

The Application of Environmental Ethics in the Study of Clothing History: Exploring the Relationship Between Sustainable Fashion and Cultural Value

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Abstract: The relationship between cultural values and sustainability draws from various accounts and developments in the clothing industry. To date, fundamental developments and progressions mark the evolution of the clothing industry, with the application of environmental ethics implicating fundamental changes and advancements. The present research delved into an intensive investigation of the application of environmental ethics throughout the history of clothing and fashion design. Fundamentally, the environmental ethos has been deliberated to attain ethically driven and environmentally friendly clothing. Unique designs have been implemented in compliance with cultural values. The fundamentals of cultural value in sustainable fashion draw from the role of fashion as a marker of identity and an important aspect of cultural elements of life. The cultural values demanded the limitation of environmental pollution, outsourcing of production, and consideration of alternative and better materials for fashion designs. This relationship entails diverse fundamentals and intricate elements constraining fashion designs within the context of cultural values.

Keywords: Environmental Ethics, Sustainable Fashion, Cultural Values, Fashion Design

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the rapid depletion of natural resources to a dangerous magnitude has sparked sustainability concerns in various industries across the world. The fashion industry is no exception to the sustainability discussions, as fashion and textile activities negatively impact natural resources. According to statistics, the fashion industry is responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions, making it the world's second pollutant (Niinimäki, 2010; Razzaq et al., 2018). The increasing unsustainable fashion items have been attributed to the demand for cheap products. In Asia, for instance, low-quality and low-cost fashion items characterize Asian markets, marking unsustainable practices (Niinimäki, 2010). Consumers and environmentalists value environmental ethics. In one survey, 94.6% of the respondents emphasized purchasing repairable, quality and durable clothes that do not negatively impact the environment despite the high

costs (Niinimäki, 2010). Since its inception in businesses, sustainability has been measured based on three parameters: societal, environmental and economic impacts (Caniato et al., 2012; Niinimäki, 2010). The conceptualization of sustainability in fashion focuses on societal equity, environmental protection and economic growth. Owing to the nexus between sustainability and cultural values, fashion consumers have displayed inherent dissonance on environmental ethics with respect to anti-ethical and ecological practices among cloth producers (Caniato et al., 2012; Joy et al., 2012). Characteristically, the principle of environmental ethics protects environmental resources. The scramble to apply environmental ethics aims at sanitizing fashion businesses from unethical and unsustainable operations. This application is core marketing cloth items deemed sustainable. Sustainable fashion in the context of cultural values is not a synonym for environmentalism (Razzaq et al., 2018). Previous studies report conflicting outcomes of sustainability issues on clothing. Thus, the nexus between sustainable fashion and cultural values remains unclear. Sustainability themes and environmental ethics emerge through adverse effects of business activities that do not align with cultural values pertaining to the environment. The Geneva Environmental Network reports that garbage tracks offload clothes in landfills every second. While plastics compose 60% of raw materials in the fashion industry, 20% of pollutants in global water sources result from clothes industries (Figure 1). Nonetheless, pollutions are bound to increase with the growth of the fashion industry.

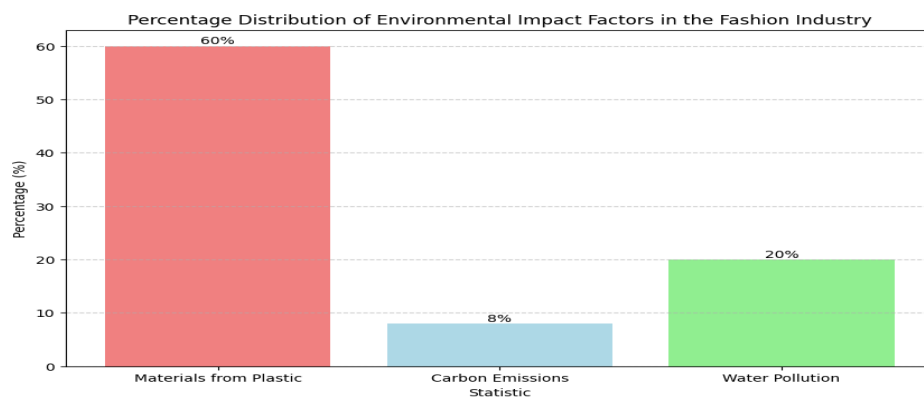


Figure 1: Environmental Footprints of the Clothes Industry

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 The Relationship between Cultural Values and Sustainable Fashion

