



"Strategic Positioning and Consumer Preferences in Sustainable Fashion: Exploring Competitive Advantage, Willingness to Pay, Trade-offs, and Consumer Awareness"

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Abstract

This study examines how sustainable fashion brands strategically position themselves to gain a competitive advantage over traditional fashion brands. It also explores consumer behavior, willingness to pay premium prices, trade-offs between price and sustainability, and the impact of growing consumer awareness on the market share of sustainable brands. In terms of methodology, the research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews and netnography to gather insights from industry experts and consumers. Data were analyzed to identify key themes related to positioning strategies, consumer behavior, pricing, and market segmentation. We found that Sustainable fashion brands adopt various positioning strategies, including transparency, local production, waste minimization, and circular models. Despite these efforts, the attitude-behavior gap remains a challenge, with consumers often prioritizing price and aesthetics over sustainability. However, increased consumer awareness and demand for ethical practices enhance the growth potential and competitive positioning of sustainable brands. Research limitations evolve around the study's qualitative nature and limited geographic focus may impact the generalizability of the findings. Future research should incorporate quantitative methods and a broader sample to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the market dynamics. This research contributes to the literature on sustainable fashion by elucidating the strategic positioning of brands and the complexities of consumer behavior. It offers practical insights for brands to enhance their sustainability efforts and align with consumer values, highlighting the importance of genuine sustainability practices in achieving long-term market success.

Keywords - Sustainable fashion, strategic positioning, consumer behavior, transparency, market segmentation

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Resumo

Este estudo examina como as marcas de moda sustentável se posicionam estrategicamente para obter vantagem competitiva sobre as marcas tradicionais. Explora o comportamento do consumidor, a disposição para pagar preços premium, os trade-offs entre preço e sustentabilidade, e o impacto do aumento da consciencialização do consumidor na participação de mercado das marcas sustentáveis. Em termos de metodologia, investigação adota uma abordagem qualitativa, utilizando entrevistas em profundidade e netnografia para obter insights de especialistas da indústria e consumidores. Como resultados, surge a conclusão de que as marcas de moda sustentável adotam várias estratégias de posicionamento, como transparência, produção local, minimização de resíduos e modelos circulares. Apesar desses esforços, a lacuna entre atitude e comportamento permanece um desafio, com consumidores frequentemente priorizando preço e estética em detrimento da sustentabilidade. No entanto, a crescente consciencialização dos consumidores e a procura por práticas éticas aumentam o potencial de crescimento e o posicionamento competitivo das marcas sustentáveis. Investigações futuras devem incluir métodos quantitativos e uma amostra mais ampla para uma compreensão mais abrangente das dinâmicas do mercado. Esta pesquisa contribui para a literatura sobre moda sustentável, elucidando o posicionamento estratégico das marcas e as complexidades do comportamento do consumidor. Oferece insights práticos para as marcas melhorarem seus esforços de sustentabilidade e alinharem-se aos valores dos consumidores, destacando a importância de práticas genuinamente sustentáveis para o sucesso de mercado a longo prazo.

Palavras-chave - Moda sustentável, posicionamento estratégico, comportamento do consumidor, transparência, segmentação de mercado

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Introduction

The fashion industry has been criticized for years because of the harmful environmental and social consequences, such as pollution, labor exploitation and the intensive use of resources. To address these issues, we are witnessing the rise of many sustainable fashion brands that, as core mission, implement practices that are rooted in responsibility and care for the environment. The sustainable fashion business offers a new model for strategic positioning in the global market because of its dedication to social justice, environmental preservation, and commercial viability. Aligning corporate strategy with customer expectations and environmental imperatives presents opportunities and difficulties for the industry as consumer tastes evolve towards more ethical and sustainable products.

Nowadays, consumers are more eco-conscious about their general consumption. According to research, a significant part of consumers is willing to spend more for long-lasting goods as long as they live up to their criteria for both aesthetic and quality. (Niinimäki et al., 2020) Therefore, we can observe a growing trend among consumers to favor brands that embrace sustainability.

Growing consumer awareness is essential to the success of sustainable fashion. Indeed, consumers that care for fair practices are more inclined to endorse firms that genuinely strive for sustainability, which in turn motivates more businesses to implement sustainable practices. Hence, raising consumer knowledge of how fashion affects society and the environment is crucial to the industry's transition (Joy et al., 2012).

Brands in the sustainable fashion industry use a variety of practices to get a competitive advantage. The implementation of circular economy ideas, the use of eco-friendly materials, and supply chain transparency are examples of them. Thus, these companies can improve their marketability and long-term survival thanks to the growing demand for these practices within customers (Bocken & Short, 2016). Moreover, as sustainability not only focuses on the environment, these brands work towards promoting social welfare (Mukherjee, 2015; Bhuiyan et al., 2015).

As the sustainable demand is rising, the influence of sustainable fashion brands is reaching the fast fashion ecosystem. Fast fashion brands have as a core purpose to launch new trends into the market at competitive prices as soon as possible. Hence, this implies fast manufacturing processes with little concern to the environment and their labor force for the sake of profit. As a result of customer demand and legal pressure, some fast fashion companies have started incorporating sustainable methods, such

as recycling initiatives and lowering emissions during production operations. Nonetheless, these efforts remain insignificant due to the consequences of their main operations (Park & Kim, 2016).

These differences highlight the fundamental contrasts in business models, where sustainably-born brands prioritize comprehensive sustainability across their operations, while fast fashion's sustainable initiatives often serve more as enhancements rather than foundational business practices.

This study aims at exploring the strategic dynamics and consumer behavior within the sustainable fashion industry and in particular, the approaches implemented into securing a competitive advantage over the traditional fast fashion industry.

Specifically, the research will address four research questions.

The first question is

How do sustainable fashion brands strategically position themselves in the market to gain a competitive advantage over traditional fashion brands?

The second question is

What factors influence consumers' willingness to pay premium prices for sustainable fashion products?

The third question is

What trade-offs are consumers willing to make between price and sustainability when choosing sustainable fashion products?

The fourth question is

How does the growing consumer awareness of environmental and social issues influence the growth potential and market share of sustainable fashion brands compared to traditional fashion brands?

Through these questions, the research hopes to identify the subtle interactions between market strategies, consumer preferences, and ethical fashion consumption, providing insights into the fashion industry's changing landscape.

To investigate these research questions, a qualitative method has been chosen, that combines semi-open interviews with experts from the sustainable fashion industry and a netnography of pioneer sustainable brands' websites and sustainability reports. Then, these insights will be analyzed and organized by themes to highlight the positioning, competitive advantages, consumer motivations, and decision-making processes that define this sector.

The study's findings will provide useful strategic insights into the variables that drive the success of sustainable fashion companies, as well as contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of market dynamics in this industry.

This thesis is organized as follows:

The next section provides a review of the literature on the sustainable fashion industry, strategic positioning, consumer behavior, competitive advantage, trade-offs in consumer decision-making, consumer awareness and finally regulation. This is followed by a detailed outline of the methodology employed in this study, including the research design and data collection methods. Afterwards, the results of the analysis will be presented, discussing the themes and sub-themes. The thesis concludes with the theoretical and practical contributions, as well as the limitations of the study.

Literature Review

1. Overview of Sustainable Fashion and The Concept of The 7R

Sustainable fashion is a rising model in the fashion industry, that embodies environmental, social and economic integrity all through the lifecycle of the items. Reducing the environmental impact and improving the socio-economic conditions linked to production and consumption are key practices. Furthermore, these brands actively research ways to use green materials, such as organic cotton and recycled fabric, and ensure a transparent supply chain. (Fletcher & Grose, 2012)

This model is fundamentally opposed to the traditional fast fashion model, which consists of fast production cycles, cheap quality and underpaid labor force. These elements lead to a significant degradation of the environment and social exploitation (Joy et al., 2012).

A sustainable fashion brand cannot only rely on improving production techniques but consistently working towards reshaping consumers' behaviors and attitudes to avoid overconsumption (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

Lewandowski (2016) conceptualized the 7R to implement sustainability into the business models for the circular economy. This study highlights that reinventing the business model in terms of consumption and production is key to enhancing sustainability.

The seven R are:

- **Rethink:** This principle urges manufacturers and consumers to think about the complete lifespan of a piece of clothing. For example, opting for timeless designs crafted from high-quality materials can lessen the frequency of necessary replacements.
- **Reduce:** This includes tactics to reduce the use of resources, such as water, energy, and raw materials, throughout the production process. It also involves cutting back on the number of clothes purchased, leading to a decrease in total consumption.
- **Reuse:** Promoting the reuse of clothing through resale, trading, or transforming old garments into new items (upcycling) can greatly prolong the lifespan of clothing pieces. Successful online platforms make it easier to recycle clothes by enabling people to buy and sell second-hand garments.
- **Repair:** Providing accessible and trendy repair services prolongs the lifespan of clothing, ultimately decreasing environmental waste. Patagonia's Worn Wear initiative provides both repair services and sells secondhand gear, encouraging customers to embrace a culture of fixing and reusing (Patagonia, n.d.).
- **Recycle:** Innovative methods for recycling textiles are crucial in turning old clothes into new fibers and minimizing the need for new materials. Brands like H&M have launched programs to gather old clothes from customers and turn them into new fashion pieces through recycling (H&M, n.d.).
- **Rent:** Renting clothes, especially for events demanding special outfits that may be worn only once, such as weddings or formal gatherings, decreases the quantity of clothing someone has to buy.
- **Refuse:** This final principle promotes a culture of eco-conscious consumption, where consumers and producers alike avoid excessive consumption and unsustainable products. It means rejecting fast fashion, avoiding overconsumption, and selecting sustainable brands.

By incorporating these principles, the fashion industry can progress towards a more sustainable framework that not only lessens its environmental footprint but also promotes more ethical consumer behaviors. Collaborative efforts from companies, consumers, and policymakers are needed to change

industry norms and consumer habits for the transition to these practices. This strategy tackles both current environmental problems and sets the groundwork for sustainable development and innovation in the fashion industry.

