Xie & Bagozzi, 2019; Xie et al., 2015) suggested that the three emotions are indistinguishable and have analysed their mediating role as a single CAD factor. While this approach is empirically effective, it seems to contradict sociofunctional theories of emotions (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011; Rozin et al., 1999) arguing that despite the similarities and shared variance among the emotions, each emotion has unique social functions and thus leads to specific consequences for companies.

Consistent with this view, Romani and colleagues (Romani et al., 2013) demonstrated that contempt is a more threatening emotion than anger because it signals a desire to socially exclude and harm the company. Contempt is a negative moral emotion that is experienced when appraising a severe case of CSI (Romani et al., 2013). Contempt, however, is differentiated from anger because it implies a strong negative evaluation of the abilities of the target (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011).

When consumers feel contempt for a company, they are likely to look down on the targets of this emotion (Fiske, 2010). According to this account, anger remains a more problem-focused emotion that motivates consumers to find a resolution through collaboration with the company (Antonetti, 2016a), while contempt aims to completely exclude the company and to cut all relevant relational ties. What matters, therefore, is the motivation, which is more malevolent in the case of feelings of contempt (Romani et al., 2013; see also Kähr et al., 2016).

There is little evidence on the role of disgust in reactions to CSI. Similar to contempt, disgust motivates social exclusion (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). Furthermore, targets of stigma elicit disgust, and this emotion is responsible for troubling forms of discrimination (Harris & Fiske, 2006). Despite this evidence, existing accounts downplay the role of this emotion and argue that the emotion is inactive and thus unlikely to cause punishment (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016b; Grappi et al., 2013a; Romani et al., 2013). However, scholars have not yet considered the possibility that disgust might have more subtle consequences, such as the possibility of stigmatising the company (Devers, Dewett, Mishina, & Belsito, 2009), and thus lead to indirect aggression (Molho, Tybur, Güler, Balliet, & Hofmann, 2017).

To the extent that CSI implies the appraisal of victims and their suffering, compassion or sympathy are also important emotions that shape reactions to CSI. Compassion is caused by the appraisal of others' suffering and leads to a desire to help alleviate such suffering (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010). Compassion makes victims' suffering more salient, thus leading to stronger feelings of anger that can then fuel consumer punishment (Antonetti & Maklan, 2018). Conditions that are likely to increase compassion, such as when the victim is perceived as more similar to the self (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016b), therefore also indirectly increase consumer punishment through the joint actions of sympathy and anger. At the same time, compassion on its own, without the activation of anger, is unlikely to cause consumer punishment (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016b).

There has also been some attention to the possibility that multiple negative feelings could coalesce to determine more complex emotional experiences that lead to different forms of punishment. Especially instructive in this respect is the developing stream of research on brand hate (Bryson & Atwal, 2019; Fetscherin, 2019; Hegner, Fetscherin, & van Delzen, 2017; Kucuk, 2018, 2020; Zarantonello, Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2016; Zarantonello Romani, Grappi, & Fetscherin, 2018). While a review of the competing conceptualizations of brand hate goes beyond the scope of this paper, the analysis by Fetscherin (2019) is especially interesting because it proposes that hate forms from different combinations of anger, disgust and contempt. According to his typology (Fetscherin, 2019: 124), when anger is predominant, consumers are more likely to engage in overt and costly retaliation against the brand. Instead, disgust and, to a lesser degree, contempt are responsible for types of punishment that are more closely linked to social exclusion (e.g., brand switching, negative word of mouth). Further research is needed to examine how emotions combine dynamically and over time (Zarantonello et al., 2018) to shape different responses to CSI.

The existing literature has also identified boundary conditions that are likely to enhance or reduce the emotional responses of consumers appraising CSI. For example, there is significant evidence that a range of personality traits linked with altruism and other-related concerns can enhance negative emotions following exposure to CSI information. Evidence shows that moral identity, empathy, other-regarding virtues, social justice values and a relational self-concept all tend to increase feelings of contempt and/or anger following CSI (Grappi et al., 2013a; Xie & Bagozzi, 2019; Xie et al., 2015). Furthermore, Antonetti and Maklan (2016) have shown that the moderator of emotional responses can depend on the type of victim and have shown that severity increases feelings of sympathy for low similarity victims, while collective narcissism increases sympathy for high similarity victims (see Table 2 for more details).

3.3. Consumer responses to CSI incidents

Manifold measures of “consumer responses” have been adopted in past studies. Web Appendix D presents a thorough review of the evidence. A few studies use public perceptions of the ethicality of firms (Tsalikis, Seaton, Shepherd, & van Solt, 2018), corporate reputation, (Lin, Zeng, Wang, Zou, & Ma, 2016; Lu, Ren, He, Lin, & Streimikis, 2019; Nardella Brammer, & Surdu, 2020; Rothenhoefer, 2019), collective emotional reaction in social media (Makarem & Jae, 2016), or corporate sales (Kim, 2015).

Furthermore, some studies focus on behaviours that are not directed towards the wrongdoer, thus offering initial evidence of the broader economic and societal repercussions of CSI. For instance, findings show that when consumers perceive companies to be unethical, they are more likely to engage in unethical actions themselves (Rotman et al., 2018), that perceptions of unethical corporate behaviour lead to greater support for punitive government policies (Eadeh & Chang, 2020; Unnever, Benson, & Cullen, 2008) or that perceptions of fraud in an industry affect household investment choices (Niu et al., 2019).