The intricate interplay between cultural values and sustainable fashion

regards the fundamentals of environmental ethics. In recent years, stakeholders and consumers have demanded sustainability and accountability. Consequently, fashion houses and clotheslines are confronted with an urgent need to consider environmentally related responsibilities and considerations. Profound environmental ethics constraining the interplay between cultural values and fashion sustainability include environmental justice, conservation, stewardship, ecocentrism and biocentrism. These ethical principles are deployed to reduce adverse effects on the environment like carbon emission, water pollution and unsustainable operations in production and supply chain systems. Upholding environmentally sound and sustainable practices demonstrate adherence to ethical standards. The historical accounts of the relationships between sustainable fashion and cultural value depict an intricate detail of fashion trends, practices and environmental implications. The evolution of cultural values and fashion trends and practices profoundly shape the production of fashion items and clothes, often aiming at reducing environmental degradation. The historical accounts of environmental ethics posit that cultural values determine the fashion trends of every generation. In fact, cultural values condition individuals to pay for sustainable clothing (Khan et al., 2024). Over the years, the interplay between cultural values and sustainable fashion emerged through the concept of collectivism. Based on this concept, individuals identifying with a particular culture are inclined to eco-friendly fashion practices collectively (Hussain & Huang, 2022; Khan et al., 2024). The cultural values constrain eco-friendly approaches and practices to fashion forgo individual interests and cooperate towards achieving sustainability. Generally, collectivists are concerned with the production and consumption of clothing that does not harm the environment. Often, collectivists, like the Chinese community, enforce positive environmental attitudes and perceptions among members of the community. Historically, the relationship between cultural values and sustainable fashion was deeply rooted in environmental concerns and ethics. Through centuries of development and evolution, the consumption of clothing and cultural values significantly influenced the consumption of clothing with regard to environmental ethics (Niinimäki, 2010; Niinimäki et al., 2020). In areas without profound environmental protection, clothing degraded the environment, whereas in areas where cultural values implicated environmental protection, production methods and supply chains championed environmental protection and preservation. Table 1 highlights key elements of defining the application of environmental ethics in exploring the interplay between cultural values and sustainable fashion.

A multidimensional landscape emerges to demonstrate the intricate relationship.

Table 1: Key Elements Defining the Intricate Relationship Between Cultural Values and Sustainable Fashion

Key Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural values and sustainable fashion are intricately linked. - Environmental ethics principles like environmental justice, conservation, stewardship, ecocentrism, and biocentrism play a crucial role. - Historical accounts show that cultural values influence fashion trends and practices, aiming to reduce environmental degradation. - Collectivism fosters eco-friendly fashion practices collectively among individuals identifying with a particular culture. - Cultural values shape perceptions and attitudes towards environmental protection and influence fashion consumption behaviors. - In areas with strong environmental protection values, fashion production methods and supply chains prioritize environmental preservation.

3. APPLICATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN MARKETING STRATEGIES

As the sustainability concerns and campaigns increase across the board, environmental ethics and fashion sustainability within the cultural context. Environmental issues influence consumers' decisions for or against commodities (Niinimäki, 2010). With these developments, advances and ethically backed marketing approaches characterize fashion players, including marketing changes. A characteristic development regards the use of ethical and environmental ethics terms: green fashion, ethical fashion, and environment-friendly clothing (Joy et al., 2012; Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Razzaq et al., 2018). Such marketing strategies work in communities with vibrant pro-environmental attitudes and perspectives. Interestingly, dissonance among fashion consumers arises due to double speeches by fashion producers, where producers purport to comply with environmental ethical standards that are not reflected in their produce (Joy et al., 2012; Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Niinimäki, 2010). In connection with this point, environmental ethics have been applied in production through recycling or reusing of materials, especially water, disposition and consumption of fashion items in distinct ways to minimized adverse impacts on the economy, society and environment as a unit (Caniato et al., 2012; Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Razzaq et al., 2018). The argument fronted by this approach regards a multidimensional approach to crucial matters contrasting cultural values. The mindfulness of economic, societal and

environmental matters is an indicator of a multidimensional approach to fashion sustainability within cultural value systems and contexts, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: The Relevance of the Application of Environmental Ethics to Demonstrate the Interplay between Cultural Value and Sustainable Fashion

Key Points	Relevance to Environmental Ethics	Relevance to Sustainable Fashion
Environmental Concerns Influencing Consumer Decisions for or Against Compliant Clotheslines	High	High
Implementation of Ethically Backed Marketing Approaches.	High	High
Influential Terms Like Green Fashion, Ethical Fashion, and Environment-Friendly Clothing are Used.	High	High
Effective Marketing Strategies Drive Communities with Pro-Environmental Attitudes Down the Sales Funnel.	High	High
Dissonance Emerges When Fashion Producers Claim to be Environmentally Compliant but Fail to Deliver.	High	High
Environmental Ethics are Applied in Production through Recycling and Reusing Materials.	High	High
Economic, Societal, and Environmental Concerns by Fashion Industries and Key Players.	High	High
A Multidimensional Approach to Fashion Sustainability Considers Cultural Values and Contexts.	High	High

4. ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN PRODUCTION AND SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

In the history of clothing and environmental ethics, consumers in the 21st century are deemed responsible for sustainable fashion products and respect societal values than the previous era. The rise of sustainable practices pushes consumers to assess products' compliance to set standards governing environmental, economic and societal values through ethics. Often, evaluating whether a company's products are environmentally friendly is not costly to consumers. Since ethics influence consumers' decisions, consumers strive for environmentally friendly production

methods or materials (Niinimäki, 2010). The application of environmental ethics in the Asian textile industry saw the division of clothing supply chains into regions, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, to tap the inexpensive labour into sustainable production processes. The division of the Asian supply chain aimed to gauge compliance with sustainability standards as fashion items from each region were assessed. The assessment ascertains whether the entire production and supply chains are secured and account for environmental ethics (Joy et al., 2012). Environmental ethics unfolds in multiple ways in the production and supply chain systems. Firstly, the production processes threaten environmental well-being through pollution through emissions, wastes and effluents (Caniato et al., 2012; Niinimäki, 2010; Pedersen et al., 2018). Generally, environmental ethics aim at reducing the adverse effects of the byproducts of the production processes. For instance, in a bid to address the pollution, fashion houses in Cambodia, India, China and other parts of the world have resorted to various approaches, including manufacturing cloths using garments and textiles that do not consume a lot of energy, treating wastewater, reducing carbon emission and chemical use in manufacturing processes (Niinimäki et al., 2020). In connection with this point, the Chinese textile industry, which is dependent on coal-based energy, has a higher carbon emission than Europe or Turkey by 40%. For countries depending on coal and energy sources that pollute the environment, production scales have been downscaled, the use of non-renewable energy has been discouraged, and the production of polyester has been substituted by renewable plant-based textiles (Niinimäki et al., 2020; Pedersen et al., 2018). Limiting energy consumption reduces energy production through erratic methods like coal burning. The history of sustainable fashion and cultural values has seen the ditching of coal-based products to eco-friendly and sustainable approaches like renewable sources of energy. Characteristically, the companies have resorted to saving energy by developing energy-efficient products, which has been a remarkable intervention in recent years (Caniato et al., 2012). Secondly, clotheslines adopt economies of scale by outsourcing mass cloth production in select countries. Zara, for instance, outsources 13% of their cloth production in China (Caniato et al., 2012; Niinimäki et al., 2020). In contrast to China, European textile industries pose more environmental threats. Thus, Zara limits environmental degradation by outsourcing production services in China and selling the commodities in China. Lastly, the textile industry employs 15, 000 different chemicals, leaching the soil (Niinimäki et al., 2020). The aftermath of leached soil includes reduced soil fertility and biodiversity, interrupted biological processes in the soil and

destruction of insects, plants and micro-organisms in the soil. Strategically, genetically modified cotton species have been introduced to eliminate the dependence on pesticides to grow cotton (Caniato et al., 2012). Genetically modified cotton wool plants resist pests and attacks by workers, averting the threat of pests that create the need for pesticide application, as summarized in the table below.

Table 3: A Summary of Environmental Ethics in Establishing the Relationship between Cultural Values and Sustainable Fashion

Environmental Ethics	Sustainability in Fashion & Cultural Values
Reducing Pollution by Emissions, Wastes, Effluents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopting manufacturing processes with lower energy consumption. • Implementing wastewater treatment. • Reduction of carbon and effluent emissions alongside chemical usage. • Shifting from coal to renewable sources. • Substituting polyester with renewable plant-based textiles. • Promoting energy-efficient production processes and products. • Emphasizing eco-friendly and sustainable practices in line with cultural values.
Outsourcing Production Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizing economies of scale to reduce adverse environmental outcomes. • Enforcing environmental regulations • Mitigating environmental threats through outsourcing inexpensive labour to countries like China.
Limiting Chemical use in Textile Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing genetically modified cotton species as replacement for pesticide-dependent plants. • Adopting pest-resistant cotton varieties to lower pesticide usage. • Preserving soil fertility and biodiversity.