2. Strategic Positioning

a. Positioning

In the fashion industry's competitive environment, sustainable fashion brands set themselves apart by strategically positioning themselves around their dedication to sustainability. It not only reflects environmental and ethical concerns but also serves as a strategic distinctive factor that attracts a significant group of environmentally aware consumers.

Dean and Pacheco (2014) present a concept that pinpoints five key strategic categories for environmental positioning essential for marketing strategies in sustainable fashion. This model directs brands on utilizing sustainability to improve their market position and attract eco-conscious consumers:

- **Pure-Green Play:** It includes brands that integrate sustainability into all aspects of their operations. These brands promote themselves by solely using sustainable materials and processes, targeting consumers who value environmental ethics when making purchases.
- **Market Green Status and Image:** This approach focuses on building a stable and recognizable brand identity. To do so, companies emphasize their sustainability achievements and certifications in their marketing efforts to showcase their dedication to sustainability. Brands can demonstrate their commitment to environmental and social standards by acquiring certifications. These not just guarantee compliance to strict standards but also function as a promotional tool to educate customers on the brand's sustainability practices.
- **Self-Functional Value:** Brands using this approach highlight the practical advantages of their eco-friendly products, like longer lifecycle or improved performance. The marketing strategy focuses on attracting consumers looking for the tangible advantages of sustainability, such as saving money in the long run and getting better quality products.
- **Target Commercial Markets:** This strategy entails customizing segmenting tactics for particular groups, like specific industries or consumer demographics, that prioritize

sustainability. This process includes discovering and focusing on specific market segments that place a high value on environmental sustainability, whether it is because of regulations, customer choices, or fundamental business principles.

- **Holistic Brand:** Brands that embrace a holistic approach incorporate sustainability into all facets of their business model. They focus on conveying a complete dedication to sustainability that impacts every aspect of the consumer journey, from the creation and packaging of products to the management of the supply chain and retail methods.

b. Marketing Strategies

Effective communication of sustainable practices is crucial for fashion brands looking to pioneer in the competitive market of eco-conscious consumers. Academic studies have offered a structure for comprehending the different tactics that improve brand perception and customer interaction via sustainability-centered marketing.

Brands can use educational marketing to educate and involve consumers about the sustainable features of their products. Studies show that offering in-depth details on product origins, production methods, and environmental effects can establish trust and loyalty among consumers (Peattie & Crane, 2005). This method not only educates buyers but also gives them the ability to make informed choices, incorporating sustainability into their purchasing decisions.

Transparency is growing in importance within the fashion industry. Consumers are more likely to have trust in and make purchases from brands that are transparent about their supply chains and production methods. Academic studies show that being transparent not only meets consumer curiosity, but also enhances brand credibility and consumer trust, resulting in increased customer loyalty (Chen & Burns, 2006).

Storytelling is particularly effective in the context of sustainable fashion. Stories that illustrate a brand's commitment to sustainability can enhance emotional engagement and brand loyalty. Researchers argue that storytelling can transform the perceived value of a product, linking personal and social values with the brand's ethical practices (Woodside, Sood, & Miller, 2008).

c. Successful Case Studies

For a long time, Patagonia has been praised for its commitment to the environment, always incorporating sustainability into its business practices. It plays an active role in environmental initiatives and makes sure its supply chain operations reduce environmental damage. Its initiative "Worn Wear" promotes purchasing pre-owned items or exchanging old gear, backing the concept of the circular economy (Patagonia, 2020).

Stella McCartney is a leading figure in the luxury fashion industry, setting an example with her dedication to sustainability. Indeed, she promotes animal rights and environmental issues in the fashion industry by using innovative materials such as leather alternatives made from mushrooms. McCartney has repeatedly worked with key groups that have significant impact such as the Rainforest Alliance; This demonstrates her proactive stance on sustainability. (Stella McCartney, 2019).

3. Consumer Behavior and Preferences

In sustainable fashion, consumer behavior and preferences play a crucial role in determining the success and support for sustainability efforts. Indeed, studies have indicated that a growing number of consumers are ready to spend extra on products that are ethically made and eco-friendly. Moreover, a research conducted by Griskevicius, Tybur, and Van den Bergh (2010) reveals that consumers frequently see consuming green products as a way to improve their social status by showing off their generosity and eco-conscious actions to their peers. Additionally, Nielsen's 2015 Global Corporate Sustainability Report shows that 66% of worldwide consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable brands, with the number increasing among millennials. Indeed, there are significant differences between demographic segments.

The difference between consumers' attitudes towards sustainability and their actual purchasing behavior, known as the attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion, reveals a cognitive dissonance in their values. Indeed, even though sustainability issues are receiving more attention and concern, consumer behavior does not always align with these attitudes when making purchases. Several different factors play a role in causing this gap. According to Carrington et al. (2014), consumers are appealed by ethical products, but the higher cost and limited availability of sustainable fashion can prevent them from buying. Therefore, the internal battle between instant satisfaction and future sustainability objectives plays a significant role in the disparity between attitude and behavior. Frequently, the instant gratification of buying a trendy item for a cheap price is considered more

important than the intangible advantages of ethical shopping. Furthermore, purchasing behavior is significantly influenced by social norms and peer pressure. Gifford and Nilsson (2014) examine the impact of social norms on sustainable behaviors, highlighting how these norms can either promote or discourage such actions based on the attitudes of those in the consumer's social network. Marketing strategies can also influence the gap between attitude and behavior. Frequently, there is a gap between the promotion of eco-friendly fashion and how consumers view its impact. If individuals believe their efforts won't have a noticeable impact, they are less inclined to buy eco-friendly fashion items even with a positive view on sustainability.

The reasons why people buy sustainable fashion products are intricate and varied from a psychological perspective. Research conducted by Connolly and Prothero (2008) indicates that personality has a considerable impact on these choices. Consumers frequently opt for sustainable products to match their buying patterns with their self-perception and individual principles. Furthermore, sustainable purchasing decisions are significantly affected by social influences, including peer behavior and social norms, as pointed out by Young, Hwang, McDonald, and Oates (2010). These psychological factors play a crucial role in influencing how consumers view and engage with sustainable fashion labels.

In addition, Song and Ko (2017) classified sustainable fashion shoppers into four separate groups, each possessing their own individual traits and reasons that impact their buying choices. This classification aims at comprehending the different types of consumers that sustainable fashion brands must take advantage of to target efficiently these key profiles.

- **Doubtful Egoists:** This category places self-interest above environmental issues and usually remain unaffected by sustainability statements unless they perceive a clear personal advantage. Brands aiming at this group may emphasize either the practicality or visual attractiveness of their products, showcasing how these features cater to the egoists' individual requirements and tastes.
- **Single-minded Bystanders:** These individuals understand social and environmental concerns, but they perceive sustainable fashion as either inconvenient or lacking in fashionable and diverse options. In order to cater to this target market, brands must focus on enhancing the ease of access and appeal of their products, so that sustainable choices are just as convenient and aesthetic as traditional ones.

- **Wavering Intellectuals:** This group grasps the significance of sustainable fashion and sincerely aims to make ethical decisions but frequently end up buying fast fashion because of affordability or trendiness. Marketing strategies should target these customers by emphasizing the importance of education and highlighting the lasting advantages of sustainable purchases, like durability and higher quality leading to cost-effectiveness in the long run.
- **Opinion Leaders:** These individuals are the innovators in the sustainable fashion industry. They are dedicated to advocating for sustainable fashion and lead others because of their credibility and deep involvement in social issues. Brands should interact with these customers as advocates for the brand, utilizing their power to promote knowledge and positive messages regarding sustainable behaviors.

This categorization enables brands to customize marketing approaches to align with various consumer profiles but also gain a better understanding of the motivations behind sustainable fashion purchases. Having a thorough grasp of each category helps brands effectively reach and sell products to diverse consumer groups based on their specific needs and motivations.

4. Competitive Advantage

The connection between sustainable fashion brands' sustainability practices and their competitive advantage is key, setting them apart from traditional brands and driving market success and expansion. This part will examine how sustainable practices can provide a competitive edge by promoting innovation, improving reputation, and strategically positioning in the market.

a. The Role of Innovation in Materials and Production Processes

In sustainable fashion, innovation in materials and production processes is essential for defining a brand's competitive edge. Studies show that sustainable materials and innovative manufacturing techniques are crucial elements that can distinguish brands in a competitive market. Niinimäki and Hassi (2011) stated that by incorporating eco-friendly materials like organic fibers, recycled materials, and advanced bio-based textiles, it not only lessens the environmental impact but also caters to the increasing consumer interest in sustainability. These advancements in materials enable sustainable fashion brands to match their products with the ideals of eco-friendly consumers who are more and more choosing what to buy based on environmental considerations.

Furthermore, progress in sustainable production methods, like water-saving dye technologies and energy-saving manufacturing processes, greatly improve operational efficiency and sustainability. Indeed, according to Shen's (2014) research, incorporating circular and zero-waste systems in manufacturing can result in significant decreases in resource waste, preserving more natural resources and improving cost-effectiveness in the long run. These technological advancements help create a sustainable brand image and provide a distinct competitive advantage in the market.

b. Sustainability Efforts Effect

Efforts towards sustainability have a considerable effect on the reputation of a brand and the growth of its customer base. Indeed, having a strong brand image linked to sustainability can set brands apart in the current market. Consumers are shifting to more and more choosing products based on how environmentally and socially responsible the company is. Brands seen as truly dedicated to sustainable practices typically experience increased customer loyalty. Patagonia's dedication to environmental issues and its transparent supply chain methods have not just enhanced its place in the market, but also built a devoted customer base that appreciates the brand's advocacy (Bain, 2016).

c. Comparisons with Traditional Fashion Brands

In comparison, sustainable fashion brands tend to have different market performance than traditional fashion brands. Despite the higher initial costs, sustainable brands can attain long-term growth by appealing to specific markets that prioritize sustainability, thus establishing a loyal customer base willing to spend extra for ethical products. On the contrary, fast fashion brands are facing backlash for their environmental and social effects, potentially impacting their market presence. Indeed, research indicates that companies that have sustainability as core value tend to perform better in the long run compared to those that do not. Based on a 2020 report from McKinsey, fashion businesses committed to sustainability are expected to thrive in a market placing more importance on environmental and social governance.