The bulk of studies examine consumers’ internal representations of the firm/brand (e.g., attitudes towards the brand, ethicality of the firm); consumers’ affective reactions to the brand (e.g., desire for revenge or brand hate); consumers’ intentions to behave vis-à-vis the firm/brand (e.g., intention to boycott or brand forgiveness) or consumers’ self-declared past punitive actions in relation to a firm/brand (e.g., voice or exit behaviour, Andreassen, 1993). The implications of these measures are discussed in section 6.4.

4. Consumers do not punish CSI: Theoretical perspectives and emerging evidence

4.1. Moral disengagement

A first body of research explaining why consumers might not punish CSI builds on seminal work on the social psychology of deviance that has studied the justifications people use to explain, tolerate or justify their own actions that contradict social norms (Bandura Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996; Sykes & Matza, 1957). These justifications are usually called moral disengagement strategies (Bandura et al., 1996), neutralisation or rationalisation strategies (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Albeit these concepts have nuanced meanings, they are increasingly used interchangeably (Kaptein & van Helvoort, 2019). This is also the case in the reviewed studies where these strategies have been referred by different names such as moral rationalization (Bhattacharjee, Berman, & Reed, 2013; Haberstroh et al., 2017), accounts, justifications and excuses (Eckhardt, Belk & Devinney, 2010) or counterarguments (Yuksel, 2013). For our analysis we retain the label moral disengagement as a descriptor of the dominant mechanism explaining the nonpunishment path, understanding that the rationalisation/neutralisation strategies are the particular forms that moral disengagement may take place and that their specific deployment can vary across consumers and contexts (Kaptein & van Helvoort, 2019).

Moral disengagement has been described as a fundamental mechanism to explain consumers’ unethical or non-ethical actions in other contexts, such as consumers shoplifting or reluctance to buy from ethical companies (Chatzidakis, Hibbert & Smith, 2007; Fukukawa, Zaharie & Romonti-Maniu, 2019; McGregor, 2008). Also, research on responses to CSI has shown that consumers use some moral disengagement strategies to convince themselves that a given behaviour does not violate moral standards and is thus acceptable (Eckhardt et al., 2010; Yuksel, 2013). As a result, they self-justify their passivity towards CSI while avoiding self-blame (Eckhardt et al., 2010; Grappi et al., 2017; Yuksel, 2013). These strategies also resolve emotional ambivalence when negative emotions triggered by CSI contradict existing positive emotions towards the same firm (Schmalz & Orth, 2012).

Although the catalogue of moral disengagement strategies is ample

(see a comprehensive taxonomy in Kaptein & van Helvoort, 2019), research in the CSI domain has unveiled a narrower palette of justifications for the non-punishment of CSI. Consumers discount the information about CSI of the brands they care about (Grappi et al., 2017; Ingram et al., 2005; Schmalz & Orth, 2012; Yuksel, 2013); justify unethical actions as inevitable in order to obtain economic growth or as justifiable in absence of tight regulations (Eckhardt et al., 2010); or discount the credibility of the firm’s accusers to justify their scepticism vis-à-vis allegations of irresponsibility (Yuksel, 2013).

Finally, past work has shown that moral disengagement is more likely to occur when individuals have a strong motivation to maintain their support for the transgressor (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013). Consistent with this, brand attachment has been found to provide a buffering effect against unethical actions as it leads consumers to discount negative information about the brand (Grappi et al., 2017; Ingram et al., 2005; Schmalz & Orth, 2012), as long as the information is not extremely negative (Schmalz & Orth, 2012).

4.2. Moral decoupling

Moral decoupling explains consumers’ loyalty to a firm, even when an incident is appraised as immoral, as a result of a compartmentalization of judgements of performance from judgements of morality (Haberstroh et al., 2017). Consumers “selectively dissociate judgements of morality from judgements of performance” (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013) and use only judgements of performance to justify their support for the brand (Eckhardt et al., 2010; Haberstroh et al., 2017; Septianto et al., 2020a). This allows consumers to continue to buy a product despite a case of CSI unless the transgression directly affects the judgement of performance (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013). Moral decoupling is more likely to occur when consumers’ involvement with the brand is high (Haberstroh et al., 2017; Scheidler & Edinger-Schons, 2020).

Moral decoupling can be mitigated by activating authentic pride (Septianto et al., 2020a). Since this emotion conveys the appraisal of self-accomplishment, the activation of authentic pride affects subsequent judgements by triggering belief in a just world or the belief that people receive the reward (or punishment) they deserve. In turn, this belief makes consumers more likely to believe that wrongdoers should be punished, which reduces moral decoupling.

4.3. Brand forgiveness

Finally, brand forgiveness is the process whereby consumers reduce or replace negative emotions towards the brand with positive emotions (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019: 635). Brand forgiveness increases repurchase intention (Septianto, Tjiptono, & Kusumasondjaja, 2020b; Tsarenko & Tojib, 2015) and reduces the intention to avoid or attack the brand (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019).

Three conditions may enhance brand forgiveness: the perceived wealth of the firm, perceived CSR and firm response. In contrast, the perceived severity of the incident attenuates forgiveness. Consumers make less harsh appraisals of non-prosperous companies (Septianto et al., 2020b) and smaller companies (Green & Pelozo, 2014); in these cases, consumers experience compassion towards the firm, and this emotion enhances brand forgiveness (Septianto et al., 2020b). Moreover, Hassey (2019) showed that consumers were more willing to forgive brands for incidents that implied a central transgression of their core features (e.g., a communal-type transgression committed by a warmly perceived firm). This is because a single transgression is seen by consumers as a confirmation of the brand’s core feature. As a result, the violation increases brand credibility, and this, in turn, increases the intention to forgive, although this effect is more likely to be observed among consumers with a low need for closure. Table 3 summarises the boundary conditions of moral rationalisations and/or brand forgiveness identified in the literature.

