



Analysis of Factors Impacting Sustainable Fashion Consumption based on Means-End Chain Theory (Case Study: Tane Dorost Brand, Iran)

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Abstract

It is essential to examine the values and motivations that influence sustainable fashion consumption in order to better understand consumer behavior and foster eco-friendly practices throughout the fashion industry. Growing concerns about climate change, resource depletion, and waste management have intensified scholarly interest in this topic over recent years. This study explores how consumers' expected consumption outcomes and personal values shape their preferences for sustainable fashion products. Data analyzed through a laddering technique applied to 23 sustainable fashion consumers revealed five dominant perceptual patterns. A hierarchical value map was constructed to capture both direct and indirect relationships among elements. Respondents identified "natural materials" and "quality" as the most salient product attributes, while "feeling good," "social recognition," and "a comfortable life" emerged as their core personal values. The findings enrich the sustainable fashion literature by offering deeper insights into how specific product attributes align with consumers' emotional and symbolic associations and, ultimately, with their underlying personal values.

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Introduction

Ever-increasing consumer demands have pushed businesses toward rapid technological advancement, enabling mass production while operating under the false assumption that natural resources are inexhaustible (Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Conventional business models typically prioritize maximum profitability by satisfying escalating market needs without considering the environmental implications of their actions. This tendency is particularly prominent in the clothing industry, where production has shifted to low-cost countries with poor labor conditions, resulting in reduced garment quality and shorter product lifecycles to accommodate fast-changing consumer preferences and contemporary styles (Goworek et al., 2012).

The fashion sector, as a whole, is failing to achieve its sustainability targets. Unsustainable patterns of consumption and production in fashion exert a direct and profound negative impact on the so-called “triple planetary crisis”—climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Globally, garment production accounts for an estimated 2–8% of total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions while contributing to water scarcity, ecosystem degradation, and social inequities (UNEP, 2023).

Furthermore, population growth and rising income levels have markedly increased textile and fiber production and consumption in recent decades (Shirvanimoghaddam et al., 2020). In this context, many fashion firms have increasingly embraced the logic of “fast fashion retailing,” characterized by the rapid turnover of inexpensive, trend-driven garments launched seasonally to stimulate continuous consumer purchases (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007; Cachon & Swinney, 2011; Vehmas et al., 2018). Fast fashion intensifies environmental pressure by amplifying production impacts and generating vast quantities of textile waste, of which less than 15% are recycled—the remainder being discarded with mixed household waste (Dahlbo et al., 2017; Bianchi & Birtwistle, 2012; Shirvanimoghaddam et al., 2020).

In response, the slow fashion movement has emerged as a countertrend to fast fashion’s unsustainable growth, advocating ethical production, reduced consumption, and an emphasis on quality over quantity (Fletcher, 2010). Slow and sustainable fashion encourage worker empowerment throughout the supply chain, the recirculation and recycling of materials, the use of traditional techniques, and the integration of renewable and organic raw materials (Henninger et al., 2016). Yet, sustainable fashion remains paradoxical (Clark, 2008), as its long-term orientation toward durability and resource stewardship fundamentally contradicts the inherent temporality of fashion trends (Walker, 2012). Norell et al. (1967) posited that fashion could be perceived as a form of art—an interpretation compatible with sustainability’s enduring perspective, emphasizing craftsmanship rather than seasonal disposability.

Existing research on sustainable fashion has primarily focused on parameters such as supply chain dynamics and raw material flows across the design, production, and fabrication stages, while also analyzing retailer practices within four key categories: branding, communication, marketing materials, and barriers to brand acceptance. Although a considerable portion of the consumer behavior literature has examined sustainable fashion at the micro level (Mukendi et al., 2020), most of these studies have concentrated on consumer attributes (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). Previous findings suggest that consumers tend to make more sustainable choices when purchasing clothing (Brandão & da Costa, 2021); nonetheless, the proportion of consumers who consciously adopt sustainable approaches to garment purchases remains limited (Diddi et al., 2019). This gap underscores the importance of exploring consumer motivations more deeply. Broader research into ethical consumption demonstrates that personal values are central to ethical decision-making (Connolly & Prothero, 2008; Schaefer & Crane, 2005), while social and cultural factors likewise exert significant influence on fashion consumption behavior (Iran et al., 2019). Despite efforts to identify