5. Trade-offs in Consumer Decision-Making

In the sustainable fashion industry, consumers are going through a decision-making process that balances personal beliefs, financial factors, and style desires. It is essential for sustainable brands to comprehend these trade-offs in order to effectively match their offerings with consumer expectations and demands.

One of the key compromises in consumer choices within sustainable fashion is the balance between cost and environmental impact. Although a lot of customers are willing to embrace sustainable practices, the dilemma often arises due to the premium cost of sustainable products in comparison to traditional choices. A research conducted by Luchs et al. (2010) discovered that consumers could view sustainable products as more expensive because of the extra value from ethical production methods. Nevertheless, this compromise can be reduced by informing customers about the long-term advantages and financial savings linked to products that are both durable and sustainable, which could result in a greater readiness to spend (Michaud & Llerena, 2011).

Another important trade-off to consider is the choice between fashionable design and ethical manufacturing. The fast fashion sector relies on quick production processes to provide trendy clothing at cheap prices, but this usually involves sacrificing ethical labor standards and environmental damage. Indeed, it leads to overconsumption and waste because our society relies a lot on looks. Nonetheless, we are moving to a change. According to Bain & Company's report from 2016, an increasing number of millennials and Gen Z consumers are giving more importance to ethical factors rather than just style in the market. These individuals are ready to sacrifice following the newest microtrends in exchange for clothes that match their values of fairness and environmental accountability, showing a move towards more mindful purchasing (Joy et al., 2012).

Moreover, consumers must weigh the trade-off between immediate availability and environmental impact. Nevertheless, the steep environmental impact of fast production, including high levels of carbon emissions, water pollution, and textile waste, is significant. According to Nielsen's (2015) worldwide sustainability report, consumers are starting to take into account the ecological impact of their purchases more seriously, with a majority willing to postpone buying a product in exchange for more eco-friendly production methods. This change is evident in the increasing popularity of brands that do pre-orders and only produce the necessary. It avoids keeping inventory thus overproduction, leading to a decrease in waste and environmental harm (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2011).

6. Consumer Awareness and Education

Focusing on educating consumers and promoting awareness are crucial in the development of sustainable fashion brands as they impact purchasing choices and market trends.

Sustainable fashion brands use different approaches to educate consumers on the positive consequences and significance of sustainability. Frequently, these strategies include open communication regarding where materials are sourced, the environmental impact of manufacturing processes, and the social conditions of clothing production. For example, companies such as Everlane and Patagonia offer in-depth details on their websites about the factories where their clothing is made and the environmental efforts they engage in (Niinimäki, 2015). Moreover, educating consumers at the point of purchase is facilitated by in-store displays, product tags, and website and social media content detailing the sustainable attributes of products.

Educational initiatives play a crucial role in changing consumer habits to favor more environmentally friendly options. Research indicates that carefully planned initiatives can greatly boost consumer knowledge and promote changes in behavior. A study conducted by McKinsey & Company in 2016 suggests that consumers who receive education about the environmental effects of their clothing decisions are more inclined to look for eco-friendly options. These initiatives utilize different forms of media, such as social media channels, to effectively share messages, leveraging the community-driven elements of consumer behavior to promote a culture of sustainability (Connolly & Prothero, 2008).

Furthermore, the more consumers are aware of sustainability issues, the more likely they are to adopt sustainable fashion. To reduce cognitive dissonance, they want to consume better, hence choosing products that align with their core values. Moreover, educated consumers are not just more inclined to buy them but are also ready to pay more for them, as they understand the advantages of these choices in the long run. This higher level of awareness frequently stems from educational campaigns that emphasize the ethical and environmental consequences of manufacturing and consumption (Joy and al., 2012).

7. Regulatory and Industry Standard

Government regulations and industry standards in the EU greatly influence the sustainable fashion sector. These rules impact the way products are made and sold, and following them can greatly impact how well a brand does against others in the market. This part of the literature review investigates how EU regulations impact the sustainable fashion industry.

The EU is leading the way in implementing strict environmental regulations that have an impact on the fashion industry. The EU Ecolabel is a significant regulatory framework that sets a standard for manufacturers to strive towards, signaling reduced environmental harm. Items with the EU Ecolabel have been confirmed to have decreased environmental impacts from extraction of raw materials to disposal, across their entire lifecycle (European Commission, 2021). This tag does more than just influence fair practices but can serve a guarantee of commitment to sustainability.

Another important legislation is the REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorization, and Restriction of Chemicals), requiring companies to control the potential dangers of chemicals to health and the environment. REACH influences the fashion sector through the regulation of materials in textile manufacturing, mandating companies to replace dangerous chemicals with safer options whenever feasible. We are witnessing a significant positive evolution in the consideration of environmental damage and public health within political leaders (Henninger et al., 2016).

Meeting EU standards can require a large investment from companies, but it can also provide a significant edge in competition. Following standards such as GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard) or the STANDARD 100 by OEKO-TEX® can set a brand apart in a competitive market. These criteria ensure that products are safe and produced sustainably, which helps improve the reputation and trust of brands (Awaysheh & Klassen, 2010).

Moreover, complying with these criterias can create potential market openings in the EU as well as in other regions. For instance, businesses that support the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan, promoting a circular economy through durable design, recycling, and reuse, are strategically positioned to take advantage of the increasing worldwide focus on sustainability (European Commission, 2020).

Methodology

1. Research Design

This research uses a qualitative research methodology to investigate how sustainable fashion brands strategically position themselves and how this impacts consumer preferences. Through the use of semi-open interviews and netnography, this study seeks to explore the intricacies of competitive advantage, willingness to pay, trade-offs, and consumer awareness in the realm of sustainable fashion.

Semi-structured interviews will be carried out with important experts in the sustainable fashion industry. The semi-open format enables a combination of structured questions but also leaves room for the experts to have structure and freely mention anything that is related to the topic. It brings spontaneity and enables us to gather a broader overview of the sustainable fashion industry. To ensure full transparency, participants will be asked for permission to record their interviews on Teams, which will then be transcribed word for word for analysis.

Netnography will be used to analyze websites and sustainability reports of pioneer sustainable fashion brands. This method includes studying and evaluating online content, interactions, and discussions in the virtual scene where sustainable fashion brands exist. By gathering and analyzing data, netnography allows for the investigation of brand communication, sustainability efforts, and consumer interaction methods on the internet.

2. Data Collection

The semi-open interviews were conducted with a diverse group of stakeholders within the sustainable fashion ecosystem to capture a comprehensive range of perspectives and insights. A total of five participants were selected based on their unique roles and expertise in the field:

- **Fashion Consultant:** The input of a fashion consultant provided valuable industry insights and expertise regarding current trends, market dynamics, and strategic positioning strategies within the fashion industry. Their perspective offered a broader understanding of the competitive landscape and the evolving consumer preferences shaping sustainable fashion.

Vera Herédia Colaço is a professor in sustainability and consumer behavior at Catolica Lisbon School of Business and Economics.

She is also a senior researcher at CUBE, the Research Center of Catolica, and her research is about how consumers make decisions within a sustainability context. She has worked for more than 15 years for the textiles, apparel and fashion industry.

- **Supplier:** Engaging with a supplier facilitated an understanding of the upstream processes involved in sustainable fashion production. Insight into sourcing practices, material selection, and supply chain dynamics offered crucial insights into the operational challenges and opportunities inherent in sustainable fashion.

Pedro Silva is the Head of communication and corporate affairs of Tintex. Tintex is a textile company that dyes, finishes and coats knitted fabrics for fashion sportswear at leisure, lingerie

and other applications. They export around 30% of their products or our production and the rest is sold to Portuguese manufacturers, who then themselves export the finished garment.

- **Founder of a Sustainable Fashion Brand:** Direct engagement with the founder of a sustainable fashion brand provided firsthand insights into the strategic decisions, values, and mission driving purpose-driven businesses in the industry. Their perspective shed light on the challenges and successes encountered in navigating the intersection of sustainability and profitability.

Catarina Gomes has a textiles company named J. Gomes, Lda focused on recycling practices and has been at the forefront of sustainability within the value chain. This company has been in the textile waste treatment industry for 47 years and offers a range of products from blankets to scarves. The brand stands out for the circularity of waste and ensures fair practices and transparency of the entire process through certifications.

- **Consumers of Sustainable Fashion:** Including the voices of two consumers who actively engage with sustainable fashion products ensured a nuanced understanding of consumer preferences, behaviors, and motivations. By exploring their experiences, perceptions, and purchasing decisions, the interviews captured the intricacies of consumer demand and the factors influencing willingness to pay for sustainable fashion.

Melody Viaud is a 35-year-old French woman, living in Paris, working in Event Management in the world of software Development. She consistently is trying to make efforts to adopt a sustainable lifestyle to reduce carbon footprint. This includes avoiding travel by plane, favoring a circular economy and avoiding overconsumption.

Pia Beaufile is a 23-year-old French woman, living in Paris and working at Balmain in Partnership Marketing. She is passionate about fashion but has developed eco-anxiety because of the negative impact of our consumption habits on the environment. She privileges buying second-hand clothes and furniture to avoid participating in overconsumption. She is constantly educating herself on how to find alternatives to fast fashion while being trendy.

Involving stakeholders from diverse roles and views in the sustainable fashion ecosystem was essential to fully grasp the complex dynamics involved. Every interviewee brought their own perspectives and backgrounds, which enhanced the discussion on strategic positioning, consumer preferences, and sustainability efforts.

Furthermore, a netnographic analysis was carried out alongside semi-open interviews to investigate the online activities, communication strategies, and sustainability practices of leading sustainable fashion labels. Based on their reputation, visibility, and dedication to sustainability, five pioneering brands were chosen for the netnographic study.