5. Boundary conditions that activate or deactivate punishment

The manifold moderators tested in past studies and depicted in Tables 1 to 3 can be integrated into four main boundary conditions that might influence whether the mechanisms involved in punishment (nonpunishment) are more likely to emerge (see also Fig. 1). We examine these factors next.

5.1. CSI-incident characteristics: Severity and identity of the victims

The severity of a CSI incident is a primary activator of punishment. The greater the severity, the greater the appraisal of harm (e.g., Antonetti & Maklan, 2016a, b; Smith & Rhiney, 2020) and blame (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016a; Grappit et al., 2013a; Grappi et al., 2017), the greater the intensity of the negative emotions elicited (Grappi et al., 2013b) and the less likely consumers will be to engage in moral rationalisation (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013; Haberstroh et al., 2017) or brand forgiveness (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2015).

The personal relevance of a company’s wrongdoing (and its consequences) influences perceived severity. As consumers subjectively appraise CSI, they see as more serious those cases that affect them or their communities directly (Grappi et al., 2013b). This is consistent with psychological evidence showing that individuals attack directly and are willing to take risks and incur costs when wrongdoing affects them directly rather than when they are observers of unethical behaviour perpetrated towards others (Molho et al., 2017). Similarly, the perception that the victim is similar to the self leads to stronger emotional reactions and an increased desire to punish the company (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016b). Although the perception of similarity has often been manipulated using national identity (Antonetti and Maklan, 2016a; Antonetti and Maklan, 2016b; Ferreira & Ribeiro, 2017), it is related to a broader network of evaluations. For example, simply liking a victim and appraising her suffering (Antonetti & Maklan, 2017) is likely to

Table 2
Moderators of the emotions activated by CSI appraisals.

Outcome influenced	Moderator variable and its effect	References
CAD factor	<i>Moderators that enhance CAD feelings</i>	
	Other-regarding virtues	Grappi et al. (2013a)
	Moral identity	Xie et al. (2015)
	Social justice values	Xie et al. (2015)
	Empathy	Xie et al. (2015)
	Relational self-concept	Xie et al. (2015)
Anger	<i>Moderators that enhance anger</i>	
	Collective self-concept	Xie et al. (2015)
	Collective narcissism*	Antonetti and Maklan (2016b)
	Perceived risk	Grappi et al. (2013b)
	Proximity to the brand responsible with CSI	Guckian et al. (2018)
	Moral identity	Xie and Bagozzi (2019)
Moral outrage	<i>Moderators that enhance moral outrage</i>	
	Empathy	Xie and Bagozzi (2019)
	Relational self-concept	Xie and Bagozzi (2019)
	Collective self-concept	Xie and Bagozzi (2019)
	Affective response to CSI	Lindenmeier et al. (2012)
	Contempt	<i>Moderators that enhance contempt</i>
Sympathy/ Compassion	<i>Moderators that enhance sympathy/compassion</i>	
	Moral identity	Xie and Bagozzi (2019)
	Empathy	Xie and Bagozzi (2019)
	Relational self-concept	Xie and Bagozzi (2019)
	Collective self-concept	Xie and Bagozzi (2019)
	Perceived severity the CSI incident**	Antonetti and Maklan (2018)
Collective narcissism*	Antonetti and Maklan (2016b)	

Notes: * moderator is significant only for high similarity victims; ** moderator is significant only for low similarity victims.

Table 3
Moderators of moral decoupling and brand forgiveness.

Outcome influenced	Moderator variable and its effect	References
Moral decoupling	<i>Moderators that enhance moral decoupling</i>	
	Product involvement	Haberstroh et al. (2017)
	Consumers’ benefiting from CSI	Scheidler and Edinger-Schons (2020)
	Belief in a just world	Septianto et al. (2020a)
Brand forgiveness	<i>Moderators that enhance brand forgiveness</i>	
	Consumers’ low need for closure	Hassey (2019)
	Previous perceptions of CSR	Tsarenko and Tojib (2015)
	Corporate response (apology)	Tsarenko and Tojib (2015)

engender higher concern for the CSI incident and stronger intentions to punish. The research on the impact of CSI on market performance is consistent with this pattern of results, suggesting that the negative effect of CSI is stronger when wrongdoing takes place in the home market rather than abroad (Carberry et al., 2018). When a related party (versus a third party) is damaged, the firm experiences greater market value loss and higher risk (Murphy, Shrieves, & Tibbs, 2009).

5.2. Previous perceptions of the firm/brand

When a consumer knows of a CSI incident, she integrates this information with her previous schemata of the firm. This information may clash with or reinforce past perceptions of the firm’s ethicality. Although companies with records of both CSR and CSI are more likely to have lower scores in reputation (Rothenhoefer, 2019), there seem to be contradictory results on how a past record of CSR affects consumers’ reactions to CSI.

On the one hand, past positive CSR perceptions may provide buffering effects in the case of future CSI incidents. The transgressions of companies that are perceived as responsible are subject to processing biases (Lin-Hi & Blumberg, 2018) so that consumers discount negative information about these brands and attenuate appraisals of blame and intention to boycott (Omar et al., 2019). This perception may also deter negative word of mouth (García-de los Salmones et al., 2020); since consumers are uncertain of the true moral character of the firm, they fear damaging the reputation of the firm.