the personal values guiding sustainable fashion consumers, most prior studies have focused on low-context cultural environments (Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Jägel et al., 2012). Scholars investigating national cultural influences on sustainable behavior (Husted, 2005; Cox et al., 2011) found that shared beliefs and collective thinking patterns facilitate sustainable actions more effectively in collectivist than in individualist cultures. It is therefore theoretically plausible that individuals rooted in collectivist societies show greater interest in sustainable consumption practices. Nonetheless, earlier works have emphasized the need for further research in this field (Ramirez, 2010; Iran et al., 2019). Accordingly, the present study examines consumers in Iran—a high-context culture (www.theculturefactor.com, 2023)—to explore the correlations between their values, purchasing motivations, and consumption outcomes. The primary objective of this paper is to assess the personal values and motivational factors shaping sustainable fashion consumption among Iranian consumers.

Literature review

Sustainable fashion can be defined as clothing that integrates one or more dimensions of social and environmental sustainability (Su et al., 2019). These dimensions encompass principles of fair trade, decent working conditions free from exploitation, and the use of environmentally benign materials (Goworek et al., 2012; Chang & Watchravesringkan, 2018). Sustainable fashion—often referred to as slow fashion—emerged, or more precisely re-emerged, as a viable alternative to fast fashion (Sung & Woo, 2019; Henninger et al., 2016). Despite the widespread use of this term in both the media and academic literature, sustainable or slow fashion remains conceptually ambiguous. Rather than standing in direct opposition to fast fashion, it represents a distinct paradigm in which designers, buyers, retailers, and consumers share heightened awareness of the social, environmental, and ethical consequences of fashion products for workers, communities, and ecosystems (Fletcher, 2007).

This broad interpretive scope of sustainable fashion has led to diverse conceptualizations and overlapping definitions throughout the literature (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). For instance, ethical clothing refers to apparel that considers the environmental and social effects of production and trade on the individuals directly or indirectly involved in the manufacturing process (Carey & Cervellon, 2014). Meanwhile, eco-fashion focuses on garments designed and produced to advance societal well-being while minimizing negative ecological impacts (Iran et al., 2019). In line with these perspectives, sustainable fashion encompasses not only what is consumed but also how consumption occurs. Its defining characteristic is a balanced integration of sustainability principles across both consumption and production processes (Chan et al., 2017).

Motivations for sustainable fashion consumption are complex and multifaceted, shaped by an interplay of environmental, social, and personal factors (Szmigin et al., 2009). The sustainable fashion literature emphasizes that environmental concerns are a major driver: consumers who express high levels of concern about climate change are significantly more likely to purchase sustainable fashion items (Gam, 2011; Yang et al., 2012; Cowan & Kinley, 2014; Thompson & Tong, 2016). Diddi and Niehm (2016) further argue that social-responsibility motivations influence consumer choices, as individuals increasingly expect companies to demonstrate sustainable and ethical practices.

Economic considerations also play a decisive role in shaping consumer behavior. Although sustainable fashion products generally carry higher prices, they offer long-term value through superior quality and durability. Consumers who perceive sustainable fashion as yielding greater value over time tend to adopt such purchasing practices (Dangelico et al., 2022). This perspective



stands in contrast to fast fashion, encouraging investment in fewer garments of higher quality and durability (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007; Cachon & Swinney, 2011; Vehmas et al., 2018).

A portion of the literature has explored sustainable fashion consumption at a micro level, focusing on consumer attributes, drivers, and barriers within a marketing context. Joyner-Armstrong et al. (2016) and Bly et al. (2015) indicate that sustainability-oriented consumers who link fashion choices to their self-identity are often fatigued by meaningless consumption cycles and seek relief from prevailing trends and social pressures. Some consumers actively reject fast fashion due to its low quality, preference for supporting local brands, and perceived lack of creativity or authenticity (Kim et al., 2013). The pursuit of self-expression—manifested through cultivating a distinctive personal style and striving for social differentiation—appears recurrent across the literature (Bly et al., 2015; Gam, 2011; Han & Chung, 2014; Lundblad & Davies, 2016). Collectively, these studies underscore the pivotal role of consumer values, attitudes, and perceptions in motivating sustainable fashion choices.