- Ecoalf: With a mission to redefine the fashion industry's approach to sustainability, Ecoalf harnesses cutting-edge technology and innovative materials to create products that not only look good but also do good for the planet. From recycled plastic bottles and discarded fishing nets to recycled cotton and wool, Ecoalf sources materials from ocean clean-ups, recycling centers, and other sustainable sources to minimize waste and conserve natural resources. (Ecoalf, 2022)
- Reformation: Renowned for its stylish and eco-conscious designs, Reformation has positioned itself as a leader in sustainable fashion, emphasizing transparency and accountability throughout its supply chain. With a focus on timeless silhouettes and on-trend designs, Reformation offers a curated collection of clothing and accessories that are as fashionable as they are eco-friendly. (Reformation, n.d.)
- Isto: Isto is a rising star in the world of sustainable fashion, renowned for its commitment to minimalist aesthetics and ethical production practices. Founded on the principles of simplicity, quality, and social responsibility, Isto seeks to redefine modern elegance while championing environmental sustainability and fair labor standards. (ISTO, n.d.)
- Sézane: Sézane embodies timeless elegance with a modern twist, offering a curated collection of effortlessly chic clothing and accessories that epitomize French style. Founded on the principles of quality, sustainability, and ethical production, Sézane is dedicated to creating fashion that not only looks good but also does good for the planet and its people. (Sézane, n.d.)
- Recover: From recycled plastic bottles and discarded textiles to upcycled cotton and polyester, Recover sources materials from sustainable suppliers and recycling partners to create its signature line of clothing and accessories. Each garment is meticulously crafted to deliver comfort, durability, and style while minimizing the environmental impact of traditional fashion production. (Recover, n.d.)

The netnographic analysis added to the knowledge gained from semi-open interviews by offering a comprehensive perspective on sustainable fashion brands' online communication, sustainability practices, and strategic actions. Through analyzing the online presence of brands, netnography provided important background information and supporting proof to enhance the qualitative results obtained from interviews. Studying the websites and sustainability reports of brands provided a better insight into the way sustainable fashion brands present themselves, convey their beliefs, and interact with customers online. Through analyzing the consistency between brand communication and environmental efforts, the netnography revealed the genuineness and trustworthiness of brands' sustainability assertions.

Moreover, the netnographic analysis made it possible to compare brands, gaining insights into trends, best practices, and areas of improvement in the sustainable fashion industry. This study sought to provide a detailed and thorough investigation of strategic positioning and consumer preferences in purpose-driven sustainable fashion by combining data from semi-open interviews with findings from netnography.

3. Analysis

The qualitative analysis process included a detailed review of the semi-open interview transcripts and the results from the netnography of sustainable fashion brands' websites and sustainability reports. By carefully examining themes and sub-themes, using thematic analysis, patterns, insights, and implications were discovered that are pertinent to the research goals. The initial stage of the qualitative analysis process included transcribing the semi-open interview recordings word for word and arranging them in a logical structure for analysis. This method guaranteed the precise depiction of the viewpoints, encounters, and understandings of the participants, setting the groundwork for a thorough investigation and analysis. In the same way, information gathered through netnography, such as website materials, sustainability reports, and online messages from chosen sustainable fashion labels, were methodically arranged and readied for evaluation. This required gathering appropriate data sources, extracting relevant information, and documenting findings to enable thorough analysis and comparison.

Thematic analysis was used to discover repetitive patterns, themes, and sub-themes in the interview transcripts and netnographic data. I immersed myself in the interview transcripts and netnographic findings to fully understand the data, identifying possible themes and patterns that showed up

repeatedly. By systematically coding text segments, specific concepts, ideas, or occurrences were labeled and categorized using both deductive and inductive methods to thoroughly explore perspectives and insights. The codes were grouped into larger themes and sub-themes, taking into account their importance, consistency, and frequency throughout the data set, with improvements made through repeated review. These ideas were later analyzed and placed into the larger theoretical context of strategic positioning and consumer behaviors into the sustainable fashion industry, allowing for the examination of connections, differences, and consequences to uncover valuable insights and practical conclusions.

Results

The interviews and netnography were carefully analyzed, and insights were strategically categorized into four primary themes: positioning, strategies, legislation, and consumers. Each theme includes sub-themes that capture nuanced perspectives and trends, such as fast fashion and sustainably-born positioning, innovative strategies, emerging regulatory frameworks, and evolving consumer preferences. To illustrate each sub-theme, the most relevant insights were selected from the data, providing verbatim quotes that highlight unique viewpoints, offering an authentic glimpse into the current landscape of purpose-driven sustainable fashion. All insights from interviews and netnography are gathered in the tables in the appendix. A more thorough analysis of these themes and their implications will be presented in the discussion section.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Verbatim
Positioning	Fast Fashion	"Their new designs that are launched every week and we see that they have more than 52/53 collections a year" Vera Colaço
	Sustainably-born	"Our branding always emphasizes truth and aims to help the planet regain balance. With the planet's natural reserves constantly endangered, companies that internally manage waste and give it a new life contribute to the planet's equilibrium." Catarina Gomes
	Circular Model	"Recover focuses on creating a closed-loop system where materials are continually recycled and reused in the production process. This minimizes resource consumption and waste generation." Recover's website

Through interviews and netnography, three sub-themes were identified in the strategic positioning of fashion brands: fast fashion, sustainably-born brands, and the circular model.

Fast fashion relies on rapid product turnover to stay competitive, offering frequent new designs to attract consumers. As Vera Colaço notes, "Their new designs are launched every week, and we see that they have more than 52/53 collections a year." However, this often leads to overproduction and waste. Sustainably-born brands emphasize transparency and balance through ethical sourcing and

waste management. Catarina Gomes explains, "Our branding always emphasizes truth and aims to help the planet regain balance. Companies that internally manage waste and give it a new life contribute to the planet's equilibrium." Circular models focus on minimizing waste by continuously recycling and reusing materials. Recover's website states, "Recover focuses on creating a closed-loop system where materials are continually recycled and reused in the production process."

Strategic positioning in fashion varies widely, with fast fashion focusing on rapid cycles, while sustainably-born brands and circular models emphasize environmental responsibility. Sustainable practices and clear positioning offer brands a significant competitive advantage.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Verbatim
Strategies	Supply chain Transparency	"Ecoalf is transparent about its supply chain, from sourcing raw materials to manufacturing and distribution. The brand provides detailed information about its suppliers and production facilities, including their locations and certifications on their website" Ecoalf website
	Innovative Solutions	"We invest a lot in new processes, new ways of doing things, process optimization, generation of energy in terms of photovoltaic or or even reducing our footprint in terms of thermal energy also from. Using biomass instead of natural gas or implementing exchanging units to recover that energy and within the process, and the third pillar would be innovation." Pedro Silva
	Transparency	"Open our doors daily and invite consumers, people from the fashion industry, and the general public to better understand the world of recycling and make conscious choices." Catarina Gomes
	Teams	"We have a dedicated department. We have a sustainability department that deals with those questions. They are applying for certification and work to keep them and keeping them is the most difficult" Pedro Silva

The theme “strategies” used by fashion brands fall into four main sub-themes: supply chain transparency, investing in innovative solutions, transparency, and investing in teams.

Many sustainable fashion brands, like Ecoalf, put emphasis on supply chain transparency by sharing detailed information on sourcing practices, manufacturing processes, and distribution networks. Creating new and creative strategies is essential for minimizing environmental damage and maximizing efficiency in production methods. Transparency is crucial in involving customers and promoting mindful decisions, and having specialized teams is necessary for reaching and upholding strong sustainability measures.

These tactics show how sustainable fashion companies focus on supply chain transparency, innovation, open communication, and strong internal teams to maintain their sustainable values. It establishes trust with stakeholders and sets them apart from other competitors who are less transparent and creative, giving them an edge in sustainable fashion.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Verbatim
Compliance	Legislation	"Clean Green Claims Directive is a directive from the European Union and what they are trying to do is they want to ban and verify ethical claims like environmentally friendly or natural or biodegradable." Vera Colaço
	Certifications	"brands and consumers require certifications so whenever the product is. The product can be certified in any way that proves or that allows for a traceability from fiber to final product. 90% of brands require certifications so that they can test the traceability." Pedro Silva

Legislation and certification sub-themes are important for credibility and following sustainability standards in the fashion sector.

Compliance is essential for fashion companies striving to achieve sustainability goals. The European Union's "Clean Green Claims Directive" seeks to regulate and verify the ethical claims made by companies, such as "environmentally friendly" or "natural."

Certifications are vital in establishing and maintaining traceability in sustainable fashion. Pedro Silva highlights their importance for both brands and consumers: "Brands and consumers require certifications. The product can be certified in any way that proves or allows for traceability from fiber to final product. Ninety percent of brands require certifications so that they can test traceability."

Compliance with legislation and adherence to certifications are essential strategies for sustainable fashion brands to maintain trust and transparency. These measures provide brands with the credibility needed to assure consumers of their ethical claims and to trace their products throughout the supply chain, ultimately enhancing their competitive advantage in the sustainable fashion industry.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Verbatim
Consumers	Consumer Behavior	"the attitude behaviour gap is that the good intentions, sometimes don't really translate into actual purchasing behaviours" Vera Colaço
	How To Attract Consumers	"I always find the quality better than fast fashion ones, and for design it depends; I think that lots of new brands are changing the game like Reformation or Guimaguas that have better designs than h&m" Pia Beauflis
	Price	"So if you choose premium raw materials, you will pay a premium price. No way around that." Pedro Silva
	Segments	"When we talk about younger generations like Generation Z, they are still very much into fashion and style and therefore these are probably attributes that weigh more than the sustainability of the product." Vera Colaço

Consumer behavior in the sustainable fashion frequently displays a gap in the consumers' mind. According to Vera Colaço, the disparity between attitude and behavior occurs when good intentions do not always result in real purchasing actions. In spite of an increasing understanding of sustainability concerns, consumers often choose cheaper and aesthetically pleasing options instead of sustainable choices.