On the other hand, positive CSR perceptions may also have backfiring effects since CSI incidents of so-considered responsible firms attract the attention of stakeholders, create perceptions of hypocrisy and fuel consumers’ feelings of betrayal for violating their expectations (Arli, Grace, Palmer, & Pham, 2017; Janssen, Sen, & Bhattacharya, 2015; Lin-Hi, Hörisch & Blumberg, 2015; Lin-Hi & Blumberg, 2018; Lin-Hi, Kempen, Petrushevska, & Hattrup, 2020; Ma, 2018; Nardella et al., 2020; Wagner, Lutz, & Weitz, 2009). In contrast, a past negative CSR record may not violate consumers’ expectations, so a negative CSR reputation should not backfire (Lin-Hi & Blumberg, 2018). Nevertheless, a past negative CSR record may drive boycott intentions as consumers attribute more effectiveness to their boycott behaviour when dealing with companies with poor previous CSR (Cruz, 2017).

Other studies have shown that buffering/backfiring effects may depend on the intensity of CSR perception and the type of transgression. When a company is perceived as responsible in one domain, but the transgression occurs in a different domain, perceived hypocrisy is attenuated since expectations are not betrayed (Chen, Hang, Pavelin, & Porter, 2020; Smith & Rhiney, 2020). Additionally, as consumers’ perceptions of strong prior records of CSR are associated with more genuine motives, perceived hypocrisy is lessened (Chen et al., 2020). However, when the company violates an expectation directly associated with a defining attribute of the firm, the sense of betrayal increases (Ma, 2018). Another factor that may explain the occurrence of buffering or aggravating effects is the independence of the source providing prior CSR

communication. When a third party communicates CSR, backfiring effects are found; if the company communicates the information, buffering effects occur (Vanhamme, Swaen, Berens, & Janssen, 2015). Finally, older brands are perceived as more sincere and more credible; however, when consumers are highly involved with an unethical incident, they are less likely to forgive an older firm (Zhang, Kashmiri, & Cinelli, 2019).

5.3. Consumers' previous relationship with the brand

Consumers' previous relationship with the brand seems to deactivate consumers' punishment. This aspect has been measured by different constructs such as brand loyalty (Dekhil, Jridi, & Farhat, 2017), brand attachment (Schmalz & Orth, 2012), psychological ownership of the brand (Wiggins, Grimm, & Kuchmaner, 2018), commitment to the brand (Ingram et al., 2005) and consumers' prior patronage (Scheidler & Edinger-Schons, 2020). It is apparent that the stronger the consumer's relationship with the firm/brand, the more likely it will be that the consumer will attenuate appraisals of blame (Schmalz & Orth, 2012), experience emotional ambivalence to the brand (Schmalz & Orth, 2012), and reduce boycott intention (Russell et al., 2016; Sweetin, Knowles, Summey & McQueen, 2013). Additionally, moral disengagement, moral decoupling and brand forgiveness are more likely to occur when a consumer has strong involvement with the brand (Haberstroh et al., 2017; Schmalz & Orth, 2012; Wiggins et al., 2018). Jointly, these studies suggest that when consumers like a brand, they are more likely to turn a blind eye to its unethical actions (Dekhil et al., 2017).

Nonetheless, the literature shows that this buffering effect is constrained by the severity of the incident such that the more severe the incident, the more negative consumers' judgement of the brand will be (Ingram et al., 2005). Similarly, highly committed consumers may forgive companies for their wrongdoing when perceived harm is low but become progressively dissatisfied as the level of perceived harm increases. This study (also Schmalz & Orth, 2012) suggests an interaction between severity and brand involvement such that the possible buffering effect of a close relationship with a brand recedes as perceived harm increases.

There are two notable exceptions to the buffering effect that denote circumstances in which a strong consumer-brand connection might even worsen consumers' evaluations of CSI. The first concerns self-brand connectedness or consumers' use of brands specifically to communicate important aspects of the self (Escalas, 2004). For these consumers, scholars have found a stronger negative reaction to unethical behaviour (Antonetti & Anesa, 2017; Trump, 2014). The second exception concerns cases of brand hypocrisy (Wagner et al., 2009), when CSI directly contradicts earlier CSR commitments. Indeed, several studies (Einwiller, Lis, Ruppel, & Sen, 2019; Ma, 2018) show that consumers react especially negatively when the CSI incident implies a violation of a core attribute of the firm or of their value proposition.

5.4. Consumers' moral character

Although no conclusive relationship has been found between consumers' sociodemographic characteristics and punitive behaviour (e.g., Guckian et al., 2020; Keung, 2000), the past work has consistently shown that consumers' strength of moral character increases their willingness to punish firms (Karampournioti, Hennigs, & Wiedmann, 2018) and increases their experience of negative emotions towards the firm (Romani, Grappi, Zarantonello, & Bagozzi, 2015; Xie & Bagozzi, 2019; Xie et al., 2015) or the likelihood of forming an intention to punish the firm (Karampournioti et al., 2018).

Trait empathy moderates the intensity of the emotions felt towards the wrongdoer (Deng & Long, 2019; Romani et al., 2015; Xie & Bagozzi, 2019; Xie et al., 2015) and perceptions of brand unethicality (Karampournioti et al., 2018). Individualising moral values (i.e., care, fairness) aggravates blame attributions and feelings of anger (Lim & Shim, 2019). Similarly, Grappi et al. (2013a) showed that consumers' other-

regarding moral virtues (e.g., justice, beneficence, equality, and communal cooperation) strengthen the intention to protest against the firm. Other studies have consistently found that prosocial and pro-environmental values enhance the intention to spread negative word of mouth or to boycott (García-de los Salmones et al., 2020; Hartman & Moeller, 2013; Hoffmann, Balderjahn, Seegebarth, Mai, & Peyer, 2018; Russell et al., 2016; Septianto et al., 2020b Trautwein & Lindenmeier, 2019; Xie et al., 2015) or that boycotters are more likely to have altruistic values (Neilson, 2010; Rössel & Schenk, 2018). Similar findings are obtained when other measures are used such as moral identity or relational/collective self-concept (Xie & Bagozzi, 2019; Xie et al., 2015).