As supply chain operations call for the application of environmental ethics, pertinent measures have been taken to reduce environmental pollution. A paramount measure adopted in nations with large clothing and textile industries is sustainable shipping. Air cargo, which accounts for 35% of carbon emissions, transports only 1% of the global cloth items from manufacturers to retailers, distributors and other dealers (Niinimäki et al., 2020). Apart from the preference for ship cargo, the large-scale approach has been given to the shipping of cloth items to central distribution centres in Europe, Asia, and the United States of America. To avert pollution by aircraft, manufacturers and distributors have retained shipping by water vessels, especially cargo ships (Niinimäki et al., 2020). Generally,

clotheslines evaluate the environmental impacts of the transport methods. Such assessments ascertain compliance with the environmental policies governing environmental pollution resulting from the textile industry (Caniato et al., 2012). Environmentalists recommend the use of shipping methods that have the least environmental impacts, shaping distribution and supply chain activities. Secondly, the interplay between cultural values and sustainable fashion merges through polyester's dominance in the textile industry. The synthetic material accounts for 51% (54 000 000 tons), followed by 25% cotton (26 00 000 tons). The preference for polyester in the fashion industry regards the fact its production processes neither consume a lot of energy and water in bleaching, finishing or dyeing processes, as compared to fibre production (Niinimäki et al., 2020). Previous investigations report that 20% of the textile industrial water contributes to 35% of the global water pollutants, as represented in the figure below.

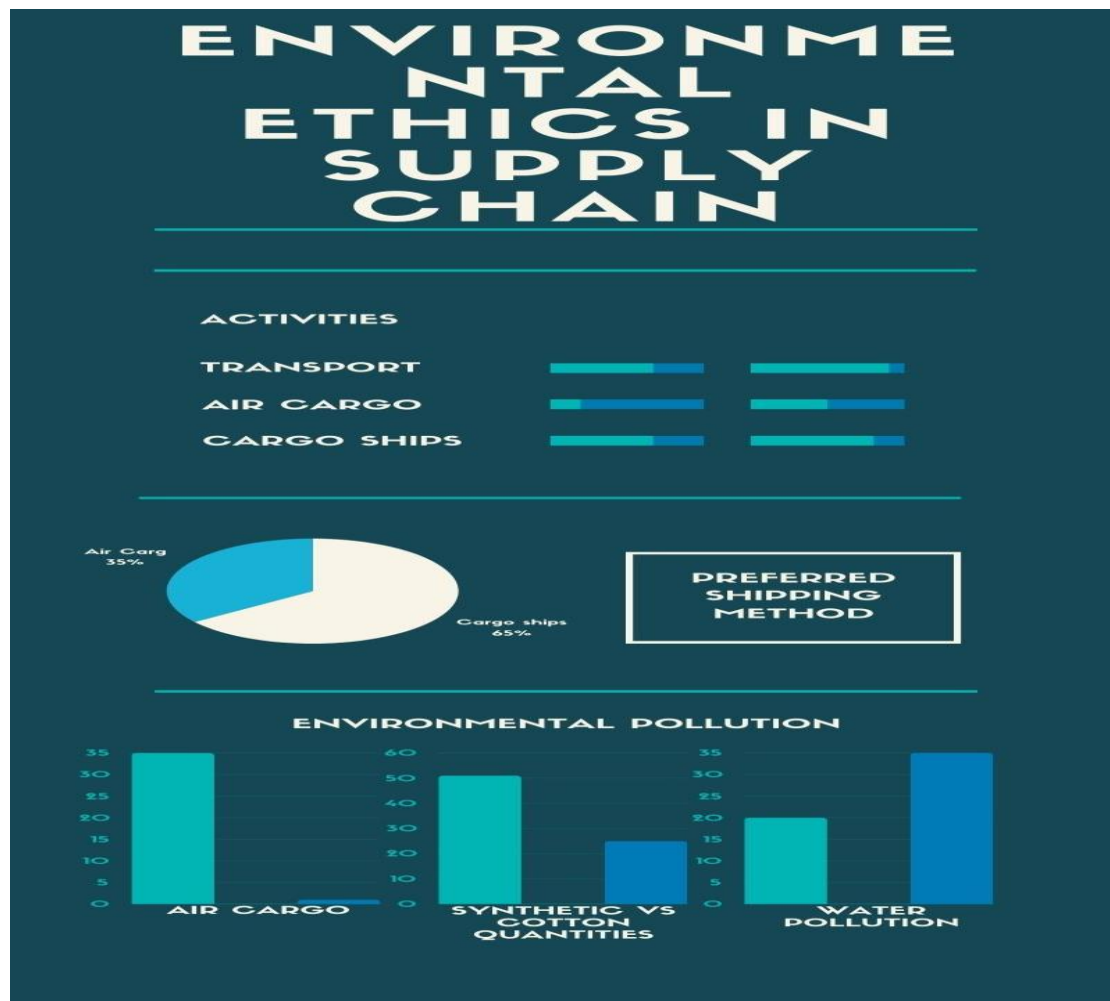


Figure 2: A Representation of the Environmental Outcomes of Supply Chain Activities

Lastly, the relationship between cultural values and sustainable fashion

has been demonstrated through short supply chains. The fundamentals of shortening supply chains regard reducing the shipping of apparel and clothes over long distances across the world several times throughout the multiple manufacturing processes. Traditionally, fabric raw materials underwent multiple processes before the final product. In the end, many of these products were transported to landfills or incinerated in developing nations in Africa, with only a few recycled or reused (Niinimäki et al., 2020). The advent of environmental ethics saw the fragmentation of supply chains and manufacturing processes, eliminating environmentally toxic practices like dumping byproducts in landfills.

5. COLLECTIVISM AND ENFORCING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Throughout the history of fashion trends and the influence of cultural values, many evolutions have been witnessed, defining approaches, attitudes and the production of unique clothing items. This phenomenon exposes avenues of implementing environmental ethics to ensure the production and consumption of culturally aligned cloth items. Fundamentally, the evolution of clothing has been constrained by collectivism to enforce ethics within the context of cultural values. Installation and promotion of positive attitudes, cooperation and communal approach to sustainable fashion or clothing stands out as an application adopted by many communities across the world (Hussain & Huang, 2022; Khan et al., 2024). Cultural values sway consumers' choices and align them with green purchasing behaviour to protect the environment from all forms of harm. Cultural persuasion affects not only consumer behavior but also the production processes of clothing items. Environmentalists banked on cultural sustainability via traditional craft. This approach incorporates and valorizes material knowledge and practices in clothing to enhance innovation, nurturing and retaining traditional craft (Brown & Vacca, 2022). In this approach, environmental ethics deliberates efforts towards fusing cultural values in the production of clothing. Historically, clothing remains a pillar of human culture as cultural values have been. Better yet, community leaders have been engaged in the production of clothing with respect to cultural values. Figure 3 represents the key themes of collectivism and enforcing environmental awareness as an approach to unmasking the interplay between cultural values and sustainable fashion.

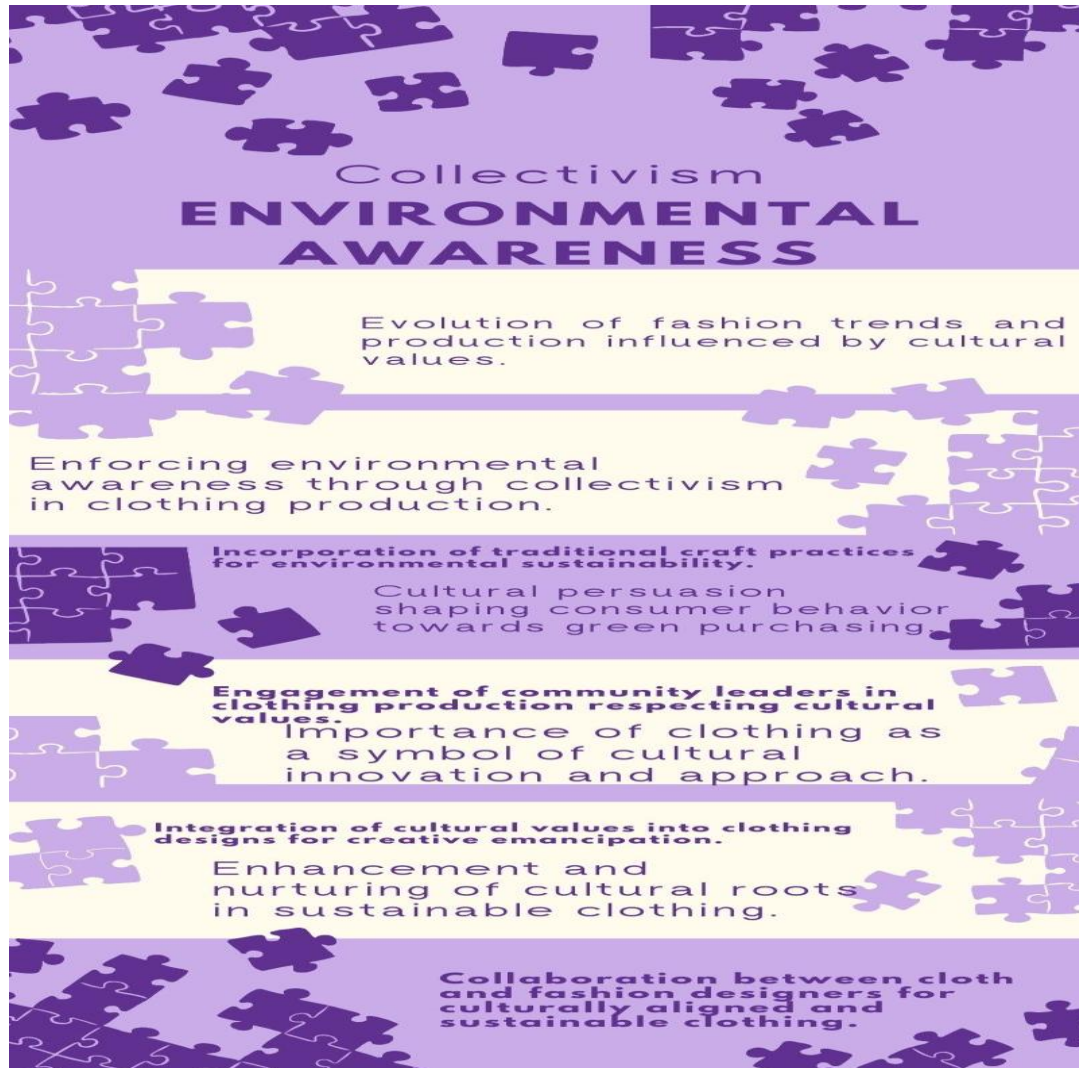


Figure 3: The Outlook of Environmental Awareness and Collectivism and its Application in a Sustainable Fashion

Fundamentally, environmental ethics have been enforced by large clothing conglomerates, depicting the interplay between cultural values and sustainability in different communities. The involvement of fashion conglomerates pairs up with environmental attitudes. With environmental attitudes, fashion conglomerates and environmentalists propose rethinking craft culture through clothing, decoding craft roots pertaining to clothing, and influencing clothing (Brown & Vacca, 2022). Rethinking craft culture regards the importance of clothing as a paramount symbol of cultural innovation and approach. Historically, clothing designs reshape expressive codes and processes by combining ancient traditions (Brown & Vacca, 2022). Historical accounts depict the evolution of cultural values, which were subsequently fused into clothing designs. For instance, an Indian designer engineered the integration of cultural values and clothing by considering cultural values. Swati Kalsi fused cultural values from Sujani in

clothing design, contributing to creative emancipation via works' dignity—this application involved including persons from the communities in creative processes and clothing production. Craft roots emerge as a core theme in the exploration of the relationship between cultural values and sustainable clothing through the lens of environmental ethics. Pro-environmental intentions and deliberate moves to improve the environment colour the historical activities and practices of many clothing businesses and personalities (Hussain & Huang, 2022). Previously, collectivist cultures demonstrated the essence of enhancing and nurturing cultural roots and approaches to clothing within the groups. In-group promotion of craft roots in clothing not only enhances the willingness to pay for the somewhat costly sustainable clothing but also promotes the appreciation of clothing items crafted and designed based on cultural perspectives. Environmental ethics drive sustainability through igniting individualistic attention and mindfulness on environmental issues and cultural values (Hussain & Huang, 2022). This approach is particularly effective among fashion and clothing designers in different communities. Historical accounts show that clothing and fashion designers have collaborated to yield culturally aligned and sustainable for the contemporary world through collaborative approaches. Such clothing has been used to mark international environmental conservation initiatives and drives to expand cultural influence and significance in environmental programs. Lastly, decoding craft roots in the interplay between cultural values and sustainable fashion with regard to environmental ethics. Cloth lines and fashion houses play crucial roles in enhancing awareness of cultural values by availing a wide array of culturally-themed clothing for the general public. Availing of culturally themed clothing banks on the underlying philosophy that cultural values underscore the human thing (Hussain & Huang, 2022). To supplement this approach, clothing businesses adopt cultural marketing strategies and ideas to enhance the decoding of cultural roots in clothing. The cultural marketing strategies implicate long-term cultural appreciation in the clothing industry and enhance cultural orientation, promoting the present consumption of culturally-themed clothing and promising future positive responses (Khan et al., 2024). Table 4 summarizes key concepts of environmental ethics pertaining to the interplay between cultural values and sustainable fashion. The intricate relationship intertwines with the historical accounts of the implementation of environmental ethics are great lengths in a multidimensional approach.

Table 4: Key Elements of Environmental Ethics Implemented by Clothing Conglomerates

Rethinking Craft Culture Through Clothing	Decoding Craft Roots Pertaining to Clothing	Influencing Clothing
Clothing is a Paramount Symbol of Cultural Innovation.	A core theme is exploring the relationship between cultural values and sustainable clothing through the lens of environmental ethics.	Crucial roles of clothing lines and fashion houses in enhancing awareness of cultural values by offering culturally-themed clothing.
Historical Accounts Demonstrate how Clothing Designs Reshaped Expressive Codes by Combining Ancient Traditions.	Pro-environmental intentions and moves to improve the environment are evident in historical activities and practices of clothing businesses and personalities.	Adoption of cultural marketing strategies by clothing businesses to decode cultural roots in clothing, promoting long-term cultural appreciation and orientation.
Indian Designer Swati Kalsi's Integration of Cultural Values from Sujani into Clothing Design Promotes Creative Emancipation and Dignity.	Promotion of craft roots in clothing by collectivist cultures, leading to a willingness to pay for sustainable clothing and an appreciation for culturally themed clothing items.	Enhancement of present consumption of culturally-themed clothing and promising future positive responses from consumers through cultural marketing strategies.

6. SUSTAINABILITY AND MARKETING STRATEGIES

Environmental ethics, sustainable fashion and cultural values are pertinent elements in the clothing industry. Given the interconnectedness of these principles, understanding sustainability from a marketing perspective elucidates the dimensions of cultural values and the application of environmental ethics. Marketing entails value transactions, communicates and creates value for consumers. In the context of cultural values, environmental ethics and sustainable fashion stand out as key values targeted by consumers (Albinsson et al., 2023). This makes marketing a strategic approach to the application of environmental ethics in understanding the interplay between sustainable fashion and cultural values. In many cultures, fashion sustainability is key with respect to environmental protection and conservation. Artisanal entrepreneurship and education have been deemed effective approaches to enforcing environmental ethics in a sustainable fashion. Throughout its evolution,

sustainable fashion standards shifted towards an appreciation of more conscientious and ethical production processes, consumption and disposal of clothing items in the industry and societies. This approach involved multiple and diverse initiatives focused on limiting environmental harm while promoting social responsibility (Caniato et al., 2012; Niinimäki, 2010; Niinimäki et al., 2020; Pedersen et al., 2018). From the implementation of circular business models to the deployment of eco-friendly materials, pioneers of sustainable fashion innovated approaches to implicate ecological footprint and resolve environmental issues. Cultural values determine key elements and policies to enforce fashion sustainability. Of course, cultural values define the policies that not only contribute to sustainability but also enforce environmental ethics. The figure below illustrates the fundamentals of cultural values and sustainable fashion relationships, mainly focusing on the role of cultural values.

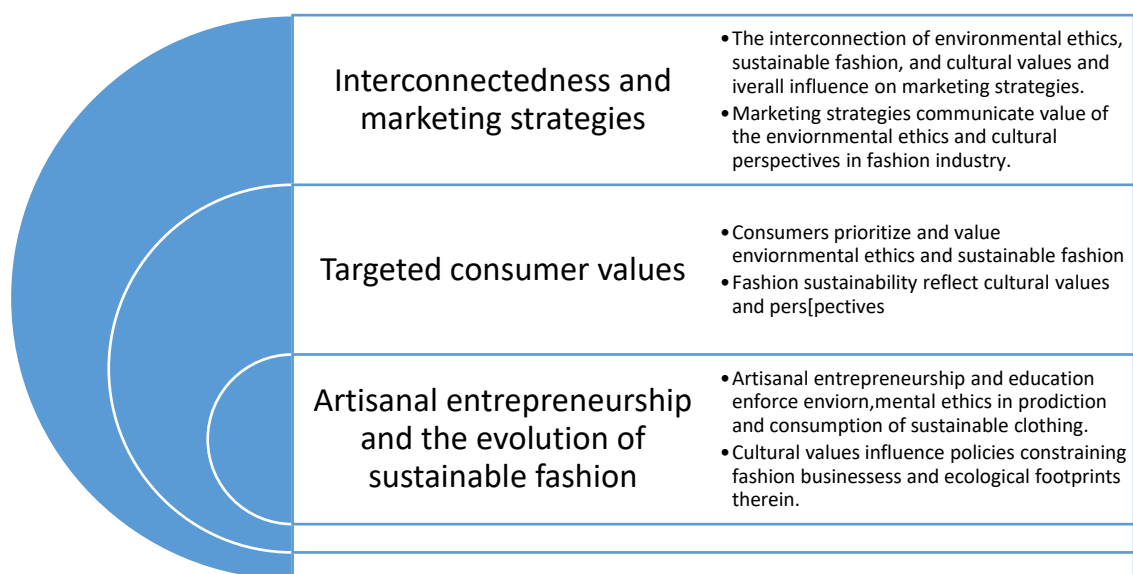


Figure 4: The Fundamentals of Cultural Values in Fashion Sustainability

The intersection between cultural values and sustainable fashion marks the importance of cultural beliefs, norms and practices on industrial and consumer behaviors. Cultural values are the foundations of identity, beauty, and status (Joy et al., 2012; Lundblad & Davies, 2016). Therefore, they influence the choice and preference for consumption habits and fashion styles in various communities. This dynamic relationship between cultural values and sustainable fashion sparks meaningful changes in the fashion industry by underscoring the consideration of environmental ethics in the design, production and consumption of fashion items. More recently, fashion designs aligned all operations with cultural and environmental ethics to sway consumers to their products. These changes

indicate the appreciation of collective ethos about social responsibility and environmental stewardship, as summarized in Figure 5.

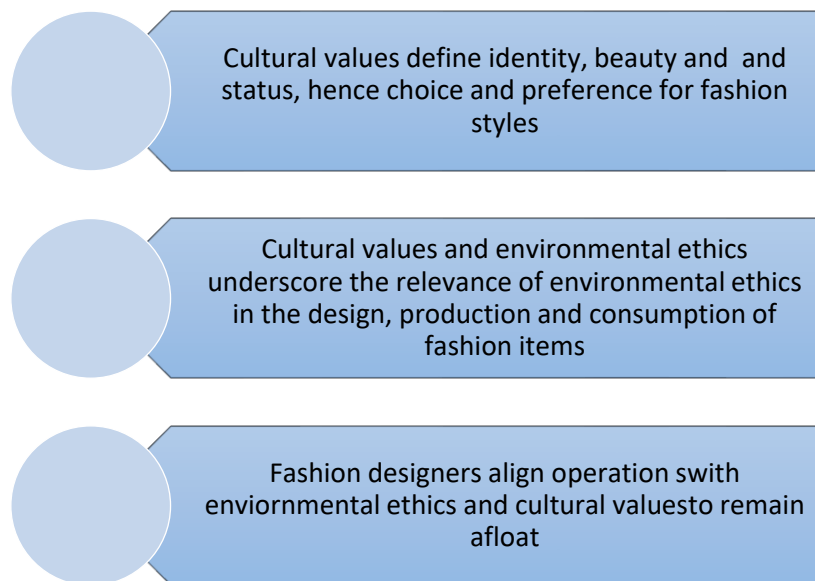


Figure 5: The Intricate Influence of Cultural Values in Fashion Sustainability and Social Responsibility.

7. CONCLUSION

The intricate interplay between sustainable fashion and cultural values in the context of historical accounts contextualises developments within the ethos of environmental preservation and sustainability. Environmental concerns and sustainability demands intensified throughout the history of the evolving fashion and cultural values in many societies across the world. The importance of themes surrounding cultural values and sustainable fashion has conditioned fashion designers, societal leaders and other stakeholders into reevaluating approaches to fashion and clothing matters. Utilisation and depletion of natural resources and water and air pollution have been of significant concern in the fashion industry, posing an urgent need for actions and conscientious production, consumption and disposal of clothing items. Historical accounts indicate that cultural values significantly influenced fashion trends and consumer patterns. Even today, cultural values determine consumer choice and preference for clothing, mainly based on environmental sustainability and concerns. Environmental ethics served as a guide and a framework for fashion designers to navigate the complex scene posed by cultural aspects constraining clothes design. Mainly, environmental conservation, protection, social responsibility and stewardship stand out as core factors constraining fashion designs,

production and operations within the supply chain systems. Among the many applications of environmental ethics are education and artisanal entrepreneurship that shape consumer habits and fashion trends. The entrepreneurial applications of environmental ethics regard enforcement of the use of eco-friendly materials in the production of clothing items, adoption of circular business models, and innovation to promote sustainability and reduce environmental degradation through water and air pollution. The marketing approaches supplement the entrepreneurial approaches by setting the value, awareness and significance of sustainable and environmentally friendly fashion and clothing items. The educational perspective houses the broader picture of the interplay between cultural values and fashion sustainability, where awareness and campaigns for pro-environmental initiatives are embodied. Despite the historical accounts and the developments, the fashion industry continues to evolve alongside cultural values and perspectives. The intersection between sustainable fashion and cultural values underscores the importance of environmental ethos as fashion designers and clothing lines scramble to align with ethical principles. More recently, cloth lines banked on environmental ethics as they influenced consumer behaviors, choices and preferences. As clothes are symbols of culture, fashion designers strive to achieve equitable, ethically driven, and environmentally-conscious fashion designs, production and sustainable supply chains.

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