Drawing in customers to eco-friendly fashion involves using a variety of strategies that highlight the importance of both quality and aesthetic appeal. Pia Beauflis comments that she always prefers higher quality items over fast fashion, and believes that brands like Reformation or Guimaguas are excelling in design compared to H&M. Combining high quality products and timeless and aesthetic items can present sustainable brands as attractive options to conventional fast fashion choices.

Price remains a significant barrier in the adoption of sustainable fashion. The use of premium materials and ethical production practices inherently drives up costs. As Pedro Silva states, "So if you choose premium raw materials, you will pay a premium price. No way around that." This emphasizes the fact that sustainable goods are usually more expensive, which may discourage cost-conscious consumers.

Consumer segments show varied responses to sustainable fashion based on age and values. Vera Colaço highlights that "when we talk about younger generations like Generation Z, they are still very much into fashion and style and therefore these are probably attributes that weigh more than the sustainability of the product." Generation Z, while highly engaged with sustainability issues, often prioritizes style and trendiness in their purchasing decisions.

Discussion

1. Positioning

This section delves into the positioning strategies adopted by various fashion brands, which are crucial in defining their role and responsibility within the industry. By examining the distinct approaches of fast fashion, sustainably-born brands, and the concept of circular models, this discussion aims to understand the global picture of the principles of sustainability.

Fast fashion brands incorporate more sustainability practices to appear socially and environmentally responsible. Despite establishing human rights departments and sourcing from suppliers using renewable energy, these efforts fall short due to the inherently unsustainable fast fashion business model. As Vera Colaço highlights, "the entire business model... is very fast fashion-oriented," leading to overproduction and subsequent overconsumption, exacerbated by the rapid launch of over 52 collections per year. Fast fashion's drive for rapid turnover creates significant waste and resource consumption. While some brands have adopted practices like water-efficient dyes and renewable energy sourcing, the root issues lie in high production volumes and the excessive pace of new designs.

In contrast, sustainably-born brands emphasize transparency, local production, and waste minimization from the initial design stage. Local production and minimizing environmental impact are crucial aspects of their positioning, with brands like Isto prioritizing a single, timeless collection

available year-round instead of following seasonal trends. This approach aligns with Vera Colaço's insight that "80% of... waste can be avoided at the stage at the development," emphasizing the importance of conceptualizing collections sustainably. Pedro Silva acknowledges the growing consumer demand for transparency, where more brands now disclose manufacturing locations and labor conditions. Sustainably-born brands like Ecoalf and Sézane position themselves as environmentally responsible and conscious, communicating their missions through branding that aligns with planetary health. Ecoalf's "Because There Is No Planet B" motto and Sézane's slow fashion approach with limited-edition designs are clear examples. Ecoalf's commitment to creating fashion with a purpose, along with Recover's sourcing of post-consumer plastic bottles and discarded cotton scraps for their fabrics, exemplifies the dedication to reducing the environmental footprint of fashion, as core mission.

The circular model emphasizes creating a closed-loop system where waste is minimized, and materials are continually reused. Circularity-focused brands such as Recover, Reformation, and Sézane, promote repair services and resale platforms to extend the life of their products. This minimizes resource consumption, waste generation and leads to reshaping consumers' minds into consuming differently. Catarina Gomes points out the value of "the circularity of waste," as her company separates textile waste by quality and color, avoiding the need to dye yarn. The partnership between luxury conglomerate LVMH and Farfetch, as well as platforms like The RealReal and Vestiaire Collective, illustrates growing partnerships within circular models to handle overproduction through resale. Moreover it enables greater access for consumers since luxury second-hand products are more affordable.

Positioning strategies in sustainable fashion reflect varying approaches across fast fashion, sustainably-born brands, and circular models. Fast fashion brands struggle with sustainability due to overproduction and rapid design turnover. Sustainably-born brands leverage their transparency, local production, and waste minimization to appeal to conscious consumers. Circular models offer innovative circular systems to reuse materials and extend product life cycle and reduce waste.

2. Strategies

This section explores the strategic approaches employed by sustainable fashion brands to enhance their sustainability and ethical practices. Focusing on supply chain transparency, innovative solutions, transparency in operations, and the crucial role of dedicated teams, the discussion evaluates how these

strategies are implemented to address the environmental and social challenges within the fashion industry. By examining the specific tactics adopted by brands, from auditing and detailed disclosure to investing in new technologies and maintaining rigorous standards through team efforts, this analysis highlights the complexities and advancements that characterize the pursuit of sustainability in fashion.

Transparency is closely tied to the ethical dimensions of sustainable fashion, where disclosing detailed information about manufacturing processes and the environmental impact of products is crucial. Brands are making significant efforts to open up their operations to scrutiny by consumers and industry peers, providing detailed breakdowns of costs and environmental impacts. Transparency can take place through organizing visits of the manufacturing plants like at J. Gomes, Lda or disclosing percentages or amount of money corresponding to their costs and margin like Isto. This openness is intended to foster a deeper connection between consumers and brands, making transparency a tool for building trust and loyalty. However, Pedro Silva, as a supplier, points out the complexity of being transparent about processes that are not entirely sustainable, highlighting the nuanced challenges brands face in balancing transparency with the need to protect sensitive business information. Indeed, processes, such as mercerization, necessitate tons of water and energy but increase drastically the life cycle of garments. Therefore, this practice is sustainable as it makes the product last longer, hence decreasing overproduction and overconsumption but consumes a lot of resources, which makes it tricky to communicate to consumers.

The emphasis on supply chain transparency is significant among sustainable fashion brands, driven by the need to build trust and verify ethical claims across the entire production process. Vera Colaço notes the industry's challenges with transparency, especially regarding the origins of fibers and the full extent of the supply chain. This is echoed by statements about suppliers who lack comprehensive information about their production processes. Indeed, even Tintex, a supplier, also has suppliers. Having information on each step of the supply chain until the consumer is complex. However, brands like Isto have made strides in consolidating production in Portugal to enhance control and oversight. Moreover, several brands employ third-party auditors to verify the life cycle assessments of their products, measuring factors such as water usage, energy consumption, and CO2 emissions. Ecoalf and Sézane provide detailed transparency about their tiered suppliers, aiming for full traceability from the raw material to the final product. This detailed disclosure is becoming more common even among fast fashion brands, with initiatives like digital product passports set to enhance transparency through technology like QR codes and blockchain, as mentioned by Vera Colaço.

Innovative solutions are pivotal in addressing the environmental impacts of fashion production. Pedro Silva discusses investing in new processes, such as using renewable energy sources and optimizing thermal energy, which highlight the sector's shift towards more sustainable production methods. Companies are exploring how to utilize excess stock and leftovers creatively, reducing waste and environmental footprint. Ecoalf and Reformation, for example, have focused on recycling materials and reducing water usage through innovative manufacturing processes. This approach not only conserves resources but also enhances the sustainability of the products. Catarina Gomes emphasizes the importance of investing in research and development to find new technologies that improve the recycling process, underlining the long-term benefits of these investments despite the higher initial costs. As mentioned above, By investing in the process of mercerization, Tintex has considerably improved the quality of their products, thus the life cycle of their garments. These investments enables them to gain a competitive advantage.

Dedicated teams within companies play a crucial role in sustaining these efforts towards greater sustainability. Maintaining certifications and managing sustainability practices is both costly and labor-intensive, requiring specialized staff. Pedro Silva describes how sustainability departments focus on keeping certifications current, which is one of the most challenging aspects of sustainability commitments. Investing in people within the company is key, since dedicated people are the ones that will push the project. The economic pressures and the need to balance profitability with sustainability are highlighted in the discussion about RENEWCELL's bankruptcy, showing the harsh realities faced by companies striving to innovate in the sustainability space.

The strategies employed by sustainable fashion brands reflect a complex interplay between transparency, innovation, and dedicated team efforts. While progress is evident in areas like supply chain transparency and innovative solutions, challenges remain in fully realizing these strategies due to economic constraints and the intricate details of sustainable practices. This discussion underscores the ongoing efforts and evolving strategies within the industry as brands strive to align their operations with sustainable and ethical principles.

3. Compliance

The changing realm of sustainability laws significantly influences how the fashion industry operates, especially with governments globally increasing their attention on environmental and social

responsibilities. The Clean Green Claims Directive of the European Union is a leading instance of regulatory endeavors that focus on the accuracy of companies' sustainability claims. This directive aims to reduce the prevalent trend of greenwashing, in which brands falsely advertise their products as being more environmentally friendly or natural. In the past, without strict regulations, brands could make claims about their products being "natural" or "biodegradable," which often has led to deceptive advertising for consumers. Vera Colaço points out the change in regulatory frameworks, stating that in the past, there was minimal regulation allowing brands to promote products as natural or biodegradable without third-party verification. The new rule requires that these statements are supported by unbiased confirmation, guaranteeing that environmental statements are transparent and reliable. This not only builds consumer trust but also encourages brands to embrace truly sustainable practices instead of just appearing sustainable.

Looking forward, the introduction of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive indicates a significant expansion in the scope of sustainability reporting. Vera Colaço discusses its implications: "Until I would say 2026-2027, we will see smaller and medium-sized companies that will start to engage in reporting sustainability and practices for the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, and therefore companies are already, you know, they are making moves to comply with these directives." This directive is expected to make sustainability reporting more comprehensive and standardized, offering stakeholders better insights into the environmental and social impacts of the companies. The discussion about the digital product passport, as brought up by Vera Colaço, represents an innovative legislative push that could revolutionize how consumers interact with product sustainability. This tool would allow consumers to access detailed information about a product's lifecycle, from raw material extraction to manufacturing and disposal at any time. This is a revolutionary invention that enhances transparency and enables informed purchasing decisions.