6. Blind spots in these theorizations

Blind spots may be caused by different research practises, specifically, the repeated application of a theory to explain a phenomenon, the use of certain methods or the implicit assumptions guiding researchers (Wagner, 1993). To detect blind spots, researchers are encouraged to "problematize" (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011) or "scrutinize assumptions underlying established theories, including to some extent, the favourite theory of the problematizer" (p. 253). To remedy blind spots, researchers should rethink the problem using different theoretical frameworks and critically scrutinise the methods used, maintaining a position of theoretical and methodological agnosticism (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012: 169). We present four blind spots that scholarship needs to address to advance the conceptualization of what activates or deactivates consumers' punishment of CSI (Wagner, 1993). Table 4 summarises recommendations for future research based on these four blind spots.

6.1. Awareness and memory of CSI incidents

Consumers cannot punish firms unless they are aware of corporate wrongdoing. Given the experimental design adopted in most studies, awareness is often taken for granted since all participants are presented with a CSI incident. Surveys and qualitative studies, however, have found that a majority of consumers are unaware of CSI incidents (Aktar, 2013; Guckian et al., 2020; Pradhan, 2018; Vo, Hartmann, & Langen, 2018). Given the obvious importance of awareness, the mechanisms that govern it deserve further attention. Drawing from moral decision-making models (Schwartz, 2016), we propose that awareness of a CSI incident is the result of the moral salience of the CSI event (the combination of features that lead to the incident being perceived as an ethical issue or dilemma; Barnett, 2014; Brown et al., 2016) and the moral sensitivity of the observer (the disposition of the observer to perceive and consider moral elements in her environment) (Schwartz, 2016). The moral salience of a CSI event increases as media coverage provides greater evidence of an incident. Some studies have identified the factors that drive media coverage of CSI incidents (Barnett, 2014; Carberry et al., 2018; Pavlovich, Sinha, & Rodrigues, 2016; Stähler & Fischer, 2020). However, there is evidence of a gap between media coverage of CSI incidents and consumers' awareness (Guckian et al., 2020) that needs further exploration. Furthermore, there might be specific features of a CSI incident that contribute to its moral salience. This could lead to further research to develop a taxonomy of CSI incidents that are more or less likely to be morally salient because of their intrinsic characteristics.

Other factors may explain moral salience for specific individuals. Janssen, Sen and Bhattacharya (2015) posited that moral salience will increase if the wrongdoer has a previous good reputation, arguing that as individuals confront information with different valences (positive past CSR and negative present CSI), perceptions of incongruity increase, which may increase awareness. Additionally, personal relevance may increase moral salience. Personal relevance may increase with perceived harm (for example, harm to ingroup members should be more noticeable than harm to outgroup members) (Antonetti & Maklan, 2018, 2016b) or

Table 4
Recommendations for future research.

Blind spot	Specific research questions
Awareness and memory of CSI incidents How and why are CSI incidents salient and remembered by consumers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How does moral salience affect consumers' awareness of CSI? ● How does the observer's moral sensitivity affect awareness of CSI? ● What features of a CSI incident contribute to its moral salience? ● What is the role of brand involvement in awareness of CSI incidents? ● What is the role of personal relevance in CSI awareness? ● Which individual consumer characteristics raise moral sensitivity to CSI?
Appraisals and information processing How and why do consumers process information to assess the CSI incident?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do different and often contradictory pieces of information about a CSI incident affect perceived responsibility, blame attributions and other appraisals? ● What is the role of information source credibility in CSI appraisals? ● How do consumers' appraisals of CSI change over time? ● How do the nonlinear effects of appraisals influence consumers' responses to CSI? ● What combinations of CSI attributes/features can lead to consumers' (non) punishment?
Secondary cognitions How and why do consumers assess their own role and potential action vis-à-vis CSI?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How does ethical obligation affect consumer responses to CSI incidents? ● How does diffusion of responsibility occur, and what is its role in explaining consumers' non-action regarding CSI incidents? ● How does consumers' perceived self-effectiveness shape reactions to CSI incidents? ● What is the role of moral capacity in consumers' responses to CSI incidents? ● What secondary appraisals activate or deactivate self-conscious emotions? What is the role of self-conscious emotions in responses to CSI?
The punishment intention-behaviour gap How and why do consumers carry out specific actions vis-à-vis CSI?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is the predictive validity of self-reported measures of punitive consumer behaviour? ● How different unique antecedents explain specific behavioural responses to CSI? ● What psychological mechanisms explain changes in consumers' punishment over time? ● What is the role of learning effects in consumers' responses to CSI incidents?
Suggestions of new theories and methods to respond to the RQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Moral decision-making models (Schwartz, 2016) and theories on informal social control (Ponseca et al., 2013) and on bystander effect (Fischer et al., 2011). ● Longitudinal studies to examine a dynamic process ● Configurational approaches to causation ● Use of real, "muddled" CSI events in scenarios ● Use behavioural measures for the dependent variable ● Test for non-linear effects between appraisals/emotions and consumers' punitive action

with the degree of self-threat the incident may entail (Barnett, 2014; Dekhil et al., 2017; Vo et al., 2018). The relationship between brand involvement and awareness of CSI incidents also deserves further attention (see section 5.4). The wide differences in awareness found by past studies (Guckian et al., 2020; Vo et al., 2018) also point to individual-level characteristics that reflect the individual's moral sensitivity (Schwartz, 2016). However, the previous research has not elucidated whether the consumer traits that drive punitive behaviour (section 5.4.) are also antecedents of moral sensitivity to CSI. Further work should examine this issue.