Lundblad and Davies (2016) stand out for their rare empirical inquiry into sustainable fashion motivations using a sample of actual sustainable clothing consumers. Their study demonstrates that ethical commitment guides purchasing behavior: consumers seek to reduce waste, protect the environment, and support the welfare of workers by avoiding exploitative production processes. At the same time, they pursue personal benefits—such as comfort, individuality, aesthetic appeal, and stylistic distinction—reflecting hedonic dimensions of consumption. Lundblad and Davies (2016) offer a nuanced interpretation of self-esteem, self-indulgence, and self-expression, suggesting that sustainable fashion consumers may be driven by egoistic values rooted internally rather than externally. Notably, their findings are derived from participants in a developed, low-context cultural environment, which limits broader cross-cultural generalization. Therefore, while their research provides valuable insights into sustainable consumption motivations, further investigation is warranted to account for the influence of national cultural factors on sustainable behavioral expression (Cox et al., 2011).

Since developed nations—particularly European countries—have taken the lead in promoting sustainable consumption (Wang et al., 2019), much of the existing research has centered on the ethical consumption behaviors of consumers in these contexts. However, the worldview of consumers in developing countries likely differs from that of their counterparts in developed regions for numerous socioeconomic reasons (Bucic et al., 2012). In many developing nations, consumers must balance or even challenge the prioritization of sustainable consumption against the imperative of meeting fundamental needs. Economic development often remains the dominant national and individual priority within less affluent economies (Wang et al., 2019). Moreover, Iqbal and Pireson (2017) contend that consumers in developing countries face economic, social, political, and security challenges that frequently outweigh environmental concerns. Consequently, the values and motivations underlying sustainable consumption behaviors in developing contexts constitute an expansive and still-evolving area of research (Khare & Varshneya, 2017).

Materials and Methods

This study employed the means-end chain approach to explore the hierarchical relationship among product attributes, consumption consequences, and personal values. Holbrook (1999) developed means-end chain theory to explain how consumers' values influence their decision-making processes. The theory posits a hierarchical organization of consumer perceptions and product knowledge, progressing from attributes to consumption consequences and then to overarching personal values. The hierarchy begins with specific product attributes that produce



particular consumption consequences; each consequence, in turn, fulfills one or more significant life values (Holbrook, 1999).

Empirical data were collected through laddering interviews with 23 customers of Tane Dorost Garment Company in Iran. The laddering technique is an in-depth, one-on-one interview method in which participants respond to a series of probing questions such as “Why is this important to you?” (Reynolds & Gutman, 2011). This semi-structured approach facilitates the identification of elements within the means–end chain—namely attributes, consequences, and values. Laddering has long been used to uncover consumer value structures (Humble et al., 2021) and has recently been applied in studies exploring motivations underlying actual sustainable fashion consumption (Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Jägel et al., 2012).

Two general laddering methodologies are recognized: the soft and hard approaches. The traditional soft laddering method requires a skilled researcher to conduct detailed one-to-one interviews, while the hard laddering method involves structured data collection and demands less expertise (Koszewska, 2013). Given the exploratory nature of this study and the relatively small sample size, the soft laddering approach was selected (Costa et al., 2004).

Participants were purposively sampled from customers of Tane Dorost Garment Company. Tane Dorost has been producing and marketing specialized eco-friendly clothing for nearly two decades, operating eight active branches across Iran (www.tanedorost.com, 2023). As no formal customer database existed, data were collected directly from the Tane Dorost store located in Shahid Bakery Hypermarket, Sattari neighborhood, Tehran, following company approval. The company’s sales manager accessed purchase records through the Tane Dorost Customer Club and contacted frequent customers. Individuals who consented to participate were included as interviewees. To capture participants’ authentic consumer behavior, no instructions or prior explanations related to sustainable consumption were provided. Consequently, purposive non-probability sampling was adopted. This sampling technique—in which participants are deliberately selected to yield relevant and information-rich cases—aligns with qualitative research principles (Tongco, 2007). Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the study participants.