Certifications play a key role in substantiating the sustainability claims of fashion brands. Pedro Silva explains how certifications allow for the traceability of products from fiber to final product, which is a requirement for about 90% of brands to ensure the integrity of their supply chain and product quality. Maintaining these certifications is challenging but vital for proving compliance with environmental and social standards. Catarina Gomes emphasizes the importance of certifications like the Global Recycle Standard (GRS) in validating the environmental and social practices of her company. Certifications are not just markers of compliance but also tools for communication with consumers and suppliers about the authenticity of the products and the ethical nature of their production. Isto and Ecoalf highlight their adherence to standards such as the Global Organic Textile

Standard (GOTS) and OEKO-TEX® Standard 100, which assure consumers of the organic origin of the fabrics and the absence of harmful substances, respectively. Sézane's multiple certifications, including B Corp, signify its commitment to stringent environmental and social standards, enhancing consumer trust and brand reputation.

Legislative compliance and certifications are foundational strategies for sustainable fashion brands to align with global standards and consumer expectations. As legislation becomes more stringent, brands are compelled to adopt more transparent and verifiable practices. Certifications serve as a bridge between consumer trust and brand credibility, offering a verifiable means to prove the sustainability of practices and products.

4. Consumers

There is often a notable gap between consumers' intentions and actual purchases, especially in the industry of sustainable fashion. Vera Colaço observes that although many consumers have positive intentions towards sustainability, these may not always result in sustainable purchase habits. Consumers often prioritize price, style, and aesthetics over environmental concerns, choosing cheaper and more visually attractive options instead of their sustainable choices. This lack of consistency shows the difficulties sustainable brands experience in turning environmentally conscious attitudes into purchases. Catarina Gomes highlights that a large number of consumers are not adequately ready to make sustainability a priority when it comes to their fashion decisions. This hesitancy may result from a lack of knowledge, the perceived hassle of transitioning to eco-friendly brands, or just the familiar routine of traditional shopping behaviors.

A multifaceted approach is needed to attract consumers to sustainable fashion. Some influencing factors have a significant impact on consumer preferences by promoting sustainable brands as appealing and fashionable. Pedro Silva talks about how certification labels impact consumer perceptions, highlighting how these labels greatly increase the perceived value of a piece of clothing by stating its superiority in sustainability. It is also crucial to establish a robust connection between brands and consumers. Brands that effectively involve consumers in their sustainability efforts typically build stronger loyalty. Achieving this integration entails being transparent about how products are made, the working conditions of laborers, and the environmental effects of production. Pia Beaufils and Melody Viaud point out that brands such as Reformation and Sézane have successfully blended top-notch design with sustainability, proving that eco-conscious fashion can still

be stylish and high-quality, in opposition to the popular opinion that sustainable fashion is boring because of the timeless aspect.

Price plays a major role in sustainable fashion, frequently serving as an obstacle for consumers who are used to the affordable prices of fast fashion. However, the manufacturing of eco-friendly and ethically produced clothing often comes with increased costs, resulting in elevated prices for consumers. Consumers understand that quality and fair labor comes with a price but yet, they can't afford it even if it less frequent thanks to the durable quality. Pedro Silva emphasizes the natural expenses associated with high-quality raw materials and fair labor practices, explaining, "Opting for premium raw materials means you will be paying a higher price." This signifies that implementing sustainable practices, like offering fair compensation and utilizing environmentally-friendly materials, lead to increased expenses. Nevertheless, he also recognizes that a lot of consumers face financial constraints, pointing out the challenge of finding a balance between sustainability and cost-effectiveness. A few customers, such as Melody Viaud, are prepared to spend extra money on sustainable goods to support a healthier environment and improved labor conditions. This eagerness stems from the belief that increased prices contribute to wider social and environmental advantages.

Different consumer segments react distinctly to sustainable fashion. Vera Colaço notes that older generations tend to prioritize quality and are more willing to invest in higher-priced, durable items, whereas younger consumers, particularly Generation Z, are more driven by style and trends. However, Gen Z also values authenticity and transparency, indicating a nuanced approach to engaging with these consumers. Social pressure and the desire to align with peer values can significantly influence their purchasing decisions.

Millennials often show a strong inclination towards sustainable practices, motivated by a sense of responsibility towards the environment and society. Melody Viaud exemplifies this trend, noting that she values ethical production processes, use of environmentally friendly materials, and fair labor practices. She is willing to pay a premium for sustainable fashion products, viewing such purchases as investments in a sustainable future. Melody's behavior indicates a deep commitment to sustainability, influenced by an awareness of the social and environmental impact of her consumption choices. Indeed, embracing a sustainable lifestyle is the key priority, which is possible because of her purchase power.

Gen Z consumers are particularly focused on authenticity and transparency but face constraints like limited budget which significantly influence their shopping habits. Pia Beaufiles, representing Gen Z, prefers buying second-hand as a more accessible way to engage with sustainable fashion. This choice

underscores Gen Z's adaptive approach to sustainability, balancing eco-consciousness with economic reality. Despite their strong interest in fashion and style, Gen Z consumers like Pia are pragmatic, often opting for second-hand shopping as a way to participate in sustainable consumption without the premium costs associated with new, sustainably produced goods.

Conclusion

To conclude, we will answer the research questions.

Sustainable fashion brands adopt distinct positioning strategies to differentiate themselves from traditional fashion brands. Fast fashion brands, while incorporating some sustainability practices, often fall short due to their inherent business model which emphasizes rapid production and turnover. This leads to overproduction and significant waste. In contrast, sustainably-born brands focus on transparency, local production, and waste minimization. They emphasize sustainable design from the initial stages and prioritize ethical production processes, which appeals to eco-conscious consumers. Circular models create closed-loop systems that promote recycling and reuse, minimizing resource consumption and waste. These brands often provide repair services and resale platforms, further enhancing their sustainability credentials and market appeal.

Several factors influence consumers' willingness to pay premium prices for sustainable fashion products. Key among these is the perceived quality and durability of the products. Some consumers find that sustainable brands offer superior quality and innovative designs, which justify the higher prices. Additionally, the use of premium raw materials and ethical labor practices inherently increases costs, which consumers recognize. Moreover, the commitment to environmental and social responsibility, as demonstrated by certifications and transparent practices, also plays a significant role in convincing consumers that the higher prices are worth the investment. Eco-conscious consumers are willing to pay more because they view their purchases as contributions to a healthier planet and better working conditions.

When choosing trendy items, consumers often have to choose between sustainability and pricing. Price is still a significant barrier to adopting sustainable practices. Many consumers, especially those with limited resources, prioritize affordability over sustainability, selecting less expensive options even though they may not be as ecologically friendly. However, due to the long-lasting quality and ethical benefits, some customers, especially those with greater disposable income, are willing to pay

more for sustainable items. The perceived longevity and quality of sustainable products, as well as personal financial circumstances, usually impact the decision-making process.

The growth potential and market share of sustainable fashion brands are considerably increased by the rising consumer awareness of environmental and social issues. Transparency and moral behavior are becoming more and more important to consumers when making purchases. Consumer behavior is changing, which puts pressure on established fashion businesses to implement more sustainable practices and strengthens the position of sustainably positioned firms in the marketplace. Companies that show a sincere dedication to moral behavior and successfully convey their sustainability initiatives stand to gain a larger and more devoted following of consumers. As long as sustainable fashion brands keep their operations in line with consumer ideals and legal requirements, there is hope for them.

1. Theoretical Implication

This research enhances the academic discussion about sustainable fashion by strengthening and broadening the theoretical foundations related to consumer behavior, strategic positioning, and market dynamics in the context of sustainability. It emphasizes the intricate relationship between consumer intentions and actual buying behavior, referred to as the attitude-behavior gap, which is a key focus in consumer studies. The results indicate that although a lot of customers are willing to support sustainable practices, their actual buying choices are often affected by things like price, appearance, and convenience, which can take precedence over ethical concerns.

The study further enhances comprehension of how sustainable fashion brands employ strategic positioning to distinguish themselves in a crowded market. This involves implementing transparency in supply chains, investing in sustainable technologies, and obtaining certifications to confirm the ethical origins of the product. These plans are based on the larger idea of establishing shared value, where companies incorporate social and environmental advantages into their fundamental business strategies, aiming to not only improve their competitive edge but also make a positive impact on society.

2. Practical Implication

Essentially, the results offer practical guidance for fashion companies looking to improve their sustainability efforts. Fast fashion brands must go beyond surface-level sustainability initiatives and

incorporate real sustainable methods into their fundamental business models. Eco-conscious consumers are increasingly drawn to sustainably-produced and circular brands that emphasize transparency, local manufacturing, and innovative recycling methods to earn trust and appeal. Furthermore, companies need to tackle the financial obstacles in adopting sustainable fashion by informing customers about the enduring benefits of their items and developing ways to lower the cost of sustainable fashion. Emphasizing regulatory compliance and certifications is essential for validating sustainability claims and should be a top priority to establish consumer confidence and comply with international norms.