6.2. Appraisals and information processing

As discussed above, the existing research argues that the appraisal of CSI ultimately leads to punishment. The study of CSI appraisals to date, however, has been based on three fundamental assumptions that deserve close scrutiny.

First, the research has assumed that appraisals are straightforward and uncontested. Indeed, this is a necessary assumption for some experimental studies that need to control the treatment by presenting participants with a single piece of information with specific and unambiguous cues about the appraisals of CSI that researchers want to manipulate (e.g., Antonetti & Maklan, 2016a). However, outside the lab, this assumption does not hold. Rather, consumers encounter different and often contradictory pieces of information about a CSI incident so that appraisals are made in a "cacophony of environmental stimuli" (Barnett, 2014: 682), especially on social media (Vollero, Palazzo, Siano, & Foroudi, 2020). Since the media frame CSI incidents differently (Clemente & Gabbioneta, 2017; Kölbel, Busch, & Jancso, 2017; Lange & Wasburn, 2012), the information presented might vary in the description of the responsibility of the firm and the harm caused. The different sources of information, such as the media, NGOs, other consumers and the firm, also vary in terms of credibility, leading to different effects on consumers' appraisals of the CSI incident (Barnett, 2014; Fuoli & Hart, 2018; Richardson & Garner, 2019; Vanhamme et al., 2015). Moreover, the affected firm usually responds to media reports (Coombs & Holladay, 2015; van den Broek, Langley, & Hornig, 2017; Wei & Ran, 2019), and this response is also used by consumers as a cue to form appraisals of blame and unfairness (Antonetti & Baghi, 2021; Fuoli & Hart, 2018; Smith & Rinney, 2020; Wagner et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2019).

Appraisals are not only contested; they are also dynamically formed. However, the past work has largely treated appraisals as static. Again, this is a necessary assumption in cross-sectional studies. In real life, however, consumers are not presented with all the available information at once; rather, as a CSI incident gains coverage in the media, different pieces are added to the feed, new sources begin covering the story, and consumers are exposed to their peers' communication about how they appraise the incident. Thus, the appraisal-making process should be studied as dynamic such that appraisals change as consumers are presented with new information from new sources. Recent evidence illustrates how the appraisal of blame can be conceptualised as a dynamic process (Brown, Apostolidis, & Farquhar, 2021). Moreover, the dynamic nature of blame is not only intrapersonal but also includes the unfolding of "blame games" that might engage different actors in a CSI incident and that might shape consumers' appraisal processes (Roulet & Pichler, 2020). Recent CSI studies have moved in this direction (Brunk & de Boer, 2020); however, more longitudinal evidence is needed to understand how consumers' appraisals change over time.

The third assumption of the past work is that appraisals have linear and independent effects. Regarding linearity, the past work has largely modelled the linear effects between causes (i.e., severity) and effects (i.e., emotions or punitive behaviour). However, there is evidence to suggest that some effects are not linear. For example, the effects of severity on an outcome variable are observed at extreme severity, whereas at low or mild severity, differences in an outcome variable are not observed (Antonetti & Maklan, 2018; Niu et al., 2019). Similar

results have been shown for vividness (Antonetti & Baghi, 2021), relevance (Brunk & de Boer, 2020), strength of evidence against the company (Fuoli & Hart, 2018) and past CSR perceptions (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2015). Thus, allowing for nonlinear effects will increase theoretical precision (Edwards & Berry, 2010).

The assumption of independence among appraisals is also suspect. Appraisals influence one another (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016a; Grappi et al., 2013a; Robbennolt, 2000). For instance, perceived severity influences attributions of blame (Antonetti & Maklan 2016a; Grappi et al 2013a; Grappi et al., 2017; Hartmann & Moeller 2014; Robbennolt, 2000), perceived unfairness (Ingram et al., 2005; Antonetti & Maklan, 2016a) and perceived greed (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016a). Similarly, perceived motives for CSI - an appraisal overlooked in the past studies - could also influence perceptions of harm and responsibility (Antonetti & Maklan, 2018).

These interdependencies suggest that it may not be a variable (e.g., severity or corporate motives) but an attribute (e.g., extreme severity or perceived corporate greed) that drives the outcome. Understanding consumers' punishment as a result of a combination of attributes or features, rather than variables, implies adopting a different view of causality that should be examined using configurational analysis. Configurational analysis is an increasingly popular approach to obtaining solid and rigorous evidence of which configurations of causes work together to explain an outcome of interest, regardless of whether such work outcome involves emotion or behaviour (Ragin, 2008). Because this technique allows for equifinality and asymmetry (Ragin, 2008) and there is evidence that these conditions are common in reactions to CSI, this technique may be more suitable to understand the different causal configurations of attributes leading to consumer punishment.

6.3. Secondary cognitions: consumers' assessment of their own moral agency

Secondary appraisals are cognitions about the self and its responsibility and ability to act against a company responsible for CSI. These secondary cognitions have seldom been tested as antecedents to explain consumers' reactions to CSI. The research on ethical neutralizations has identified the repertoires used by consumers to justify their moral passivity (Eckhardt et al., 2012; Yuksel, 2013) but has not explained the antecedents leading to the use of these repertoires or, conversely, when consumers do not resort to these repertoires and engage instead in punitive behaviour. Thus, the analysis of the role of secondary cognitions can help develop a conceptual bridge between the two models that currently emerge in the literature. Drawing from moral decision models (Schwartz, 2016) and the scholarship on informal social control (Fonseca et al., 2013), we argue that four secondary appraisals influence punitive behaviour: ethical obligation, diffusion of responsibility, perceived effectiveness and perceived moral capacity.