Table 1. Demographics of the participants ($n=23$)

Variable	Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)
Gender		
Male	10	43
Female	13	57
Age		
<30	9	39
30-50	7	30
>50	7	30
Education		
<Bachelor	7	30
Bachelor	9	39
Master	5	22
Ph.D.≥	2	9
History		
>1 year	4	17
1-4 years	13	57
>4 years	6	26



Research Findings

Following the completion of ladder interviews and the development of individual ladders, the data analysis proceeded through the series of steps outlined by Gengler and Reynolds (1995). In the first step, the content of the ladder interview elements was summarized, with all responses classified into independent expressions. The second step involved generating a consolidated set of summarized elements that captured the range of ideas expressed across participants, organized according to the three core means–end classification concepts—attributes, consequences, and values. This stage is particularly important, as it establishes categories broad enough to encompass responses from multiple interviewees.

Regarding the conceptualization of values, the framework proposed by Stern et al. (1993) was employed to guide the interpretation and categorization of statements. Through this coding process, a total of 27 condensed content codes were derived, comprising 9 attributes, 11 consequences, and 7 values (see Table 2). In instances where clarification was necessary, the wording and expressions used by Jägel et al. (2012) were consulted to inform the coding and ensure conceptual alignment.

Table 2. Attributes, consequences, and values of Tane Dorost customers

Attribute	Freq.	Consequence	Freq.	Value	Freq.
A1: natural materials	36	C1: Feel of wearing	16	V1: Comfortable life	14
A2: Quality	15	C2: Value for money	15	V2: Feeling good	27
A3: Product performance	25	C3: Saving	5	V3: Inner harmony	15
A4: comfort and fit	9	C4: Promote health	11	V4: social recognition	14
A5: Style	26	C5: Looking good	28	V5: health	12
A6: Color	16	C6: Avoid attention	12	V6: self-respect	15
A7: Intimacy	3	C7: Convenience	14	V7: a world of beauty	1
A8: Choice and availability	6	C8: Reduce preoccupation	15		
A9: Local sourcing	1	C9: Trust	2		
		C10: Reduce buying	10		
		C11: Promote local economy	1		

The development of the hierarchical value map (HVM) represents the final step in the analysis. An initial inference design matrix was used to extract the HVM, which provides a semantic structure for representing interviewees' subjective responses and serves as a practical tool for decision-making and problem-solving. The hierarchical value map is generated by reconstructing the chains derived from the collected data, where each chain corresponds to the sequential linkage of elements identified in the inference matrix.

A common approach to developing the HVM involves establishing a “cut-off” index—that is, the minimum number of links required for a researcher to include an element in the map. Employing multiple cut-off values (typically three to five links for samples of approximately 50–60 participants) allows researchers to select elements that yield the most informative and stable relationships (Reynolds & Gutman, 2001). In this study, direct and indirect relationships among variables were examined based on the minimum link criterion defined by the cut-off index, thereby constructing hierarchical chains that reflect the interconnections between attributes, consequences, and values. According to this procedure, a cut-off value of two was adopted.