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Appendix

Table of the qualitative analysis

THEME 1		POSITIONING	
Source	Verbatim		Sub-theme
Itw Vera Colaço	we have these fast fashion business models, they are incorporating more sustainability practices to making an effort to be more environmentally and socially responsible. For instance, they have a department just on human rights to oversee how the production is made. However, the entire business model, it's very fast fashion oriented.		Fast Fashion
Itw Vera Colaço	very fast fashion and therefore even if they are engaged in reducing their water consumption in using dye that do not need water or they are working with suppliers who have solar panels, it's still not enough		Fast Fashion
Itw Vera Colaço	there's a whole side of the business that is related to overproduction and obviously then overconsumption from the consumer side.		Fast Fashion
Itw Vera Colaço	Their new designs that are launched every week and we see that they have more than 52/53 collections a year		Fast Fashion
Isto website	Local production transport does not justify to locate the production somewhere else.		Sustainably-born
Itw Vera Colaço	80% of you know waste can be avoided at the stage at the development, so conceptualization of the collection is key		Sustainably-born
Itw Pedro Silva	But more and more, you see, even in their websites that they look at where the product is manufactured. So they attest to the labor conditions of those manufacturers.		Sustainably-born
Itw Catarina Gomes	Our branding always emphasizes truth and aims to help the planet regain balance. With the planet's natural reserves constantly endangered, companies that internally manage waste and give it a new life contribute to the planet's equilibrium.		Sustainably-born
Itw Pedro Silva	high quality product. Different from the competition with that, it also must be sustainable as much as possible.		Sustainably-born
Isto website	"ISTO. does not rely on seasonal collections. We care for everyday clothes that fit our everyday needs. That's why we have one single collection and try to make it permanently available."		Sustainably-born
Isto website	"Our meticulous selection process ensures that we only use organic materials with the lowest possible environmental and social impact, while prioritizing durability."		Sustainably-born
Recover website	"They source post-consumer plastic bottles and discarded cotton scraps to create their fabrics, reducing the need for virgin materials and diverting waste from landfills."		Sustainably-born
Ecoalf website	"Ecoalf is founded on the principle of "Because There Is No Planet B," reflecting its deep commitment to environmental sustainability. The brand is dedicated to creating fashion with a purpose, striving to prove that sustainability and style can coexist harmoniously."		Sustainably-born
Sézane website	"Sézane embraces the concept of slow fashion by offering limited editions and timeless designs that are meant to be cherished and worn for years to come"		Sustainably-born
Itw Catarina Gomes	Our company stands out for the circularity of waste. Our added value proposals lie in the valorization of waste and all the components involved in it.		Circular model
Itw Catarina Gomes	After collection we separate all textile waste, by qualities and colours. In this way, the impact of J Gomes is immediately reduced because it is not necessary to dye the yarn to obtain the desired colour as well as the material.		Circular model
Itw Vera Colaço	business models that are based on circular economy. They engage in second hand resell for instance LVMH, they are doing a partnership, they were doing a partnership with Farfetch. We also have companies such as the Real real and Vestiaire collective that only work with resale.		Circular model
Itw Vera Colaço	thrift shops that are trying to deal with the overproduction or with the, you know, goods that are not sold, but they are still very good and good value for money.		Circular model
Recover website	"Recover focuses on creating a closed-loop system where materials are continually recycled and reused in the production process. This minimizes resource consumption and waste generation."		Circular model
Reformation website	Reformation promotes circularity by offering a range of initiatives to extend the lifespan of its products, including repair services, resale programs, and partnerships with resale platforms.		Circular model
Sézane website	"The brand offers repair services for damaged items and encourages customers to donate or resell their gently used Sézane clothing through second-hand marketplaces."		Circular model
THEME 2		STRATEGIES	
Source	Verbatim		Sub-theme
Itw Vera Colaço	But the whole industry itself is still very unsustainable because there's still not lots of transparency from the supplier side.		Supply chain Transparency
Itw Vera Colaço	Suppliers sometimes don't have information about the whole supply chain. They still don't have the full information about where the fiber was extracted from, where the yarn was manufactured.		Supply chain Transparency
Isto website	Isto is a menswear brand and they try to, you know, to have all the production here in Portugal, so they have better control over their production		Supply chain Transparency
Isto website	"This time, we used the knowledge of an external, third-party auditor to ensure partiality and assess the traceability and lifecycle assessment of most our products, including how much water it takes to produce, their energy consumption and CO2 emissions."		Supply chain Transparency
Isto website	"We've been disclosing as much information as possible for years now and the next step - also one of 2023's commitments - seemed quite obvious: to trace our products, from fiber extraction all the way to the finished product, and have more control over our supply chain, so we, as a brand, and you, as a consumer, can keep track of our environmental footprint."		Supply chain Transparency
Sézane website	"Our traceability is 100% for our tier 1 partners (parts assembling). For tier 2 (manufacture of the final material), 95% and 55% for tier 3 (transformation of raw materials). We aim to achieve 100% for tier 2 and 70% for tier 3."		Supply chain Transparency
Recover website	"By controlling our supply chain and having everything under one roof, we are able to offer exceptional quality with quick leads and affordable pricing."		Supply chain Transparency

Ecoalf website	Ecoalf is transparent about its supply chain, from sourcing raw materials to manufacturing and distribution. The brand provides detailed information about its suppliers and production facilities, including their locations and certifications on their website	Supply chain Transparency
Itw Vera Colaço	Now you even see, for instance, companies like H&M. Below is the information concerning the composition of the fabric. You can see the manufacturer's name, so you already see some fast fashion brands disclosing the name of their supplier.	Supply chain Transparency
Itw Vera Colaço	So as of 2026-2027, companies will be required to develop what we call a digital product passport. The DPP falls under the regulation of eco-design for sustainable products regulation, ESPR (ecodesign for Sustainable products regulation) and basically it's a vehicle or through a QR code and blockchain. They basically attach a small chip to the garment and with the QR code you are at the store, and you can scan all the information about the product since the extraction of the raw material.	Supply chain Transparency
Itw Vera Colaço	Third-party agencies that verify if the supplier was paying a fair price for the goods because they may not disclose the full information about the pricing	Supplier Transparency
Itw Vera Colaço	as long as the supplier is paid a fair price and this information is verified by a third-party agency, this should be enough to attest or not the transparency and the good doing of the company when it comes to working with their suppliers.	Supplier Transparency
Itw Pedro Silva	So they attest to the labor conditions of those manufacturers. They even I wouldn't say promote it, but they disclosed it on their website for each product so that you see that more and more.	Supply chain Transparency
Itw Pedro Silva	Tintex as the supplier has their own supplier. So we have responsibility for the suppliers that we choose. And so the brands themselves must have responsibility for the suppliers that they choose. And so that is a good thing to have transparency and traceability along the supply chain.	Supply chain Transparency
Itw Pedro Silva	You have Armed Angels in Germany. They do that, they disclose every portion of the cost calculation and so this goes for raw material, transportation, for packaging and the margin.	Supply chain Transparency
Itw Pedro Silva	So let's say you are a client of mine and another brand discloses your complete cost structure. It would be sensitive information about my business.	Supply chain Transparency
Recover website	It's not that I want to keep my costs or my prices even. It is just necessarily different prices for different clients. "By controlling our supply chain and having everything under one roof, we are able to offer exceptional quality with quick leads and affordable pricing."	Supply chain Transparency
Ecoalf website	Ecoalf is transparent about its supply chain, from sourcing raw materials to manufacturing and distribution. The brand provides detailed information about its suppliers and production facilities, including their locations and certifications on their website	Supply chain Transparency
Itw Catarina Gomes	as a GRS-certified company, the whole chain is checked and the most sustainable and true values are also realised. But it's a long road and there's still a lot to do	Supply chain Transparency
Itw Vera Colaço	Great opportunity for brands to diversify. There are many ways that they can engage in sustainability as a different sustainable business model.	Innovative Solutions
Itw Vera Colaço	There are also great opportunities for companies to reinvent themselves or to diversify into different business models because they have leftovers from collections. Thinking about solution to accommodate leftovers and excess stock that was not sold in the stores et cetera is an opportunity for the growing demand	Innovative Solutions
Itw Vera Colaço	If there are innovative solutions even in the short term, they can be more costly right in the long run. In the long run, you will see the benefits of investing in those solutions because you know at the end of the day, they will save lots of natural resources, which are very needed for the planet.	Innovative Solutions
Itw Pedro Silva	We invest a lot in new processes, new ways of doing things, process optimization, generation of energy in terms of photovoltaic or even reducing our footprint in terms of thermal energy also from. Using biomass instead of natural gas or implementing exchanging units to recover that energy and within the process, and the third pillar would be innovation.	Innovative Solutions
Itw Pedro Silva	So the first thing to do is to have ecodesign in mind. So when we are developing a product or collection, you have to take into account that if you have these properties or this look, you have to look for those fibers and those fibers have advantages and disadvantages.	Innovative Solutions
Itw Pedro Silva	Even choosing a specific fiber, you are limited to specific manufacturers or suppliers in specific countries and all of that and have different factors to take into account.	Innovative Solutions
Itw Pedro Silva	Let's take a process that we do here and it's one of our most important processes and that we are known now worldwide, which is mercerization that basically changes the cellulosic fibers.	Innovative Solutions
Itw Pedro Silva	And so a conventional cotton becomes completely different after being mercerized, but that is a chemical and physical process, and you have chemical inputs, you are in fact using more resources than you would if you don't mercerize. The thing is, when you mercerize the product becomes a lot more durable and so the tricky thing is to have a life cycle assessment to attest the sustainability.	Innovative Solutions
Itw Pedro Silva	Mercerization makes clothes almost shrink free and do not create the fuzziness	Innovative Solutions
Itw Pedro Silva	Sometimes I look back and I say I shouldn't have been so innovative or I shouldn't have been so green, and especially in times like this when the world is in a crisis, an economic crisis.	Innovative Solutions
Itw Pedro Silva	But the truth is that when we reach a bit more difficult times like this and then you say maybe I shouldn't have made that investment, I should have been calmer, and now I would have the buffer to face these times.	Innovative Solutions
Itw Catarina Gomes	We allocate the necessary resources to ensure that performance objectives are met. Invest in research and development to find new technologies and methods that enhance the sustainability of the recycling process.	Innovative Solutions
Recover website	"They design their products with longevity and recyclability in mind, aiming to extend the lifespan of their clothing through durable construction and timeless style. At the end of a product's life, they encourage customers to return items for recycling."	Innovative Solutions
Ecoalf website	"One of Ecoalf's defining features is its focus on using recycled materials to create its products. The brand has developed its own patented technology to transform discarded materials like plastic bottles, fishing nets, tires, and coffee grounds into high-quality fabrics and yarns."	Innovative Solutions
Reformation website	"Reformation implements water-saving practices in its manufacturing processes, such as using innovative technologies and techniques to reduce water consumption during garment production."	Innovative Solutions
Itw Catarina Gomes	This is crucial at this time, making investments to find more sustainable solutions, I'm talking about my area, waste treatment.	Innovative Solutions
Itw Pedro Silva	making them loyal because they build a closer and stronger relationship with the brands, consumers feel more integrated within the brand.	Transparency

