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Demarketing and Economic Sustainability in the Fashion Industry

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“Buy Less, Choose Well, Make it Last.”

Vivienne Westwood

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List of Abbreviations

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

DSP: Dominant Social Paradigm

EOA: Environmentally Oriented Anticonsumption

ESG: Environmental, Social and Governance

FF: Fast Fashion

LF: Luxury Fashion

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

SF: Slow Fashion

SFO: Slow Fashion Orientation

SRC: Socially Responsible Apparel Consumption

TBL: Triple Bottom Line Approach

UN-SGD: United Nation Sustainable Development Goals

Abstract

This master's thesis investigates the role of demarketing advertising strategies in fast fashion, slow fashion, and luxury fashion segments to promote responsible consumption and foster economic sustainability. Through a systematic literature review, this research examines the purpose and possible application of demarketing strategies across the three segments, evaluating their effectiveness in balancing sustainability and profitability goals and their ability to promote sustainable consumption attitudes. It will be argued that slow and luxury fashion consistently exhibit similarities in branding, advertising, and consumer behavior. Nonetheless, demarketing can be appropriately applied to all three segments. The primary contribution of the thesis is the demonstration that demarketing, especially through status signaling, can be used effectively to align expectations across all stakeholders involved (consumers, fashion companies, NGOs, and observers).

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Diese Masterarbeit untersucht die Rolle von Demarketing-Werbestrategien in den Segmenten Fast Fashion, Slow Fashion und Luxusmode, um verantwortungsvollen Konsum zu fördern und wirtschaftliche Nachhaltigkeit zu unterstützen. Durch eine systematische Literaturübersicht wird in dieser Forschung der Zweck und die mögliche Anwendung von Demarketing-Strategien in den drei Segmenten untersucht. Dabei wird die Wirksamkeit dieser Strategien in Bezug auf die Balance zwischen Nachhaltigkeits- und Rentabilitätszielen sowie ihre Fähigkeit zur Förderung nachhaltiger Konsumeinstellungen bewertet. Es wird argumentiert, dass Slow Fashion und Luxusmode konsequent Ähnlichkeiten in Bezug auf Markenbildung, Werbung und Verbraucherverhalten aufweisen. Nichtsdestotrotz kann Demarketing in allen drei Segmenten angemessen angewendet werden. Der Hauptbeitrag der Arbeit besteht in der Demonstration, dass Demarketing, insbesondere durch Statussignalisierung, effektiv genutzt werden kann, um die Erwartungen aller beteiligten Interessengruppen (VerbraucherInnen, Modeunternehmen, NGOs und BeobachterInnen) in Einklang zu bringen.

Keywords: Fashion, Fast Fashion, Slow Fashion, Luxury Fashion, Economic Sustainability, Demarketing, Branding, Advertising, Consumer Behavior, Status

1. Introduction

On April 24 of 2013, the Rana Plaza fashion factory in Bangladesh, collapsed in a matter of seconds. More than 2,000 people were injured and over 1,100 died (Westby, 2014). The fashion industry and the marketing of fashion have been notably mired in social and environmental controversies like labor exploitation, polluting supply chain practices, disguised promotion, and unsustainable cloth disposal (see Hewitt et al., 2023, and the references therein). Furthermore, luxury companies like Burberry also faced criticism after destroying unsold high-quality clothes, accessories, and perfume worth more than £90 million to protect its brand from counterfeiting. Despite Burberry arguing having careful processes to capture the energy generated from burning its products, environmental activists were shocked, because they felt that Burberry disrespects their own products, as well as the hard work and natural resources involved in making them (BBC News, 2018). Tim Jackson, the director of the British School of Fashion, contends that luxury brands find themselves in a conundrum where they must generate excess stock to appease their shareholders, making it challenging to break this cycle (BBC News, 2018). This notion aligns with Milton Friedman's perspective that a company's primary duty is solely to satisfy its shareholders by generating profits (Friedman, 1970). However, contemporary expectations of corporate social responsibility dictate that it is necessary to meet economic, environmental, and ethical societal demands (Carroll, 1979). As consumer markets expand with global population growth and poverty reduction, it is crucial that companies offering durable, long-lasting products thrive (Moss, 2018). Since the fashion industry is one of the greatest polluters (Gordon and Hill, 2015) and faced criticism for its negative environmental impact that supports overconsumption, a large-scale behavioral and systemic change towards a circular economy will be necessary to reach climate goals and reduce resource exploitation (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022).

1.1. Motivation and Relevance

My interest in responsible leadership and responsible marketing was sparked during my undergraduate studies. A course on organizational ethics at WU (Vienna University of Economics and Business) became the catalyst for exploring themes such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), responsible leadership, and the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework. This coursework laid the foundation for understanding how organizations shape moral principles, allowing brands to influence our identity and values (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022). In the realm of demarketing, anticonsumerism campaigns leverage brand influence to reshape consumer mindsets, unlocking the untapped power of brands in fostering a more sustainable culture (Moss, 2018). The economic outlook emphasizes the indispensability of tackling sustainability issues to gain consumer legitimacy and avert potential backlash in sales (McFall-Johnsen, 2020).

Before beginning my master studies, I initially perceived marketing as incompatible with sustainability, but my perspective evolved through subsequent courses on sociology, responsible marketing, and luxury marketing. I came to recognize marketing as a neutral tool, with responsibility shared among various stakeholders, including governments, enterprises, and consumers (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015; Janssen et al., 2014; Kotler, 2011; Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013). A paradigm shift also occurred regarding the concept of demarketing, initially seen as conflicting with profitability. Further exploration through relevant articles revealed its potential significance for fashion brands as drivers for sufficiency. Demarketing, defined as intentionally reducing product demand for environmental considerations (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015), emerges as a viable approach for promoting sustainable fashion consumption (Lee et al., 2020; Bareket-Bojmel et al., 2020).