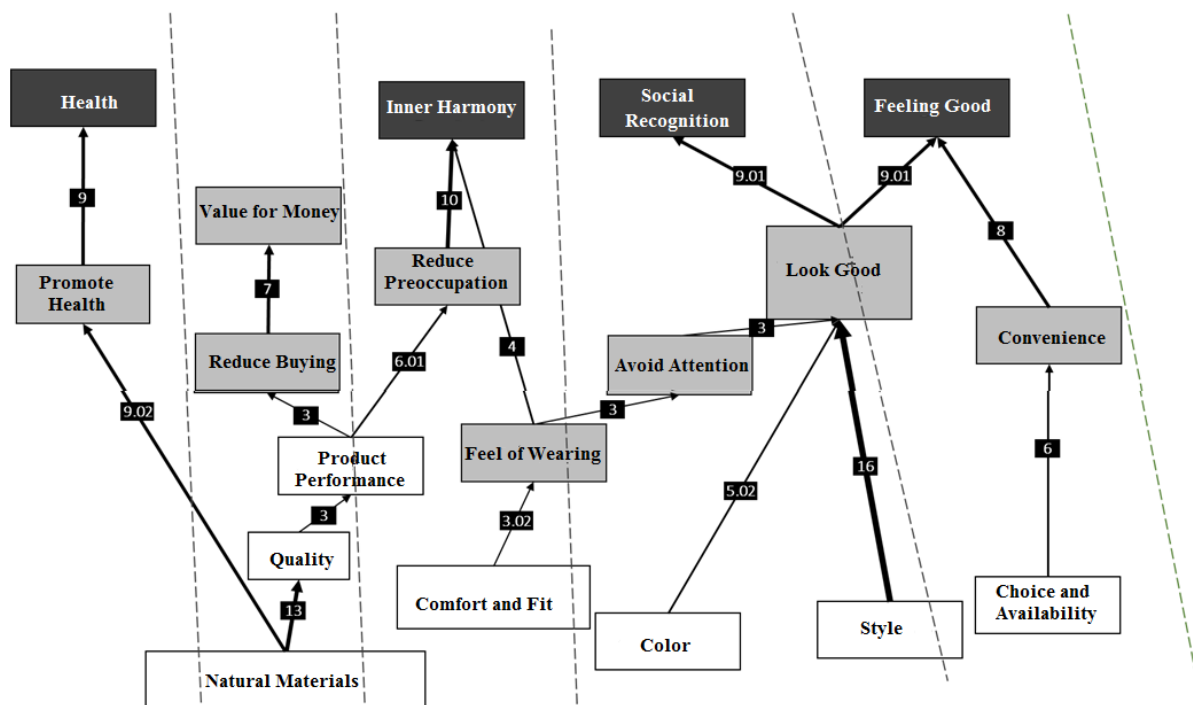


Figure 1. Hierarchical value map

According to Figure 1, the general product attributes—such as design, quality, and environmental aspects (i.e., the use of natural materials)—occupy the lowest level of the hierarchical value map. The subsequent layer represents the consequences, encompassing a set of perceived performance, emotional, and psychological benefits that consumers associate with purchasing sustainable clothing. These include perceived value for money, reduced purchase frequency, the sensory and emotional experience of wearing sustainable garments, and a diminished sense of preoccupation associated with consumption. At the top of the hierarchy lie four overarching personal values that guide sustainable clothing behavior: health, inner harmony, social recognition, and feeling good.

To elaborate, five distinct motivational patterns were derived to interpret these relationships further. Through reverse data analysis, each pattern was examined to uncover the underlying connections between consumers' values, motivations, and product attributes that define their engagement in sustainable fashion consumption.

1) Pattern 1: Health

The participants believed that materials used in sustainable clothing promoted health in light of their natural and chemical-free fibers. The attribute “natural materials” is directly associated with the promotion of consumers' physical health. Therefore, “health” is a key value in sustainable fashion buying.

“Well, I chose this kind of garments because they're made of natural fibers. Those made from synthetic and polymer fabrics hurt your body over time and cause irritation.” P18

“I spend a big part of the day outside home and keep my clothes on for a long time. So I try to pick a kind of cloth that has good quality and does not harm my health.” P10

“I always care a lot about my health and choose clothes that are harmless to my health.” P10



II) Pattern 2: Value for money

In the second perceptual pattern, natural materials used in clothing are intrinsically related to product quality. In fact, consumers assume that natural fabrics have higher quality than synthetic fabrics.

"I've done research and found that natural fibers are used in these clothes. I've bought many clothes made of synthetic fabrics, and I have seen their quality decline soon. But I have bought clothes of this brand, and they have not gone deformed." P11

Quality is, in turn, associated with product performance. Performance is a key attribute to consumers when buying garments. They seek to choose clothes that are durable over long periods and can be worn in different situations.

"I expect it to stay OK to wear for at least a year." P15

Consumers believe that high-quality clothing reduces the purchase frequency. They feel that they do not need to buy more clothes when they can keep their current clothes for a long period. Reduced buying, in turn, helps consumers save costs.

"High-quality clothes remain firm and stylish, and their color won't change. I can use them for like four to five years instead of just one year. So I won't need to spend money to buy new ones. I can save it for other things." P18

"When my clothes remain useable for years, I can save money and don't need to buy new clothes." P4

To sum up this chain, consumers are motivated to purchase sustainable fashion in light of the advantages of high-quality clothing, such as reduced buying frequency and higher value for money in the long term. Therefore, those who purchase sustainable fashion seek to obtain higher quality and product performance, both of which appear to meet customers' goals of reducing costs. This shows that financial interests impact sustainable fashion consumption.

III) Pattern 3: Inner harmony

Inner harmony was found to be a key value. It is represented through two main chains and refers to consumers' peace of mind. The attribute "product performance" helps consumers to reduce their preoccupation with buying clothes in their lives.

"Most of my clothes can be worn in all kinds of situations, like in the university and daily life. This is important to me because I am an over-thinker. I'd like to not overthink at least about what to wear, especially because it's something I have to do every day." P1

A number of participants believed that the high performance of Tane Dorost products helps reduce their preoccupation and have inner harmony.

"I would rather buy something I can wear everywhere so I don't have to think about what to wear all the time." P1

The next chain is the style of fashion products, which is associated with comfort and fit. A number of participants stated that comfort and fit in sustainable products help them feel relaxed. In fact, consumers tend to choose comfortable clothes. This comfort is not limited to physical comfort, e.g., reduced sweating; it also includes mental comfort, as some of the participants stated that they could not wear undersized and tight clothes, and comfortable and slightly oversized clothes gave them more mental relaxation.

"I just can't wear tight clothes because they are totally annoying." P4



"I don't feel comfortable in tight clothes. It feels like something heavier is on my chest and just annoys me." P16

The concepts "fit and comfortable" and "natural materials" are strongly correlated with the consequence "feel of wearing." Consumers tend to have a "feel of wearing" in their clothes. Such clothes have a modest style and can be worn in multiple situations. This leads to the advantage of "reduced preoccupation." Furthermore, fit clothes help consumers feel comfortable, leading to inner harmony.

IV) Pattern 4: Social recognition

The fourth pattern is focused on the need to be socially recognized, which is met through the two chains of "looking good" and "avoiding attention." Here, "looking good" is related to the attributes "style" and "color." Consumers consider style to be a major parameter when buying sustainable clothes. They believe that such clothes are not only stylish but also up-to-date and attractive.

"Not only were they modest, but they were also stylish and exactly what I look for in clothes." P16

"It has a fine style and good finish, which I really like." P7

"These products are modern and nice, not old-fashioned at all." P12

Apart from "style," "color" was also considered by the consumers to be important. Neutral colors and color diversity were key attributes when choosing sustainable clothing.

"The clothes mostly have a neutral color, which is really good." P11

Consumers highly tend to look good. Although some participants believed that only their own judgment was important, most of the participants mentioned that good clothing can bring confidence.

"I can wear a cloth that I like over and over again and still feel I'm looking good in it. I don't care what people say or think about me wearing a cloth multiple times." P7

"I just want to look good and stylish in people's eyes." P11

"I would like to look stylish wherever I am because it's important that people think you look good." P15

The second chain is focused on avoiding attention while wearing sustainable clothing. The participants tended to wear clothes that are decent in their national culture rather than clothes that may seem indecent.

"I'd like to seem normal. I am also an office employee and need to observe clothing codes." P2

"This cloth is not indecent and doesn't draw abnormal attention." P7

"I usually don't want to draw people's attention while outside." P3

The attributes "style," "color," and "fit and comfortable" are all related to the consequence of "looking good. Consumers choose clothes that are socially acceptable. This is not consistent with Lundblad and Davies (2016), who denied the role of social acceptance in choosing clothes and argued that clothing choices are strongly based on self-identity and non-conformity.