Itw Pedro Silva	I would say it's still a tricky thing and I have this discussion a lot because, uh, when we look at our processes, we are not 100% sustainable	Transparency
Itw Pedro Silva	But when I limit my observation or my assessment to the process itself, it has of course more inputs because it consumes more chemicals. So when I just show that assessment to people and say no, this consumes more resources than if you're not mercerized, it is tricky.	Transparency
Itw Catarina Gomes	Open our doors daily and invite consumers, people from the fashion industry, and the general public to better understand the world of recycling and make conscious choices.	Transparency
Itw Vera Colaço	Isto is providing the life cycle assessment and also give exactly how much water, how much energy, they have what we call environmental indicators.	Transparency
Itw Vera Colaço	Informing how much you are producing and how much is the environmental impact is important	Transparency
Itw Vera Colaço	the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive where companies have to engage in reporting the non-financial information.	Transparency
Isto website	"We decided to wrap up our Transparent Week 2023 by inviting other businesses to join us in this Transparency Journey and show what's behind the curtain."	Transparency
Isto website	They disclose the price breakdown by disclosing the costs of labor, fabrics, logistics, transport, material costs, marketing, etc	Transparency
Itw Pedro Silva	We have a dedicated department. We have a sustainability department that deals with those questions. They are applying for certification and work to keep them and keeping them is the most difficult	Teams
Itw Pedro Silva	having all those certifications is costly. It's time consuming, so we have two people, 100% of their job or their daily work is to look at these things. Of course, there are other things, but a big part of what they do is to keep these certifications.	Teams
Itw Pedro Silva	But when I have people to pay, when I have salaries to pay and when I have a structure to maintain, then those kinds of questions arise for sure. And so that is the biggest constraint.	Teams
Itw Pedro Silva	RENEWCELL, a Swedish company that makes a type of viscose that is called cirulose and so the company was founded maybe in 2015. They got a lot of funding, so they were really big in the textile world and because of this crisis in 2022, they started to be less profitable, and then they filed for bankruptcy in February this year.	Teams
Itw Pedro Silva	You have to be as sustainable as possible while making money, because at the end of the day we are people working here. We are employing people.	Teams
Itw Vera Colaço	They are incorporating more sustainability practices to be more environmentally responsible and socially responsible. For instance, they have a department just on human rights to oversee how the production is made.	Teams

THEME 3 LEGISLATION		
Source	Verbatim	Sub-theme
Itw Vera Colaço	Primark again, they are trying to incorporate sustainability practices in their business model and invest in innovative practices not because also because you know the legislation is changing and they need to comply with these measures	Compliance
Itw Vera Colaço	Clean Green Claims Directive is a directive from the European Union and what they are trying to do is they want to ban and verify ethical claims like environmentally friendly or natural or biodegradable.	Compliance
Itw Vera Colaço	Before, there was not much of a regulation, so every brand they could from food to fashion, they could advertise that it's natural, it's biodegradable, but without verifiable ways from third party agencies.	Compliance
Itw Pedro Silva	So nowadays, when brands make claims, they should and must be able to justify those claims, either by having the certification label that helped a lot, of course.	Compliance
Itw Vera Colaço	Until I would say 2026-2027, we will see smaller and medium-sized companies that will start to engage in reporting sustainability and practices for the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, and therefore companies are already, you know, they are making moves to comply with these directives.	Compliance
Itw Vera Colaço	The digital product passport is This allows consumers to access detailed information about the product's sustainability, ethical practices, and other relevant factors before making a purchase but it's not regulated yet.	Compliance
Itw Vera Colaço	Third-party agencies that verify if the supplier was paying a fair price for the goods because they may not disclose the full information about the pricing	Compliance
Itw Pedro Silva	brands require or our clients require certifications so whenever the product is. The product can be certified in any way that proves or that allows for a traceability from fiber to final product. 90% of brands require certifications so that they can test the traceability.	Certifications
Itw Pedro Silva	We have a dedicated department. We have a sustainability department that deals with those questions. They are applying for certification and work to keep them and keeping them is the most difficult	Certifications
Itw Pedro Silva	that's a big thing for us to be able to attest that the products that we produce are not only safe, but there is a third-party certifying our processes and our products because at the end of the day we can say whatever we want and the client may believe it.	Certifications
Itw Catarina Gomes	Certifications are crucial for our company because they attest to the truthfulness of processes and metrics. Everything must be measured to be quantified.	Certifications
Itw Catarina Gomes	To demonstrate J Gomes is certified by the Global Recycle Standard - GRS - which ensures the chain of good environmental as well as social practices.	Certifications
Isto website	"All our suppliers have GOTS Certification, which stands for Global Organic Textile Standard. It's a big deal for factories, for clothing brands and for consumers."	Certifications
Ecoalf website	Ecoalf is certified by organizations such as Global Recycled Standard (GRS) or OEKO-TEX® Standard 100, which verify the use of recycled materials and the absence of harmful substances in its products.	Certifications
Reformation website	"We joined the Ellen MacArthur Jeans Redesign initiative to develop a denim collection that focuses on durability, material health, recyclability, and traceability and is made to be circulated, not wasted."	Certifications
Sézane website	"Five labels, among the industry's most credible, certify our collections: GOTS, Oeko-Tex Standard 100, FSC, LENZING™ ECOVERO™* and RWS"	Certifications
Sézane website	"Since 2021, Sézane has been committed to being a mission-led company and is B Corp certified"	Certifications
Itw Vera Colaço	in the industry Ecotext, I think Tintex works with them, but we also have a for instance, we have the B-Corp, the certification.	Certifications
Itw Vera Colaço	Certifications that are important and in a way, they are trying to communicate with the consumers and even with suppliers that you know the products they verified. They were subjects to scrutinizing, you know, the practices behind their production.	Certifications

THEME 4 CONSUMERS		
Source	Verbatim	Sub-theme
Itw Vera Colaço	the attitude behaviour gap is that the good intentions, sometimes don't really translate into actual purchasing behaviours	Consumer Behavior
Itw Vera Colaço	Many times they go into the less expensive option. OK, so there's the tradeoff.	Consumer Behavior
Itw Vera Colaço	But at the end of the day, the consumers are faced with the final product and he or she will look into the aesthetics will lose in.	Consumer Behavior
Itw Vera Colaço	They will look into the style and the price. So all of these factors will have at the end of the day, they are making tradeoffs.	Consumer Behavior
Itw Catarina Gomes	This issue is particularly relevant because consumers are not yet ready to see sustainability as the way forward.	Consumer Behavior
Itw Vera Colaço	all the influencers are talking about and it's and it's creating a desire in consumers' minds.	How To Attract Consumers
Itw Pedro Silva	I was having a conversation with a colleague about how the consumer sees the certification label and instantly is convinced that that garment was better than another. That doesn't have that label right away, so the certification is a big means of reliability.	How To Attract Consumers
Itw Pedro Silva	making them loyal because they build a closer and stronger relationship with the brands, consumers feel more integrated within the brand.	How To Attract Consumers
Itw Pedro Silva	It's good that there is a greater concern about those questions with the general public for companies like Tintex that made their strategy and vision a long time ago about sustainability.	How To Attract Consumers
Itw Pia Beauflis	Sustainable fashion appears more honest, more expensive, more qualitative, rare	How To Attract Consumers
Itw Pia Beauflis	I always find the quality better than « traditional » (fast fashion) ones, and for design it depends; I think that lots of new brands are changing the game like reformation or guimaguas and they have better designs than h&m	How To Attract Consumers
Itw Pia Beauflis	finding the design / trend that you are searching for in a sustainable first hand brand catalog can be tricky , and in second hand it takes time	How To Attract Consumers
Itw Melody Viaud	Traditional brands often lack transparency and lag in implementing environmentally friendly practices, making them less appealing to me.	How To Attract Consumers
Itw Melody Viaud	key factors that influence my decision to buy from sustainable brands are their ethical production processes, use of environmentally friendly materials, and fair labor practices.	How To Attract Consumers
Itw Pedro Silva	So if you choose premium raw materials, you will pay a premium price. No way around that.	Price
Itw Pedro Silva	I know about my choices, but I cannot demand that other people do the same. For me, it's easy when I buy a better quality, piece of clothing. I know that it will last more so for me because maybe I have the the finances, to buy a €40-t-shirt is okay because it will have a greater lifetime.	Price
Itw Pedro Silva	I cannot say the same or I cannot demand the same for others when I know that they are choosing between buying a T-shirt by for 10-20€ or buying, I don't know food or paying their rents.	Price
Itw Pia Beauflis	I am willing to pay more for smthg more sustainable in the future, but currently I tend to prefer buying second hand as I have small purchasing power	Price
Itw Melody Viaud	Yes, I am willing to pay a premium for sustainable fashion products. I believe that paying more for sustainably made items contributes to a healthier planet and better working conditions for workers in the fashion industry.	Price
Itw Vera Colaço	The older generations, they look more into quality and are more willing to buy less. But it's a little bit more expensive, but because they are looking for quality	Segments
Itw Vera Colaço	When we talk about younger generations like Generation Z, they are still very much into fashion and style and therefore these are probably attributes that weigh more than the sustainability of the product.	Segments
Itw Vera Colaço	I would say that you guys (Gen Z) are very much into authenticity and transparency,	Segments
Itw Vera Colaço	Social pressure is a very important factor or you know it's actually a construct that you should take into consideration the social pressure, especially in the younger generations.	Segments
Itw Pia Beauflis	I have switched my consumption over the last 7 years and always try to buy second hand as much as possible because I think that everything already exists and is of better quality ; unfortunately, sometimes the non-ecological first-hand is the easy solution	Segments
Itw Melody Viaud	the quality and design of sustainable fashion products have improved significantly and often exceed those of traditional fashion items.	Segments
Itw Melody Viaud	I am willing to pay a premium for products that meet my sustainability criteria. I see it as investments in a sustainable future.	Segments