The relevance and originality of this thesis lie in the recognition that anticonsumption behavior and demarketing can be stigmatizing and challenging for prevailing social and economic norms. This stigma may hinder economic growth and impact consumers who derive pleasure and status from their purchasing habits (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015). However, demarketing does not necessarily lead to lower revenues. In fact, it can attract new consumers, open new markets like repair services and support fair unit prices that could compensate lower demand (Vilasanti da Luz et al., 2020), as exemplified by Patagonia's successful anticonsumption campaigns. Patagonia encouraged consumers to repair instead of buying new clothes and through their anticonsumption campaigns they increased their profits (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022). Indeed, REI and Patagonia have experienced substantial sales expansion in recent times. REI saw a 5.5 percent increase in net sales in 2016, and Patagonia's revenue has surged by $250 million since the "don't buy this jacket" ad campaign was introduced. There is the need for more companies to adopt models like REI and Patagonia, meeting consumer demands with reduced product quantities. Failing to do so will strain resources within planetary limits. The evolution of new market structures like the circular economy is a dynamic process that is influenced by a variety of factors. Companies that adapt to these changes through innovation, will remain competitive (Moss, 2018).

While marketing traditionally emphasizes promoting consumption, there are occasions when demarketing becomes necessary in response to production shortages or resource scarcity. Demarketing addresses concerns such as unsustainable consumer behavior, consumption patterns, and lifestyle practices, including campaigns for tobacco cessation and alcohol consumption prevention. Addressing unsustainable practices involves promoting responsible consumption and marketing that does not encourage spending on non-essential products. (See Lawrence and Mekoth, 2023, and the references therein)

Previous research on demarketing has been limited in its exploration of sustainability. Beeton and Benfield (2002) observed that demarketing has been used mostly in healthcare and there is a growing trend towards demarketing in the tourism sector (Drugova et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2020). The concept of demarketing has been ingrained in the field of marketing since its inception and has gained significant traction among both scholars and practitioners on a global scale in recent years. After the 2000s, a spill-over of demarketing research began in other sectors like retail, government, transportation, energy, and hospitality (Lawrence and Mekoth, 2023). Lawrence and Mekoth (2023) have advocated for a reconsideration of the demarketing definition, incorporating a connection to sustainability. According to the authors, existing research in the field of demarketing has primarily focused on social and environmental sustainability. However, there is a lack of research specifically examining the role of demarketing strategies within the economic sustainability dimension. Under-studied areas within the economic dimension include: „demarketing to enhance brand's green reputation, demarketing to accomplish sustainable demand levels, demarketing to manage undesirable customers and demarketing to discourage company's old and less sustainable products in favor of new and more sustainable products" (Lawrence and Mekoth, 2023, p.20). The authors also identified that demarketing effectively addresses sustainability challenges faced by politicians and managers since "green demarketing is by definition a CSR strategy" (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015, p.1408).

A particular topic of interest identified in the present thesis is on the main implications of demarketing in the fashion industry, particularly when comparing its effects on fast fashion (FF), slow fashion (SF), and luxury fashion (LF) within the economic sustainability dimension of the TBL approach (Vilasanti da Luz et al., 2020; Lawrence and Mekoth, 2023). Managing sustainability alongside business objectives remains a challenge for organizations, including fashion brands, as they strive to balance sustainability and profitability (Di Paola and Russo Spena, 2021; Argento et al., 2022). This challenge requires innovative management and business strategies that balance sustainability and economic viability. In this sense, I enjoy exploring and contemplating paradoxes, since the challenge lies in bringing together seemingly contradictory elements — like fashion, anticonsumption, sustainability, demarketing and profitability — not dismissing them outright. Paradoxes can reveal limitations in our understanding and encourage complex thinking. Paradoxical thinking allows us to approach questions differently, emphasizing the importance of both sides rather than a binary choice. It's about discerning the vital aspects of conflicting ideas and figuring out how to preserve and develop them. Paradoxes serve to capture attention and stimulate fresh thoughts. Take the statement "less is more" as an example. As a person with a creative mindset, I excel in navigating divergent demands, such as those found in distinct fashion sectors united by a shared objective: economic sustainability. Economic sustainability involves adopting practices aimed at fostering the enduring economic growth of a company or nation, concurrently addressing the environmental, and social dimensions of its operations.

Central to my motivation is the belief that this approach is especially pertinent for the millennial generation, poised to become the consumers and managers of the future. Millennials are characterized by their social consciousness and environmental mindfulness. For example, according to Nielsen (2022), over half of Australian consumers prefer brands committed to environmental and social sustainability. Sustainability also plays a pivotal role in reputation management, pricing power, and overall monetary value (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012; Fombrun and Shanley, 1990). I consider demarketing as a powerful tool in steering towards a sustainable future and responsible consumption. This thesis aims to make a significant contribution at this critical moment, where enterprises are confronted with the delicate balance between profitability and sustainability.

1.2. Executive Summary

This work explores the dynamic intersection between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Socially Responsible Apparel Consumption (SRC), and Sustainable Fashion Orientation (SFO), particularly focusing on the role of green advertising and green demarketing (GDM) in influencing responsible consumer behavior within the fashion industry. The study takes a closer look at key concepts such as anticonsumption, sufficiency, and demarketing, shedding light on the dilemma faced by consumers and firms in balancing economic and symbolic interests with environmental concerns.

Central to the investigation is the exploration of whether there exist underlying similarities in demarketing strategies across Fast Fashion (FF), Slow Fashion (SF), and Luxury Fashion (LF) sectors, despite their perceived differences, and whether these similarities indicate convergence in approaches and comparable economic effectiveness.

The rest of the thesis is organized as follows:

- **Methodology (Chapter 2):** The thesis starts with a short description of the criteria used for the literature search and the selection of the documents included in the thesis.
- **General Definitions and Concepts (Chapter 3):** This introductory chapter explains the core concepts of CSR, the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP), and the dilemmas faced by both consumers and firms. It introduces crucial ideas such as anticonsumption, sufficiency, demarketing, SRC and SFO laying the foundations for subsequent discussions.
- **Green Communication (Chapter 4):** This chapter explores green advertising, examining its different forms, including green marketing (GM) with a primary emphasis on GDM. It investigates how GDM advertising strategies influence consumer perceptions, brand attitudes, and environmental reputations, while also exploring product versus institutional advertising and status signaling.
- **GDM Application in the Fashion Industry (Chapter 5**): Building upon the theoretical framework presented in previous chapters, this chapter applies the concepts of GM and GDM to the fashion industry. It examines the dynamics of the FF, SF and LF sectors, highlighting their impact on consumer behavior.
- **Discussion and Conclusion (Chapter 6):** The final chapter summarizes the main findings, drawing out key insights and implications for both scholars and practitioners. It discusses managerial implications of adopting GM and GDM strategies in the fashion industry, while also providing a critical view on potential limitations and some suggestions for future research.

2. Methodology

To accomplish the aim of the thesis, a systematic literature review was conducted to provide a comprehensive overview of sustainability advertising strategies, specifically GDM, within the fashion industry. This qualitative approach aligns with the exploratory nature of the research question, aiming to uncover insights regarding the convergence of green advertising strategies (Snyder, 2019).

The search strategy involved identifying relevant studies from various sources, including academic journals and reputable online publications. A search was conducted on Scopus using specific terms within the title, abstract, and keywords, focusing on topics related to fashion and economic sustainability. A snowballing technique was used to supplement the search related to fashion and demarketing, starting with key documents such as Lawrence and Mekoth (2023). A total of 276 articles were initially identified through abstract screening, with 38 selected for full reading based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 1). Subsequently, full-text analysis led to the identification of 18 pertinent publications. The flow diagram presented in Table 2 illustrates the systematic selection process. Key findings, themes, and patterns were extracted and analyzed from the 18 studies selected (see Table 3). Synthesizing these results provided insights into demarketing strategies in the fashion industry, identified research gaps, and facilitated the development of recommendations for future research or practice. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the research question and the contextual aspects of demarketing in the fashion industry (Lestari et al., 2023).

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Focus: economic sustainability	Focus: environmental, or social sustainability
Full text available	Full text not available
English articles	Non-English articles

Table 1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria during the abstract review

Step	Description
1	Retrieve documents from Scopus and through Snowballing
2	Identify documents where abstracts and title are relevant
3	Documents from step 2, whose full text was relevant
4	Data extraction: recording key insights
5	Integration of studies: answer the research question
6	Reevaluate the problem and review research question Describe methodology details of how the review was conducted
7	Report results: Literature review of main topics Discussion that reviews all the relevant studies and topics Present key insights and managerial implications

Table 2: Flow diagram (Saunders et al., 2012)

#	Authors	Year	Title	Topic
1	Gerstner, E., Hess, J., Chu, W.	1993	Demarketing as a Differentiation Strategy	Demarketing
2	Sodhi, K.	2011	Has marketing come full circle? Demarketing for sustainability	Demarketing
3	Armstrong Soule, C.A., Reich, B.J.	2015	Less is more: is a green demarketing strategy sustainable?	Demarketing
4	Reich, B.J., Armstrong Soule, C.A.	2016	Green Demarketing in Advertisements: Comparing “Buy Green” and “Buy Less” Appeals in Product and Institutional Advertising Contexts	Demarketing
5	Kim, S., Ko, E., Kim, S.J.	2018	Fashion brand green demarketing: Effects on customer attitudes and behavior intentions	Demarketing
6	Gossen, M., Ziesemer, F., Schrader, U.	2019	Why and How Commercial Marketing Should Promote Sufficient Consumption: A Systematic Literature Review	Sufficiency
10	Sekhon, T.S., Armstrong Soule, C.A.	2019	Conspicuous anticonsumption: When green demarketing brands restore symbolic benefits to anticonsumers	Demarketing
7	Freudenreich, B., Schaltegger, S.	2020	Developing sufficiency-oriented offerings for clothing users: Business approaches to support consumption reduction	Sufficiency
8	Silva Solino, L.J.S., Teixeira, B.M.de L., Dantas, Í.J.de M.	2020	The sustainability in fashion: a systematic literature review on slow fashion	Slow Fashion
9	Vilasanti da Luz, V., Mantovani, D., Nepomuceno, M.V.	2020	Matching green messages with brand positioning to improve brand evaluation	Demarketing
11	Cavender, R.C., Lee, M.Y., Wesley, S.	2021	The Impact of Slow Fashion Orientation (SFO) on Socially Responsible Apparel Consumption (SRC): Moderating Effects of Industry Irresponsibility and Consumer Irresponsibility	Responsible Consumption
12	Herm, S., Möller-Herm, J., Wache, C., Mafael, A.	2021	Please Do Not Buy Our Brand—How Consumers Respond to Green-Demarketing Messages	Demarketing
13	Liedong, T.A., Taticchi, P., Rajwani, T., Pisani, N.	2022	Gracious growth: How to manage the trade-off between corporate greening and corporate growth	Sustainable Growth
15	Armstrong Soule, C.A, Sekhon, T.S.	2022	Signaling Nothing: Motivating the Masses with Status Signals That Encourage Anti-Consumption	Demarketing
14	Sinha, P., Sharma, M., Agrawal, R.	2023	A systematic review and future research agenda for sustainable fashion in the apparel industry	Sustainable Fashion
16	Lawrence, J., Mekoth, N.	2023	Demarketing for sustainability: A review and future research agenda	Demarketing
18	Hewitt, J., Parker, L., McQuilten, G., Khan, R.	2023	Sustainability Chic and the Future of Fashion Marketing	Demarketing
17	Rathee, S., Milfeld, T.	2023	Sustainability advertising: literature review and framework for future research	Sustainability Advertising

Table 3: Final sample (compiled by the author)

3. General Definitions and Concepts

3.1. Exploring Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) in the Fashion Industry

In the business world, growth is a primary goal for companies seeking profitability and competitiveness. However, the emergence of sustainability goals, like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is reshaping business perspectives. This shift challenges traditional marketing practices, particularly in industries like clothing, where growth has led to significant environmental and social issues. Amid consumer activism and scholarly discourse, some businesses are exploring eco-efficient and consistent approaches to address these challenges. This chapter sets the stage for examining the complex dynamics between growth, sustainability, and consumerism in the clothing industry.

According to Liedong et al. (2022) companies prioritize growth as a pivotal goal, aiming to boost profitability and competitiveness through portfolio expansion or entering new markets. The prevailing belief is that increased growth leads to higher profits. The SDGs are influencing business missions by introducing concepts like corporate citizenship. Hence, companies actively contribute to shaping society and safeguarding the environment. Shared value advocates a new form of capitalism that not only enhances competitiveness but also promotes socioeconomic welfare through CSR. In the DSP, marketing is intrinsically linked to demand creation, leading to increased consumption and production of goods. The relationship between environmentalism and overconsumption poses a significant challenge in combating climate change, largely due to the historical influence of marketing in society. This connection suggests that brands and efforts toward planetary protection through anticonsumption are fundamentally at odds. Brands might avoid anticonsumption initiatives despite their environmental impact, as they can disrupt individual consumption patterns and diverge from the growth imperative, especially if growth is solely measured by increasing units sold. However, it is possible to maintain profitability while reducing overall production. This may be achievable if a company can meet consumer needs without increasing the production of physical goods. (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022)

The detrimental environmental and social consequences associated with the clothing industry have been a topic of discussion for several decades (Caniato et al., 2012; Curwen et al., 2013). The industry is estimated to consume 98 million tons of non-renewable resources annually on a global scale, contributing to issues in clothing disposal, with only 13% of materials used being recycled (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). The sector is predominantly characterized by standardized mass production, coordinated by influential focal companies that utilize low-cost materials and labor from various regions to supply large quantities of affordable and trend-sensitive clothing to customers in industrialized nations (Fletcher, 2010). At present, the clothing industry is predominantly governed by the FF paradigm, wherein supply chains are optimized for swiftly transforming designs into mass-produced ready-to-wear collections (Ertekin and Atik, 2015). The prevalence of FF is facilitated by the adoption of quick response systems and agile supply chains (Bettiol, 2013). Many companies in the clothing sector can bring a garment from design to sale on streets within a span of three to eight weeks, frequently changing collections every three weeks, and some retailers introducing new products daily (Cline, 2013). The FF model motivates consumers to frequently purchase new clothing in alignment with the rapid turnover of collections. Consequently, the demand for clothing has nearly doubled over the past 15 years, leading to a parallel increase in social and environmental issues within the industry (Ertekin and Atik, 2015; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). Additionally, environmental degradation can be attributed to a consumer culture that equates happiness with material acquisition, perpetuating a cycle of overconsumption (Featherstone, 1990). The DSP in Western societies is entrenched in consumerism, linking personal fulfillment to increasing material wealth and consumption patterns (Mittelstaedt et al., 2015) and marketing exacerbates this relationship by historically focusing on demand creation (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022).

In response to these adverse effects, consumers have initiated boycotts (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have positioned themselves to advocate for solutions, exemplified by entities such as the Fair Wear Foundation. Complementing these initiatives, certain businesses have proactively engaged in implementing sustainability measures and championing sustainability within the sector (Hansen and Schaltegger, 2013). Simultaneously, researchers have proposed diverse alternatives to encourage sustainability in clothing supply chains (Seuring and Müller, 2008). The eco-efficiency approach seeks to achieve a reduction in resource utilization for a given output or to enhance the production of clothing using a given number of resources (Niinimäki and Hassi, 2011). Alternatively, the consistency approach aims to align production materials with natural material flows, such as utilizing biodegradable materials, or establishing closed loops for material flows (Freudenreich and Schaltegger, 2020).

The clothing industry's pursuit of growth for profitability clashes with the imperative for sustainability, evident in the escalation of environmental and social challenges. Fast fashion's rapid production cycles exacerbate overconsumption, intensifying resource depletion and environmental degradation. While some companies and stakeholders advocate for sustainability measures, aligning with eco-efficiency and consistency approaches, the intrinsic link between marketing and overconsumption perpetuated by the DSP presents a significant hurdle. Addressing this challenge necessitates collaborative efforts to redefine a consumer and production culture with more sustainable practices while ensuring business profitability and competitiveness.

3.2. Greenwashing Dilemma: Bridging Firm Knowledge Gaps and Consumer Intentions

In today's business environment, the pursuit of CSR and sustainability is paramount. Global initiatives such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDG) tie an organization's legitimacy and competitive advantage to its contributions to societal solutions. Despite the widespread acknowledgment of the importance of sustainability by managers, scholars, and policymakers, there is a significant knowledge gap when it comes to providing practical insights and guidance for the actual implementation of sustainability. While there is extensive literature discussing the concept of the TBL and its outcomes assessing sustainability performance based on profits, planet, and people, there is a noticeable lack of discourse on its practical implementation or achievement. This chapter highlights the complexities managers encounter, including the risk of CSR-washing, and the importance of understanding consumer perceptions and challenges in driving sustainable practices.

Even before COVID-19, business leaders recognized the need to address societal challenges like climate change. Post-pandemic, these concerns were even more crucial. However, many companies struggle to incorporate sustainability into their growth strategies. According to Liedong et al. (2022) the literature recognizes that CSR programs may incur costs, potentially impacting a company's profitability and weakening shareholder support for sustainability initiatives. On the other hand, rapid growth may compromise sustainability by causing land degradation, pollution, and contributing to global warming. The trade-off between sustainability and growth poses a dilemma for managers facing pressure from various stakeholders to establish and run sustainable organizations. Simultaneously, they encounter resistance from shareholders opposed to CSR initiatives that could diminish profitability and return on investment. Managers, pulled in different directions by competing stakeholder demands, may be tempted to resort to CSR-washing — promoting sustainability externally without real implementation. Although this tactic can secure short-term shareholder support, it poses significant long-term risks for both managers and their companies. Governments are implementing measures to discourage deceptive positioning within this framework. Charities and non-governmental organizations like the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) play a role in scrutinizing greenwashing claims — encouraging companies to provide specific evidence — and serve as sustainability watchdogs, while individuals are exposing corporate misconduct through whistleblowing. While companies are increasingly investing in sustainability and ethical business practices, there are concerns about the long-term commitment to these principles (Holger, 2023). Greenwashing and socialwashing, have received significant attention due to their impact on brand perceptions, profitability, and perceived ethical harm (Sailer et al., 2022; Tavares et al., 2017). Socialwashing involves companies portraying themselves as more socially conscious than they truly are, often by associating with social initiatives or movements (ESG Report, 2021). Greenwashing involves deceiving consumers about a company's environmental practices or the true benefits of a product or service, often manifested through vague or false claims in advertising (Carlson et al., 1993; Kangun et al., 1991; Schmuck et al., 2018). Studies on socialwashing, particularly in the context of ESG reporting practices, reveal negative effects such as increased reputational risk, doubts about financial prospects, and adverse impacts on stock market prices (Del Giudice and Rigamonti, 2020; Aouadi and Marsat, 2018; Frooman, 1997). Allegations of misleading social claims can alter corporate identity, create stakeholder skepticism, and lower brand credibility. Moreover, perceptions of greenwashing are associated with lower credibility for vague ads, increased skepticism about green advertising, negative brand evaluations, and intentions to spread negative word-of-mouth evaluations of unclear green claims (see Liedong et al., 2022, and the references therein). Certain companies, like Volkswagen, have faced the consequences of their opportunistic actions. Volkswagen paid around US$30 billion to settle fines and class action lawsuits stemming from its diesel gate scandal. Likewise, the fashion industry is facing heightened scrutiny for sustainability, with concerns ranging from child labor to unfair worker conditions. This scrutiny intensified after the 2013 garment factory collapse in Bangladesh, which claimed over 1,000 lives. Although there was a perceived decrease in greenwashing, recent allegations have prompted companies such as Ryanair, Lipton, and Innocent Drinks to withdraw their advertisements. This issue also extends to ESG practices, where companies set measurable goals but demonstrate inadequate environmental performance overall. (Rathee and Milfeld, 2023)

To enhance the credibility of ads, advertisers employ cues as marketing symbols (e.g., green imagery, eco-labels), certifications (e.g., B-Corp certification, fair trade symbol), and endorsements (e.g., corporate reputation lists, celebrities, social media influencers) (Choi and Rifon, 2012; Cowan and Guzman, 2020). The effectiveness of these cues varies depending on the source and the cue itself, with familiar brands benefiting from eco-seals, especially among those with high environmental concern (Bickart and Ruth, 2012). However, the proliferation of green labels has led to skepticism. Haaland (2021) surveyed consumers opinions on different ecolabels and found that more than 70% of respondents consider terms like 'green,' 'eco-friendly,' and 'sustainable' as overused and meaningless. Given the rise of sustainability advertising, companies using prevalent cues may face additional consumer skepticism (Pancer et al., 2017). In this sense, understanding consumer perceptions becomes crucial as companies invest more in sustainability advertising (see Rathee and Milfeld, 2023, and the references therein).

In consumer research, various terms are used to describe individual differences, motivations, or trait measures related to environmental concern in consumption choices. These include environmental consciousness, environmental protection, pro-environmental orientation/attitudes, environmental altruism, conscious consumerism, green consumption values, sustainable, responsible consumption, and eco-friendliness, among others. Numerous scales have been developed to measure this consumer trait and examine its connection to marketplace behaviors. For instance, the GREEN scale, developed by Haws et al. (2014) measures the tendency to express the personal value of environmental protection through purchase choices. Additionally, studies explore motives for and against green behaviors beyond trait-level environmental concern, including green quality perceptions, personal values, motivational orientations, monetary savings/cost, positive feelings, altruism, and status motives.

Despite considerable research in this area, the understanding of environmental concern and its links to consumption and business strategies remains unclear and misunderstood in the marketing field. Regardless of ongoing research interest and reported environmental concern in the marketplace, consumer choice of green products remains marginal. Carrington et al. (2010) argue that ethical consumerism, which includes environmental concern, has transitioned from fringe to mainstream culture since the early 2000s. However, ethical intentions often fail to translate into ethical purchases due to factors such as social desirability bias, implementation intentions, behavioral control, and situational context. Despite an agreement on the wasteful nature of disposable clothing, the literature highlights the pro-environmental attitude-behavior gap, explaining consumers' challenges in taking responsibility for their purchases, usage, and disposal within the apparel supply chain (see Cavender et al., 2021, and the references therein). This attitude-behavior gap, widely studied in social psychology and consumer research, suggests that despite strong ethical or environmental motives, various contextual and internal factors can moderate the relationship between intentions and behavior. Consequently, increasing environmental concern may not always effectively drive behavioral change, especially when competing motives are present (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022).

Historically, the post-war economic revival led to limited consideration for environmental constraints, but by the 1960s, the negative environmental impacts of overconsumption and industrialization became a global policy concern (Bramwell and Lane, 1993; Goodland, 1995; Kotler, 2011; Seyfang, 2005). In the current context, it is crucial for managers to adopt sustainable practices in demand management, promotion, and consumption, considering mounting pressure from ethical and regulatory bodies such as green audits, ESG Investment, and UN-SDG Reporting (Cort and Esty, 2020; Peattie and Ratnayaka, 1992; Pizzi et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). Achieving a balance between environmental, social, and economic sustainability is imperative (Hussain et al., 2018; Jamali, 2006; Waas et al., 2010), and demarketing emerges as a valuable contributor across all three dimensions. Economic sustainability in fashion is about achieving financial success while also considering the broader impacts of business operations. Brands across different fashion segments can adopt various strategies to balance profitability with ethical, social, and environmental responsibility to ensure their long-term economic sustainability. A market-oriented approach in sustainable fashion aligns with an extended consumer demand for sustainable clothes, since consumers consider sustainability as an important criterion for a purchase (Hewitt et al., 2023). Economic sustainability encompasses both tangible and intangible assets, but it may resonate less with consumers due to its extrinsic versus intrinsic motivations (Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002; Sen et al., 2016). This dimension goes beyond maximizing profitability, focusing on decisions that ensure the organization's long-term viability (Lindgreen et al., 2009). While brands may not actively promote economic sustainability since it primarily rewards firms, excelling in this dimension can indirectly contribute to human development (Rathee and Milfeld, 2023).

To summarize, there is a lack of understanding how companies can achieve both sustainability and growth. While sustainability is emphasized, practical guidance is limited, posing challenges for managers. The profit vs. sustainability dilemma leads some to resort to greenwashing, damaging credibility. Consumers, meanwhile, show confusion and mistrust toward brands, creating a gap between pro-environmental intentions and actions. Companies aiming to bridge this gap must deeply understand how to implement sustainability measures and, at the same time consumer perceptions and complex motivations guiding their decision-making.

3.3. Unveiling Potential: Anticonsumption, Sufficiency and Demarketing

Throughout the evolution from post-war economic recovery to present-day, concepts like anticonsumption and sufficiency have gained prominence, offering alternative routes towards sustainable consumption. This chapter examines how these concepts intersect with demarketing strategies and aims to illuminate their collective potential in reshaping consumer behavior for a more sustainable future.

Certain consumption reduction practices, highlighted in studies by Bialski et al. (2015) and Bly et al. (2015), specifically target minimizing interactions with business entities. Implemented within self-organized networks supporting collaborative consumption, these practices involve activities such as giving, lending, swapping, and repairing to extend a product lifespan. Brand-driven green initiatives, such as Starbucks' efforts to design more easily compostable or recyclable cups, aim to reduce waste on a consumer level. Starbucks distributes a staggering 6 billion single-use cups annually, equating to over 16 million cups per day or nearly 200 cups per second (Starbucks, n.d.). Despite spending millions of dollars on designing a better cup, Starbucks assures customers that they won't notice any significant difference in their experience with the new cup (Starbucks, 2020). This highlights the brand's focus on addressing waste while maintaining a seamless customer experience. However, the impact of such green initiatives on waste reduction may be limited if consumers continue to rely on single-use cups. In contrast, anticonsumption initiatives, like encouraging the use of reusable cups, could potentially have a more significant impact on waste reduction by addressing the root cause of the issue – the culture of disposability. Starbucks, for example, promotes anticonsumption by incentivizing reusable cup use (Tyko, 2021). When consumers return the cups, they get $1 back and 10 reward points in the Starbucks loyalty program. Starbucks also gave 10 cent discounts on drinks when consumers brought their own cup from home. Although previous reuse initiatives have only modestly increased reuse rates, brands like REI and Patagonia have seen success in encouraging anticonsumption or demarketing practices such as abstaining from Black Friday shopping or repairing items instead of buying new ones, resulting in increased profits (Moss, 2018). Understanding the factors behind successful brand-supported anticonsumption initiatives can help scale such practices to a broader audience, crucial for climate change mitigation (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022).

Anticonsumption encompasses various motives, attitudes, lifestyles, actions, and inactions against consumption (Chatzidakis and Lee, 2013). It includes actions like refusal to buy, as well as reducing, repairing, and reusing existing goods to minimize resource exploitation (García-de-Frutos et al., 2018; Zavestoski, 2002). Various anticonsumption behaviors exist, including boycotts, brand avoidance, buycotts (when consumers buy the products from another competitor), voluntary simplicity (a lifestyle choice that minimizes the needless consumption of material goods), culture jamming (parodying or criticizing advertising and consumerism), and lifespan extension of products (see Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022, and the references therein). Richer conceptualizations of anticonsumption expand on rejection actions to include reclaiming and restricting. Lee et al. (2011) argue that when complete cessation of consumption is not feasible, restriction actions —

such reducing overall consumption or within specific categories — and reclamation — diverting items from the waste stream — align with the anticonsumption ethos. Motivations behind these actions range from resistance to consumerism to social, ethical, or environmental concerns (see Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022, and the references therein).

Moreover, the original just-in-time concept, implemented by the Toyota production system, advocates for efficient production measures and the avoidance of overproduction. This approach, now termed "lean production" has become an industry standard (Freudenreich and Schaltegger, 2020). To achieve win-win solutions for companies and customers through lean consumption, it is essential to implement the sufficiency approach. Sufficiency, defined as avoiding over- and underconsumption, is crucial for sustainable consumption (Hansen and Schrader, 1997; Schaefer and Crane, 2005; Brown and Vergragt, 2016; Fuchs et al., 2016). Despite the lack of a universally agreed-upon definition, sufficiency entails reducing material consumption in affluent societies to ensure human well-being and ecological stability (Princen, 2005; Gorge et al., 2015). This approach goes beyond lean production, requiring companies to not only align production and consumption to avoid overproduction and waste but also take steps to actively support consumption reductions at the consumer level. The goal is to create a system that promotes efficiency without generating unnecessary waste, benefiting both businesses and customers. Nonetheless, the sufficiency approach is commonly viewed as conflicting with business objectives.

Recent advancements in service- and sharing- oriented enterprises suggest that sufficiency could, in fact, stimulate the emergence of new business prospects. Sufficiency should not connote a negative perception of "less" but rather embodies the concept of "enough" as an intuitive and individually appropriate measure of consumption, without requiring sacrifice (see Gossen et al., 2019, and the references therein). A crucial step in implementing the sufficiency approach in the clothing sector involves a shift in perception, viewing clothes not as consumables discarded after a short period but as durables intended for multiple uses. This change of perspective transforms the purpose of clothing businesses from selling numerous items quickly to fulfilling needs through durable clothing and related services. This shift lays the groundwork for business innovation. Simultaneously, there is a need for a shift in consumer attitudes, focusing on deriving pleasure from clothing use rather than the mere acquisition of clothing items. In this context, individuals should be referred as "users" instead of "consumers" (Freudenreich and Schaltegger, 2020).

Furthermore, while social and ecological awareness influences purchasing decisions, studies reveal that factors like fit and style often override sustainability considerations in clothing-related choices (Bly et al., 2015; Gwozdz et al., 2017; Niinimäki, 2010). Only a small minority, termed "ethical hardliners" prioritize sustainability criteria in clothing decisions (Niinimäki, 2010). Psychological research suggests that activating egoistic and altruistic motives can support sustainable consumption choices (Jägel et al., 2012). Additionally, consumer contributions to sustainable development by reducing consumption levels are linked to increased subjective well-being (Bly et al., 2015). Consumer hedonism, associated with sensory experiences and the aesthetic appeal of clothing, particularly for those practicing mindfulness and restraint in their purchases, implies a shift from finding pleasure in acquiring clothing to deriving it from clothing use (Blättel-Mink, 2014; Jung and Jin, 2016**).** Voluntary simplicity seeks life satisfaction through non-material aspects, while downshifting aims to reduce work and consumption for less stress. Both align with sufficiency, but voluntary simplifiers engage within the market, whereas anticonsumers can reject specific products and transactions. Some scholars propose that embracing a simplistic, less materialistic lifestyle focused on enriching time and social interaction contributes to personal happiness and well-being. Individually, achieving sufficient consumption entails reassessing personal needs to curb excessive consumer behavior (Jenny, 2016) and reconsidering the relationship between affluent consumption and life satisfaction (Cherrier et al., 2012).

The research of Freudenreich and Schaltegger (2020) advocates for an integrated perspective that incorporates both the production and consumption angles. It specifically explores the application of the sufficiency approach in the clothing businesses as a supplementary strategy to the implementation of efficiency and consistency-oriented measures. Their approach illustrated in Figure 1 below can be described as follows:

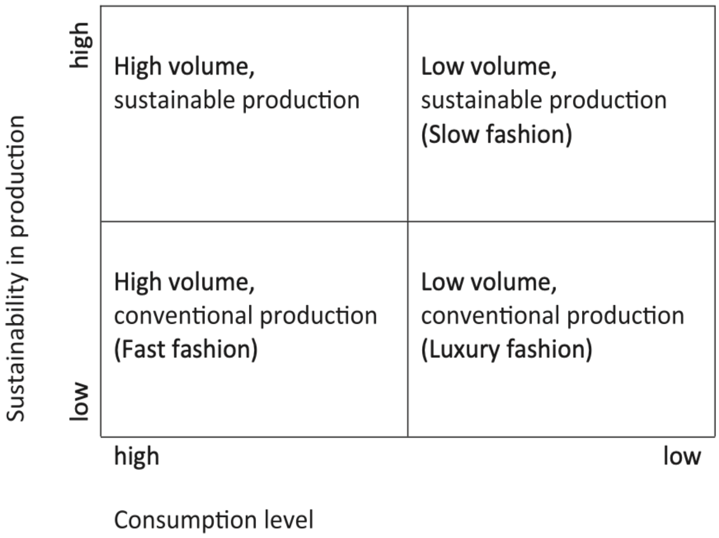


Figure 1: Sustainability at the intersection of clothing production and consumption (Freudenreich and Schaltegger, 2020, p.3)

- **Bottom left quadrant:** High-volume conventional clothing production, commonly known as **FF**, has adverse effects on sustainability.
- **Top left quadrant and bottom right quadrant:** Strategies to mitigate this impact often involve considerations of sustainability either at the production or at the consumption level. The bottom right quadrant refers to **LF** which involves low consumption levels, but conventional production standards.
- **Top right quadrant:** From a sustainability standpoint, the most promising approach involves **SF**, combining decreased consumption levels and the implementation of high sustainable production standards.

Moreover, García-de-Frutos et al. (2018) suggest that brands can act as agents of the change associated to environmentally oriented anticonsumption (EOA) and that contrary to intuition, brands supporting anticonsumption efforts may be more effective than individual endeavors or social demarketing and marketing initiatives driven by governmental or non-profit agencies. They define EOA as deliberate acts driven by sustainability concerns, encompassing reduction, avoidance, and/or rejection. Therefore, actions like purchasing durable items or opting for used goods support general consumption reduction while still involving consumption actions (Lee et al., 2011). Notably, researchers suggest that EOA serves an important self-expressive function, with global impact anticonsumers keenly interested in societal perceptions of their actions and often engaging in more visible behaviors (Iyer and Muncy, 2009).

The study of Sekhon and Armstrong Soule (2019) takes this approach, considering how global impact motivations for EOA can be signaled through anticonsumption practices, assuming that more consumers might be inclined to reduce consumption if their environmental motivations were observable and comprehensible to others, thereby offering symbolic benefits. Hence, the research targets a broader base of consumers, including those with low to moderate environmental concern, and seeks to enhance the appeal of anticonsumption actions by introducing a signaling mechanism. By making environmental motivations observable, the aim is to encourage more consumers to reduce consumption (more details in chapter 4.2.3). Regrettably, there is a lack of research adopting this perspective, particularly regarding the role of fashion brands in the anticonsumption sphere, with research on GDM being a notable exception. Consumers have the capacity to engage in anticonsumption practices, and brands can also play a pivotal role in encouraging consumers to reduce consumption. However, research suggests that advocating for consumption reduction through GDM can lead to negative brand and product attitudes compared to promoting environmentally friendly products through green marketing (GM) (Reich and Soule, 2016). With the increasing significance of demarketing (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015) and sustainable degrowth (Drews et al., 2019) — which involves actively scaling down production capacities (Sekulova et al., 2013; Germain, 2017) — a neglected aspect is discerning which brand positions stand to gain more from GDM strategies versus green environmental approaches like GM (Vilasanti da Luz et al., 2020).

Demarketing is a general term used to refer to a large set of practices that implement sustainable production, sales, and sufficiency in marketing. It is important to note that demarketing is not only consumer-oriented. Green environmental actions can also be company-oriented when brands make their products more environmentally friendly, adopt demarketing practices by reducing production or promote campaigns about overconsumption. These actions can also be consumer-oriented when they encourage consumers to return empty packaging, provide recycling options for products, or motivate consumers to donate old products (Vilasanti da Luz et al., 2020). A shift towards sustainability can also occur when eco-friendly products take over market share from less sustainable alternatives (Moss, 2018). Selling fewer, higher-quality items to affluent customers is a viable strategy. However, retailers targeting budget-conscious consumers who expect low prices may struggle to transition to a longevity-focused model while maintaining shareholder returns. The literature has provided different definitions and purposes of demarketing strategies that firms may use to cope with different aspects of their business strategies, not primarily related with sustainability goals:

- **General Demarketing** involves using a reactive marketing approach to mitigate supply shortages. During periods of macroeconomic crises when firms may be affected by unfavorable cost shocks and demand exceeds supply, customer satisfaction can be compromised, resulting in disappointment. To align supply with demand, it may become necessary to curtail demand and demarketing is a strategy to this aim (see Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015, and the references therein).
- **Selective Demarketing** aligns with a company's segmentation strategy by maintaining a specific brand image. This involves employing a market shielding strategy to demarket specific segments. Such an approach is often seen in sectors like tourism, the public sector, and luxury industries. For instance, discouraging tourists from visiting destinations through antitourism campaigns or dissuading people from making frivolous calls to the police department. It is important to note that selective demarketing can be discriminatory and potentially harm a company's brand image (Armstrong and Soule, 2015).
- **Ostensible Demarketing** is a marketing strategy that signals product scarcity, capitalizing on the perceived value of scarce items. For instance, Apple intentionally orchestrates stock-outs of new products to foster long-term demand (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015).
- **Strategic Demarketing:** Gerstner et al. (1993) postulate that demarketing may be a strategic way to differentiate a company's own product from competitors and attract customers seeking alternatives. For example, rather than solely promoting an energy drink, a company might launch a campaign highlighting the health risks associated with energy drinks in general, subtly discouraging consumers from purchasing any brand. Though this might initially reduce overall sales, it positions the company as health-conscious, attracting consumers concerned about such risks. The demarketing equilibrium model simplifies this concept, illustrating how companies can balance supply and demand by strategically managing demarketing alongside traditional marketing efforts. By finding this equilibrium, companies can maintain profitability without oversaturating the market or causing negative consequences. In simpler terms, demarketing can still be economically efficient if it expands the market or benefits both consumers and firms. For instance, offering rebates or utilizing bait-and-switch tactics can lead to increased sales and profitability, despite potential consumer inconvenience.
- **Green Demarketing (GDM)** is different from the strategies just described and refers explicitly to marketing targeted to discourage the demand for certain products for the sake of the environment (García-de-Frutos et al., 2018). GDM is an approach that **diverges from green marketing (GM)** by not promoting green products. Instead, its objective is to advo-

cate for reduced consumption, thereby decreasing pollution and minimizing the use of natural resources (Benton, 2014). GDM goes against the goal of boosting sales (Bruce et al., 2012) and appears incompatible with the prevailing view of traditional marketing (Swim et al., 2011; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). However, for-profit brands can still thrive by adopting GDM strategies (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015; Reich and Armstrong Soule, 2016; Kim et al., 2018; Heese and Rünz, 2020). The specifics of how this can be achieved will be explored in chapters 4 and 5.

The present section discussed the sometimes subtle difference between concepts like anticonsumption, EOA and sufficiency, as well as the general concept of demarketing. A distinction has been made between strategic and green demarketing. The latter responds consciously to the shift in consumption trends that attach value to a simpler, more sustainable, and resource-conserving lifestyle. The next section turns to the discussion in the context of the fashion industry.

3.4. Socially Responsible Apparel Consumption (SRC)

In the realm of socially responsible apparel consumption (SRC), it is crucial to understand the different dimensions that influence consumer behavior. This section explores key dimensions identified by scholars that tend to lead consumer choices towards a slow fashion orientation (SFO). McDonald et al. (2012) recognize consumers' complex behaviors leading to a pro-environmental attitude-behavior gap and emphasizing the need for managers to understand the underlying drivers behind SRC. Social equity stands out as a crucial ethical dimension within sustainability, highlighting the importance of human connection in driving responsible consumer choices.

The 2013 Rana Plaza disaster exposed the profit-driven practices of FF, igniting ethical concerns (Webster, 2019; Magnuson et al., 2017). In response, SF emerged, emphasizing ethical production to improve workers' rights (Jung and Jin, 2014). Scholars such as Ertekin and Atik (2015) and Cataldi et al. (2010) advocate for durable clothing to enhance sustainability. In this context, SRC requires informed decision-making, thoughtful reflections on purchases, and responsible usage and disposal (Schlaile et al., 2018). Building on these discussions, Cavender et al. (2021) make a significant contribution by exploring the link between consumers' inclination towards SF and their engagement in SRC. The authors identified five dimensions of SFO that positively influence SRC:

- Individuals with a positive orientation toward **social equity** are likely to exhibit a high level of SRC. Research confirms the strong link between fair working conditions, fair trade practices, and SRC. This aligns with consumers' favorable attitudes toward social sustainability, emphasizing human-based ethical issues in the apparel industry (Carrington et al., 2010; Loewenstein and Small, 2007; Magnuson et al., 2017).
- The second dimension of SFO is **authenticity**, which emphasizes the value derived from skilled craft-based production, time investment, and the narrative behind a product's journey to the consumer (Jung and Jin, 2014; 2016). Consumers valuing authenticity, are more likely to form emotional attachments to their clothes, leading to mindful use, care, and disposal aligned with SRC (Watson and Yan, 2013).

- The third dimension is **functionality**, related to how consumers use their clothing post-purchase, with SF consumers keeping garments in longer use, wearing them in various ways, and favoring classic designs over trends. Respondents scoring low on functionality are likely opt for FF brands (Joy et al., 2012; Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009).
- Respondents valuing **localism** may recognize the positive impact of such businesses on local economies, favoring support for artisans and entrepreneurs using local resources, traditions, and production techniques, contributing to increased emotional attachment and longer garment use (Cavender and Lee, 2018; Watson and Yan, 2013).
- Those with a positive orientation to **exclusivity** may view SF as a means of expressing their style aesthetics, curating wardrobes with high-quality and promoting both fashionability and environmental sustainability (Cavender and Lee, 2018; Ertekin and Atik, 2015).

Research suggests that concerns for social sustainability, particularly human well-being, influence consumers' attitudes toward alternative consumption paradigms like SF more than environmental sustainability issues (Carrington et al., 2010; Loewenstein and Small, 2007; Jung and Jin, 2014). Sharing such information can increase consumers' motivation for SRC. This finding is crucial to mobilize the SF agenda among apparel consumers (Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013). