Sustainable Practices in Multinational Fashion Brands: Strategies for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Operations

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Abstract: This research is focused on key sustainable initiatives adopted by global fashion brands that are aligned with sustainable development goals. In addition, a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology is followed in this research. The data findings revealed that lack of customer awareness and lack of government support are key challenges faced by global fashion brands in integrating sustainable practices into their global operations.

1. Introduction

Sustainable practice in multinational business operations influences less emissions, enhanced economic growth, and effective utilisation of resources. The multinational fashion industry impacts the environment during operations, such as water consumption, chemical bleaching, and CO_2 emissions during the production stage, which causes soil pollution and air pollution and harm to the ocean ecosystem. The fashion industry is one of the key contributors to environmental pollution, which prompts multinational fashion brands to adopt sustainable practices for social and ecological well-being aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This research mainly emphasises strategies of global fashion brands to integrate sustainability into their operations with a key focus on waste reduction, ethical sourcing, circular economy model and less carbon footprint[1].

As per the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the emission is projected to increase up to 60% by 2030 from textile manufacturing, which currently comprises10% of global carbon emissions, while 85% of all textiles are dumped, 500,000 tons of microfibres are released into the ocean each year which is equally valued as 50 billion plastic bottles. Around 20% of global clean water pollution is caused by textile production from dyeing, which generates 270 kg of CO_2 emissions per person . Global fashion brands need to embrace sustainable practices in their operations to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by focusing on stakeholder collaboration, innovation and regulatory frameworks. By implementing sustainable practices in operations, multinational

fashion brands can address the serious concerns of pollution[2].

1.1 Research Aim and Objectives

This research aims to explore sustainable practices in multinational fashion brands and identify effective strategies to integrate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into global operations. Research objectives are followed below:

To examine key sustainable practices adopted by multinational fashion brands to align sustainable development goals

To identify challenges faced by multinational fashion brands in implementing sustainability into operations

To suggest effective solutions for multinational fashion brands to overcome identified operational challenges for alignment with SDGs

1.3 Questions

What key sustainable practices are adopted by multinational fashion brands to align sustainable development goals?

What are the challenges faced by multinational fashion brands in implementing sustainability into operations?

What are the solutions for multinational fashion brands to overcome identified operational challenges for alignment with SDGs?

2. Literature review

Sustainability has been negatively impacted by rapid changes in the fashion industry and garment clothing in terms of resource utilisation . In this manner, excessive use of chemicals and the release of wastewater into nature also damages the sustainability of life. In the era of Industry 4.0, the concept of sustainability has turned into the most significant issue for global brands. Fashion brands have started to take several sustainable practices based on fundamental principles. It can be analysed that fashion brands have followed CSR initiatives to fulfil their sustainability commitment based on their product categories and competitive advantages. The study by analysed ten core sustainable fashion values that include five environmental elements, eco-friendly and recycled, among others, and five social aspects like local production and fair trade. The values were implemented onto the South Korean platform Market Gredit to showcase brands that support sustainability through a system that educates consumers about responsible fashion. In contrast,conducted a research study on what drives Korean adults between 20 and 30 years old to choose sustainable fashion bags. The research uses in-depth interviews and means-end hierarchy theory to separate motivational patterns into four sectors, including financial aspects and self-concept elements, as well as social variables and environmental awareness. Seven product attributes, 14 consequences, and five underlying values are presented in the research. The identified knowledge helps sustainable bag brands better reach their specific audience among young Korean consumers[3-5].

The fashion industry and garment clothing have imposed a significant impact on the environment due to the rapid depletion of natural resources. According to, negative factors in the fashion industry, like chemical releases, have

generated environmental awareness among environment-conscious customers. This study has analysed essential research which establishes an understanding of corporate social responsibility models together with consumer behaviour patterns and sustainable fashion program effects on brand validity and market movements. As a result, fashion brands have started to focus on sustainable production and consumption in ready-to-wear and other sectors. Multinational fashion brands have chosen to implement various sustainability strategies which reflect the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) because of increasing industry-wide sustainability concerns. Through their research, demonstrated how corporate social responsibility enhances sustainability efforts within developing world fast fashion brands. This literature demonstrates how organisations merge sustainable operations throughout their supply chain management and production systems together with their employee policy framework. Brands encounter multiple difficulties in maintaining ethical sourcing practices, but they must also ensure price competitiveness. Regulatory standards work together with public knowledge about CSR to create effective CSR programs in the fashion industry. investigates how South Korean fashion brands RE; CODE and OVER LAB transform discarded merchandise and industrial remnants from production into new clothing items. Through these initiatives, South Korea supports material waste reduction efforts and ethical consumption practices, which reflects increasing consumer concerns for sustainability in the country. This research demonstrates that South Korean fashion brands need to emphasise social and environmental accountability. On the other hand, argued that the triple-trickle theory provides an explanation for sustainable fashion adoption patterns, especially in luxury fashion settings. According to the research, sustainability has evolved beyond its grassroots beginnings because major brand leaders have now established industry transformation through sustainable examples. The study shows that consumers slowly respond to both stylish luxury interpretations and ethical awareness to adopt sustainable fashion patterns throughout various market segments[6-8].

The study of analyses how fast fashion retailers use their sustainable collection launches to improve corporate legitimacy. Consumer perceptions develop in a positive direction regarding sustainability actions when businesses successfully reveal their altruistic goals during sustainability-related initiatives. The authors stress that brands that practice greenwashing may damage their credibility, although companies should maintain genuine and transparent sustainability pledges. In contrast,argued the connecting roles of luxury fashion and sustainability since they have merged into converging domains. Luxury brands possess special capabilities to implement sustainable actions because their focus on premium manufacturing and the durability of their products allows them to benefit from sustainability initiatives. Luxury brands utilise sustainability as a distinct competitive aspect, which helps them build both reputation and customer retention. The

research of investigates sustainable fashion marketing trends and future outlooks. The paper defines the expanding role that digital marketing, together with social media influencers, plays in sustainable fashion promotion and consumer participation.

2.1 Theoretical underpinning and literature gap

The corporate social responsibility of global fashion brands incorporates sustainability as per the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) theory. The three dimensions of the triple bottom line model influence how sustainability multinational fashion brands perceive sustainability and develop their strategies for action. The TBL framework prescribes fashion brands manufacture their products from recycled materials to lessen carbon emissions while upholding commitments to people's profits and planet sustainability. Fashion employs "people" as an organisational principle to protect workers' fair pay and create living opportunities for the whole community. The company shows sustainability practices which incorporate responsible waste management alongside responsible sourcing and factory operation practices. The concept of 'Profit' in the TBL model demonstrates the ability of fashion brands to operate profitably and implement sustainable approaches in their global operations like manufacturing, supply chain and logistics operations. The supply chain of fashion businesses becomes sustainable when they use ethical support approaches that decrease environmental destruction and maintain profit margins.

This literature lacks a critical focus on sustainable fashion strategies in operations for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in South Korea. In other words, limited focus is provided to the fashion industry of South Korea and their operations to achieve sustainable development goals set by the United Nations. Moreover, this literature also lacks a systematic analysis which can be considered as a major gap of the study.

3. Methodology

A systematic literature review (SLR) method is used in this research to collect and analyse qualitative information in this manner. A systematic literature review enables a collection of research findings based on peer-reviewed journal articles associated with sustainable practices in the operations of multinational fashion brands for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In order to screen and include the most relevant peer-reviewed journals, this study includes a PRISMA framework. A keyword search technique is followed in this study that mainly consists of sustainability OR sustainable practice AND global fashion industry OR multinational garment sector AND sustainable fashion OR sustainable practice in fashion operations. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting articles are followed below:

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

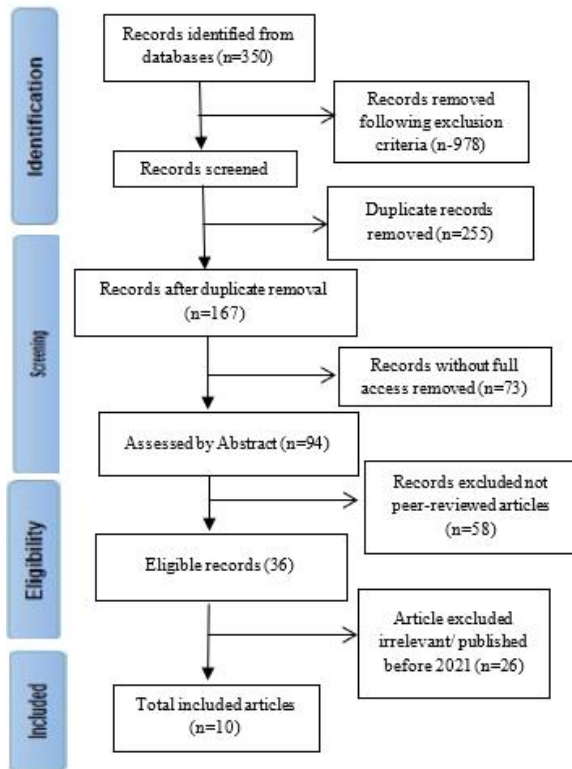| Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Peer-reviewed articles	Books, blogs and newspaper articles
Journal articles published after 2021	Journal articles published before 2021
Full-text availability and accessibility in English	Not available in English, and preview is available

Figure 1: PRISMA Framework

4. Findings

Table 2: Data summary

Author name	Country of study	Aim of study	Methodology	Sample size	Design of study	Main findings
Lee, Y. K., & DeLong, M. (2022)	South Korea	"To promote sustainable clothing behaviour focusing on second-hand clothing users."	in-depth interviews	30	Exploratory study	This study found better user experiences throughout the second-hand clothing buying and wearing process in South Korea. According to their research positive encounters mainly stemmed from owning luxury accessories which included designer handbags. The way
Lee, O., Lee, Y., & Lee, H. (2021).	South Korea	"To investigate the role of fashion-sharing platforms before and after COVID-19."	Comparative platforms analysis	20	Mixed-methods	to increase second-hand clothing consumption requires recording how users experience these items while matching their style with modern fashion trends. This study performed an analysis of 21 South Korean together with international fashion-sharing websites before and after COVID-19. They conducted usability and accessibility assessments to create better sharing services for sustainable fashion. The research provides guidelines for enhancing fashion-sharing platforms that promote sustainable development.
Wu, B., Xie, X., Ke, W., Bao, H., Duan, Z., Jin, Z., ... & Hong, Y. (2022)	Global	"To review merchandising strategies for sustainable fashion."	Systematic literature review	50 + articles	Qualitative	This study reviewed sustainable fashion merchandising studies through a systematic approach to discover three main sustainable challenges which include low feasibility combined with weak consumer awareness and insufficient government backing. They stressed that social responsibility needs to blend with merchandising strategies to build brand competitiveness alongside sustainability promotion in the apparel industry.
Hofm ti	Multi	"To explore	Case study	15 fa	Qualitative	This study found that consumer communication

Author	Location	Aim	Method	N	Type	Findings
ann, K. H., Jacob, A., & Pizzingrilli, M. (2022)	national	growth challenges of sustainable ventures in fashion."	dy anal ysis	shio n br a n ds	e	emerged as a primary challenge for micro and small sustainable fashion firms because these businesses struggled with price justification and product benefits communication. Operational strain due to limited resources. The cost-driven sector poses economic challenges for sustainable sourcing operations.
Di Vaio, A., Hassan, R., D'Amore, G., & Tiscini, R. (2024)	Asia	"To examine responsible innovation and ethical corporate behaviour in the Asian fashion industry."	Syste matic lit era tur e re view	6 0 + ar ti cl es	Qualit ativ e	This study analysed 114 scholarly articles spanning from 1990 to 2021, which focused on responsible innovation (RI) and ethical corporate behaviour (EB) within the Asian fashion industry. Fashion brands want to execute RI and ECB across supply chains, but cultural values and corporate ethics alignment problems prevent them from implementing sustainable business models that follow the UN 2030 Agenda. The research identifies RI as an essential factor for ECB and recommends additional studies linking RI to ECB and innovative sustainable business models to reach Sustainable Development Goals.
Chopra, S. S., Senadheera, S. S., Dissanayake, P. D., Withana, P. A., Chib, R., Rhee, J. H., & Ok, Y. S. (2024)	Global	"To analyse challenges in ESG reporting for sustainable development."	Ca se stu die s	3 0	Qu alit ativ e	This study found obstacles within Environmental Social Governance reporting since it needs professional skills from multiple fields to achieve sustainability assessments. The authors propose widening ESG reporting to go beyond corporate limits by making existing accounting frameworks functional for environmental and social effects measurement. The research focuses on using social and environmental accounting (SEA) as an approach to achieve better data quality, standardise sustainability metrics, understand stakeholder power, and create improved disclosure formats.
Kim, J., & Jin, I. (2022)	Gl ob al	"To assess small busine ss strateg ies for SDG agenda imple mentat ion."	Ca se stu die s	1 0 s m al l b us in es se s	Qu alit ativ e	This study analysed the methods through which small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can help fulfil Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SMEs possess strategies to reinforce sustainability by developing shared value programs and joining international value chains, although they maintain limited financial capabilities. The research delivered suggestions for ASEAN nations to adopt concerning government transformation of vision and policy alongside changes in financial institutions and regional partnerships.
Shin, H. (2024)	S ou th K or ea	"To explor e sustain able design curricu lum imple	Ca se stu dy	1 u ni v er si ty pr o	Qu alit ativ e	This study found that experience-based and project-based learning as teaching approaches supports earlier findings about incorporating

		mentation in fashion education."	gram			Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within a fashion design curriculum. The implementation of sustainability education within fashion design programs enables students to develop better knowledge and abilities about sustainable business methods which boosts sustainable practices throughout the industry.
Han, J., Woodside, A. G., & Ko, E. (2024)	Global	"To examine the impact of consumer knowledge on sustainable fashion purchase intention."	Survey	500	Quantitative	This study investigated the connection between consumer sustainable fashion awareness and purchasing decisions. Research results show that customers who correctly understand sustainable fashion show stronger purchasing interest in sustainable products. People who do not have enough knowledge about sustainable clothing tend to show diminished interest in purchasing the items. Government policies serve as fundamental tools to boost sustainable consumer conduct because educational institutions should teach sustainability knowledge to help people understand sustainable products better.
Park, J., & Chun, J. (2025)	Global	"To analyse cultural sustainability strategies in luxury fashion."	Case study	10 luxury brands	Qualitative	This study found that luxury fashion brands include traditional cultural elements from South Korean and Chinese and Japanese heritage while producing their products. Research by Park and Chun analysed 51 cases to find three essential approaches which included cultural sales, cultural sponsorship and cultural experience spaces. This research demonstrates why cultural sustainability must be considered equally important with environmental sustainability and economic aspects for the fashion industry.

4.1 Analysis and Discussion

In this section, several themes have been formulated in order to analyse the key sustainable practices in the global fashion industry, the major challenges faced and effective sustainable practices to achieve SDG goals. First of all, themes related to current sustainable practices adopted by global fashion brands are discussed. Secondly, key challenges faced by global fashion brands are assessed, and lastly, effective sustainable practices are examined to achieve sustainable development goals set by the UN.

1 Key sustainable practices adopted by multinational fashion brands to achieve sustainable development goals

Sustainability practices can be promoted by second-hand fashion clothes for a circular economy. The clothing life cycle is one of the essential aspects of a sustainable circular system for fashion in South Korea. Survey data and in-depth interviews were utilised throughout this research to examine South Korean individuals who

reuse clothing as well as their behavioural and motivational patterns. The research team studied how consumers regarded sustainability as well as the variables that governed their purchasing choices. The limitations of this research are that it is restricted by the small number of participants, the variation in response, and its exclusive focus on South Korean consumers. The effectiveness of study results may decrease when applied across different regions because cultural patterns and socioeconomic conditions differ between areas. On the contrary, fashion-sharing service websites are beneficial for the sustainable economy in South Korea in terms of accessibility and usability . The comparative study of Korean and international fashion-sharing platforms was published before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors investigated the website functionalities, operational frameworks, and eco-friendliness dimensions of these platforms. Key limitations of this study are narrow focus on online platforms, selection error, and absence of primary data. Sustainable fashion practices include several issues like consumer culture, low feasibility, ignoring the driving force, weak consumer awareness and lack of governmental support and intervention. The fashion merchandising and marketing disciplines were preceded by a systematic literature review methodology in this study on sustainable fashion sourcing, which looked into strategies and factors such as consumer behaviour within the industry ecosystems, including the ones created by existing research. The research is inextricably limited by a biased and filtered literature selection, ignoring the body of work outside assumptions and data and

not being based on sociology, making it difficult to enable implementation.

2 Key challenges faced by multinational fashion brands in implementing sustainability into operations

A collaborative stakeholder approach can promote sustainable sourcing in the context of the fashion industry. This study has focussed on a global investigation based on case studies of sustainable fashion ventures for collecting primary data from interviews and secondary data from several markets. The limitations of the research are constrained to the level of the sample size, possible bias within the selected cases, and the comparison among different fashion sectors. On the contrary, the misalignment of cultural values and corporate ethics is a key challenge to adopting business strategies to attain the UN 2030 agenda. A systematic literature review is followed in this study to analyse responsible innovation and ethical behaviour in the Asian fashion industry with limitations like lack of key trends, challenges, and future research directions. The Social and Environmental Accounting (SEA) framework is suggested by to attain sustainable development.

3 Key sustainable practices for alignment with SDGs in multinational fashion companies

Government vision, institutional reform, and financing institutions can promote the commitment of SMEs to SDGs in the ASIAN context The article uses a qualitative approach by researching the strategies of small businesses relative to the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). It applies case studies and literature reviews to formulate practices for small businesses regarding pandemic

planning. However, the regional focus and reliance on secondary data are key limitations of this study. On the other hand, argued that upcycling the design of waste PET bottle fibres could help the students generate an understanding of sustainable development goals. This study emphasised a case study approach with qualitative data, interviews and course assessments to integrate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into fashion design curricula. Lack of focus on other institutions instead of a single institution is a key limitation of the study. Besides that, the study of found a significant positive correlation r=0.45 between buying intentions of sustainable fashion and consumer knowledge. This study employs a quantitative survey methodology, and high reliance on self-reported data, including lack of generalisation, is a limitation of this study. However, cultural sustainability is carried out by luxury fashion brands through three categories: cultural sponsorship, cultural sales and cultural experience. This study covered in-depth interviews to examine the strategies of luxury fashion brands for cultural sustainability.

Based on the data analysis, it can be discussed that weak consumer awareness and lack of governmental support are key challenges faced by multinational fashion brands to integrate sustainable practices into their global operations. It can be analysed that the leaders of global fashion brands should develop a strong relationship with local governments and generate customer awareness through sustainable marketing to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs). In the existing literature, the study of showed that consumer perceptions develop a positive direction for sustainability actions. A significant literature gap has been covered by this research regarding the successful accomplishment of sustainable development goals by multinational fashion brands through integrating sustainable practices into their operations.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that this research has analysed the significance of sustainable practices in the context of multinational fashion brands to achieve sustainable development goals through a lens of systematic literature review. Ten peer-reviewed journals have been analysed and interpreted in this study to achieve all research objectives. Moreover, by applying sustainable manufacturing, supply chain, distribution, and customer awareness, multinational fashion brands can overcome the challenges of sustainable practices like regulatory compliance and market demand. Moreover, this research also showed that global fashion brands can encounter ecological and social concerns by integrating sustainable practices into their global operations to achieve SDGs. This research also includes a few limitations; for example, a limited number of articles are included in this research. A comprehensive analysis by reviewing more articles can fulfil this limitation. In further studies, primary research can be conducted to gather feedback from customers regarding the sustainable commitment of fashion brands while managing global operations.

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