V) Pattern 5: Feeling good

For the attribute "choice and availability," sustainable fashion consumers follow a relatively simple perceptual pattern. Product diversity is crucial to some consumers. They expect the products of Tane Dorost to have full diversity so that they can meet their demands in one visit and a short time. Design diversity was also important to the participants.



"Tane Dorost has good diversity in its products and I can find what I want, like bags, shoes, socks, and everything." P2

"When I come here, I can find whatever I need because they really have a variety of products." P4

"They have various types and designs of clothes. Every time I come here, I find new things." P8

This product diversity is associated with the advantage of convenience. The consumers see this advantage as leading to "feeling good" and a pleasant experience.

"They have everything I might need, like bags, shoes, dresses, and socks, and it is really easy to buy things here. I walk out the door happy." P2

"They have everything you might want, and you don't need to go shop by shop just to find something you need. This may seem a little thing, but, to people like me who don't have time, it is a big help and makes me feel happy the whole day." P2

The consequence "looking good" is also associated with the value "feeling good." Clothes that have an attractive style and color help consumers express their identity. Therefore, sustainable fashion consumption leads to "feeling good" through self-expression.

"Clothes that have good quality and look nice make me feel really good." P16

"I'd just like to wear clothes with happy and beautiful colors because that makes me feel good and happy." P4

Discussion and Conclusion

Figure 1 illustrates the hierarchical value map and the five motivational patterns identified through ladder interviews. By analyzing both the hierarchical value map and participants' personal perspectives, researchers can better comprehend how specific product attributes connect to emotional and symbolic meanings and, in turn, relate to underlying consumer values. According to Stern et al. (1993), values can be categorized into three groups—egoistic, altruistic, and biospheric. The findings of this study reveal that all identified values fall within the egoistic category. Therefore, this research does not support previous studies (Jägel et al., 2012; Lundblad & Davies, 2016), which suggested that altruistic and biospheric values are equally influential for sustainable fashion consumers. Lundblad and Davies (2016) emphasized that egoistic values offering advantages such as feeling good, improved health, social recognition, and inner harmony should not be overlooked when analyzing sustainable fashion consumption; the present results reinforce this argument.

The outcomes derived from the laddering data advance current understanding of consumer perceptions, aligning with earlier findings on sustainable product consumers' value structures (Chi et al., 2021; Dangelico et al., 2022). The present study therefore supports previous research on the perceived value of sustainable products. In the context of sustainable fashion, Moon et al. (2015) demonstrated that perceived value can predict consumers' willingness to pay premium prices. Consistent with this, the current findings show that garments produced from eco-friendly materials enhance both purchasing intention and willingness to pay. Consumers who associate products with high performance and quality exhibit a greater readiness to pay higher prices for these expected benefits (Homburg et al., 2005).

Gabriel and Lang (1995) proposed that individuals consume fashion to fulfill needs for social recognition, self-esteem, and acceptance—patterns also observed in the present study. Fashion consumption continues to serve as a medium for identity expression. Although Lundblad and Davies (2016) argued that sustainable fashion consumers are predominantly guided



by internal egoistic motivations rather than external social approval, the present findings suggest that personal and social acceptance remain salient factors influencing clothing choice. Iranian consumers seek garments that are perceived as attractive both by themselves and by others, contradicting Lundblad and Davies's (2016) prediction that sustainable fashion would lose appeal once it became mainstream.

While direct relationships between minimalism and performance in everyday clothing and reduced preoccupation were not previously examined, earlier research has highlighted numerous psychological pathways through which clothing choice affects well-being and behavior. Clothing exerts multifaceted psychological effects, closely tied to social recognition, identity formation, and interpersonal dynamics. Previous studies confirm that attire can influence both psychological states and personal performance (Adam & Galinsky, 2012) and exert substantial impact on mental health and emotional stability (Lindeman et al., 2023). The present study adds a new dimension by demonstrating that clothing minimalism contributes to reduced preoccupation and, consequently, greater inner harmony among consumers. Minimalist garments are valued for their flexibility, as they can be worn across diverse settings such as work, education, and leisure activities. This functionality reduces the time and mental effort spent on garment selection, thereby fostering a sense of inner balance.

Sustainability-related motivations emerged primarily in association with the value of health. Consumers perceive health enhancement as a major benefit of purchasing sustainable clothing (Hustvedt & Dickson, 2009). However, Iranian consumers' awareness of other sustainability dimensions appears limited. For sustainable fashion practices to develop effectively, long-term transformation in consumers' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors is essential. Educational efforts and awareness programs addressing the environmental and social consequences of current fashion consumption patterns are necessary before broader acceptance of sustainable fashion principles can occur (Khalili-Poorrodi & Dadashian, 2014).

Managerial implications

The results indicate that organic product factors exert the strongest influence on purchase intention. Accordingly, sustainable fashion manufacturers should prioritize product attributes such as fabric quality, style, and color to attract a broader customer base. Particular emphasis should be placed on fabric quality, ensuring that garments support consumer health—including those with skin sensitivities—and possess high durability to prevent deformation and quality decline. However, greater durability may reduce consumers' need for frequent repurchase. To address this challenge while maintaining growth, sustainable brands are encouraged to adopt alternative strategies such as repair services, recycling initiatives, and designs incorporating replaceable accessories to extend product lifecycles (Lundblad & Davies, 2016).

Despite the case-study company's use of the term sustainable fashion in branding and communication, findings reveal limited consumer awareness regarding the broader dimensions of sustainability. Few participants referenced its social or environmental aspects. This underscores the need for enhanced educational efforts, public relations, and targeted marketing campaigns to raise awareness of sustainability issues within the fashion industry.

Limitations and future directions

This study faced both intrinsic and contextual limitations related to data complexity and scope. The initial ladder interview data were rich and multilayered, revealing intricate connections among product attributes, consumption consequences, and personal values. However, translating these complexities into a simplified visual framework such as the hierarchical value map



(Oliveira et al., 2006) and selecting and prioritizing data elements (Gengler & Reynolds, 1995) inevitably entailed some loss of subtle or infrequent information. Addressing these nuances therefore remains a promising direction for future research.

To assess the influence of demographic parameters—including age, gender, income, education, and geographical background—on sustainable fashion purchase intention, it is critical to clarify how these factors interact with consumers' sustainable behaviors (Dangelico et al., 2022; Lin & Chen, 2022; Tran et al., 2022). Each demographic dimension can shape attitudes toward paying premium prices for sustainable products and moderate the relationship between sustainability and fashion consumption. Although the present study did not examine demographic effects, future investigations should evaluate their potential influence to generate more actionable insights. Such work can guide the development of targeted strategies that effectively promote sustainable fashion consumption across consumer segments.

Another limitation lies in the use of customers from a single fashion enterprise to explore factors influencing sustainable fashion consumption. This methodological focus constrains the generalizability of the findings; the results may not fully represent consumers of other sustainable fashion brands. To enhance generalizability, future studies should include multiple fashion companies, capturing diverse consumer bases and business models to produce a more holistic view of sustainable fashion determinants.

Notably, this study emphasizes sustainable fashion's connection to inner harmony, underscoring the intrinsic value of minimalism and adaptability in clothing choices. The ability of sustainable garments to function across various contexts—such as casual outings, formal events, and daily wear—increases consumer satisfaction and convenience. This dimension of sustainability transcends environmental benefits by offering psychological advantages, highlighting the significance of thoughtful and functional design in fostering positive consumer experiences. As this is a novel observation within the sustainable fashion literature, further research should explore the depth and scope of these mental benefits. Such studies could reveal pathways for encouraging consumers to adopt sustainable fashion lines and contribute to a richer understanding of sustainability-oriented consumption behavior. Moreover, examining how sustainable fashion choices affect perceptions of style, positivity, and social identity may uncover the degree to which such consumption reflects self-expression and enhances social status—insights valuable for both consumers and industry practitioners alike.

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