Ethical obligation is the "sense of responsibility to act (or not) morally (or immorally) when faced with an ethical situation" (Haines, Street, & Haines, 2008, p. 390). Ethical obligation is fundamental to explaining ethical decision making (Craft, 2013) and is an antecedent of consumers' ethical purchasing (Shaw & Shiu, 2003; Shaw, Shiu, & Clarke, 2000), including boycotting (Rössel & Schenk, 2018). The reverse appraisal—perceived diffusion of responsibility (Fischer et al., 2011)—negatively affects moral agency. Diffusion of responsibility is more likely to occur when norm transgressions are public; it reduces individual punishment as it leads to the bystander effect (Chekroun, 2008). Since CSI incidents are usually witnessed by large audiences, the diffusion of responsibility is likely. Indeed, Paharia (2020) found that the diffusion of responsibility attenuated negative purchase intention to punish an irresponsible company.

A third key secondary appraisal is the perceived effectiveness of consumers' behaviour against the firm (Barnett, 2014). The research has shown that perceived effectiveness is a main route to explain participation in collective actions (van Zomeren, Leach, & Spears, 2012). Some

evidence shows that perceived effectiveness is also an antecedent of boycott participation (Chipulu, Marshall, Ojiako, & Mota, 2018; Muhamad, Khamarudin, & Fauzi, 2019; Yuksel, Thai, & Lee, 2020).

Finally, moral capacity can be defined as the ability to engage in moral behaviour (Schwartz, 2016). As Grappi et al. (2013a) note, emotions alone do not provide the motivational force to punish transgressors; rather, individuals need some ability to transform arousal into behaviour. In their study, these authors tested the moderating role of other-regarding virtues (i.e., justice, beneficence, peace, equality, and cooperation) in the path leading from hostile emotions to punitive behaviour. Their study offers initial evidence in support of the inclusion of perceived moral ability as part of the assessment of moral agency (see also Cambefort & Roux, 2019; Dessart et al., 2020). Perceived moral capacity has been found to curb passivity in helping strangers (Fischer et al., 2011) and to increase reactions to the norm transgressions of others (Fonseca et al., 2013).

Secondary appraisals of moral agency should further activate consumers' self-conscious emotions that would, in turn, provide the motivational force to act. Indeed, the past research on CSR has shown the important role of self-conscious emotions in motivating consumer support (e.g., Antonetti & Maklan, 2014). However, the CSI research has underexamined the influence of self-conscious emotions such as guilt, shame or pride on decisions to punish a company responsible for CSI (with the exception of Septianto et al., 2020a). These emotions contain important information about the self and might be activated by the perception that the consumer has a responsibility to punish a company for its wrongdoing; specifically, the anticipation of feelings of guilt or pride is often a motivation to engage in responsible consumption choices (Septianto et al., 2020a). Thus, future work should examine the influence on punitive behaviour of the anticipated and experienced self-conscious emotions activated by appraisals of moral agency.

6.4. The punishment intention-behaviour gap

The majority of studies have employed self-reported measures of consumer reactions vis-à-vis the firm (section 3.3). To our knowledge, only one study has used a behavioural measure (sales) (Kim, 2015). Although this measure has greater validity than self-reported measures, it tells us very little about the psychological mechanisms that underpin consumers' behaviour.

The measurement of punitive behaviour is based on three assumptions that may not hold. First, the past research has assumed that measures of attitudes and intentions are valid proxies of punitive behaviour. However, measures of intention have limited validity in view of research demonstrating the gap between the intention to sign a petition and actual behaviour (Antonetti & Manika, 2017). This gap cannot be explained by the frequently cited barriers to boycotting (Bray, Johns, & Kilburn, 2011) as these barriers do not exist for boycotting or signing online petitions (Cambefort & Roux, 2019).

A second assumption of the past research is that punitive behaviour is a single-faceted construct comprising a myriad of actions such as negative word-of-mouth to boycott, participation in collective actions such as signing online petitions, or sabotage (Fetscherin, 2019; Romani et al., 2013). These different actions are often treated interchangeably. However, there is evidence suggesting that indirect (i.e., private complaining or brand switching) and direct measures of aggression (i.e., brand retaliation or brand revenge) are different constructs (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Zarantonello et al., 2016). In support of this, some of the reviewed studies demonstrate that each action is affected by a different set of antecedents (Romani et al., 2013). For instance, Fetscherin (2019) showed that each punitive action is predicted by a different combination of emotions.

Finally, these punitive actions are sometimes treated as independent of one another, although the research in other domains suggests that they are not. For instance, the literature on the bystander problem (Fischer et al., 2011) showed that private punishment (e.g., negative

thoughts about transgressors) helps appease the experienced negative emotions so that private punishment precludes other forms of public punishment. Similarly, the research on moral licensing suggests that when consumers behave in a moral way, they are subsequently more likely to engage in unethical or problematic behaviours (Blanken, van de Ven, & Zeelenberg, 2015). In this case, it would be plausible to think that sharing negative comments about the brand with a friend or signing a petition may be sufficient to appease anger and satisfy the desire for revenge, and this ethical response would grant moral licence to consumers such that they repurchase from the irresponsible brand. Supporting this assertion, the emergent literature on brand forgiveness (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019) shows that immediate punishment (e.g., negative word of mouth) may coexist with ongoing loyalty to the brand in the mid-term.

This evidence points to the need for the adoption of behavioural measures to reduce overreliance on intentions. There is also a need for more longitudinal studies as it is apparent that punitive behaviour may change over time since its antecedents are dynamic. For example, memory of CSI incidents decays over time (Reczek, Irwin, Zane, & Ehrich, 2018). This decay would explain why in a lab setting, consumers report their intention to punish but this intention dissolves as memory of the incident fades. Conversely, other research has shown that unless consumers engage in rumination, they do not carry out sabotage behaviours (Kähr et al., 2016). Rumination would therefore be a psychological process that ensures that negative appraisals of and emotions towards the firm do not decay. Future studies should explore whether other psychological mechanisms, such as grudge holding (Bunker & Ball, 2008), explain whether the antecedents of consumer punishment change over time.

Additionally, longitudinal studies would allow us to explore the possibility of learning effects (responses to events at time 1 affect responses to different events at time 2). The past studies have treated consumers' reactions to a particular CSI incident as an isolated event; however, the research on moral decision making (Schwartz, 2016; Shu, Gino, & Bazerman, 2011) has demonstrated the existence of these learning effects (Schwartz, 2016: 770) such that "internal retrospection over one's action" affects subsequent ethical decision-making processes. Longitudinal studies would help to test whether these learning effects occur and how they affect consumers' subsequent reactions to CSI incidents.

7. Conclusion

This study provides an integrated synthesis of the two models explaining consumers' responses to CSI (punitive and nonpunitive models), systematises a set of boundary conditions that facilitate the understanding of under which circumstances each of these outcomes is more likely to occur, and provides a research agenda unveiling new constructs, mechanisms and methods that can extend the scholarship in this domain.

This study has several implications for theory and practice. First, the review not only offers a synthesis of past studies but also integrates the manifold examined antecedents into two major models. This integration offers a more parsimonious understanding of consumers' reactions to CSI while simultaneously attesting to the complex underpinnings of such reactions. Indeed, these two models explain the both cognitive and affective mediating mechanisms and the multifarious moderators of these psychological processes, specifically, features of the CSI incident (such as the severity or the victims involved), firm characteristics (size or previous perceptions of CSR) or consumer traits (consumers' moral character). Although the integration of past studies into two alternative models may provide an initial springboard to study the phenomenon, this review underscores the difficulties in proposing a single theory or meta-framework that can account for the complex causal relationships leading to punitive action (or lack thereof).

Second, the review also shows the interdependencies among these

antecedents, which may help clarify when consumers are more likely to punish firms. To illustrate, we reveal the interdependencies between the severity of the incident and appraisals of harm, motives and blame and consumers' previous relationship with the brand and the corresponding appraisals and activated emotions. However, there is a need for studies that further examine how the multiple drivers of consumers' reactions interact, especially considering that other constructs have yet to be included in the conceptualization of consumers' reactions to CSI (e.g., how media frames influence consumers' appraisals of CSI). As this review demonstrates, there is limited connection between the two emerging theorizations as each of the perspectives has been conceptualised using different antecedents and mediating mechanisms. For example, further research should explore the role of anger and other negative emotions in brand forgiveness processes.

Third, we identify four major blind spots that may hinder our understanding of consumer punishment. Consequently, we advocate for further research that examines awareness development processes, information processing and the role of secondary cognitions in responses to CSI. We make specific suggestions regarding theories (e.g., moral decision-making models, theories on informal social control and on bystander effect), constructs (e.g., ethical obligation or moral capacity) and methods (e.g., longitudinal studies or configurational analysis) that can advance our understanding of consumers' reactions to CSI.

The paper also raises important implications for managerial practice and policy making. First, the synthesis of knowledge can be useful to practitioners who need to manage the fallout from CSI. Evidence on the different antecedents and moderators of CSI can be leveraged to develop predictions on whether one specific instance of CSI will generate negative consequences for a company. Our overview of the literature can inform managers on the nature and intensity of the responses they can expect from consumers and can help them design appropriate crisis communication strategies to respond effectively (Bundy, Pfarrer, Short, & Coombs, 2017). A second implication of our research is relevant for policy makers and concerns the role of consumers in market arrangements. Current institutional designs entrust consumers with the social control of firms via sales and reputation (Beck, 2019; Jackson et al., 2014). Our review demonstrates that consumers are highly ineffective as social control agents in this context since they are often unable to enforce punishment even when this might be necessary. Short of redesigning such institutional arrangements, the review offers policymakers insights into how to support consumers in their function. For example, we reviewed evidence on the cognitive processes that might lead to moral disengagement. Policymakers and campaigners can design timely interventions to minimise disengagement and to support consumers in their role as social control agents.

No paper is without limitations. To maintain a balance between richness and parsimony in the presentation of the results, we have not elaborated on the findings of single studies or provided a more detailed description of methods. Additionally, the integrated model focuses on individual responses to CSI; this implies that group-level dynamics (e.g., anti-consumption or resistant communities) have not been included in the integrated model (e.g., Dessart et al., 2020; Kozinets & Handelman, 1998). Similarly, we did not consider interpersonal (Kalliny et al., 2018; Muhamad et al., 2019) or cultural (Anadol, Youssef, & Thiruvattal, 2015; Ijabadeniyi & Govender, 2019; Hamilton & Sanders, 1996; Hoffman, 2014; Neilson, 2010; Shea & Hawn, 2019; Williams & Zinkin, 2008) influences on the identified mediating mechanisms. Also, the search strategy implied excluding research on product harm crisis. Future work could integrate research in CSI and product harm crises to offer a more comprehensive view of the antecedents and moderators of the punishment and nonpunishment paths conceptualized here. Despite these weaknesses, this review offers the first integrated assessment of a burgeoning field of research and can provide insightful support for further efforts aimed at extending our knowledge of which, when, why and how consumers punish companies for their wrongdoing.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Carmen Valor: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Supervision, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization, Methodology. **Paolo Antonetti:** Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Supervision, Validation. **Grzegorz Zasuwa:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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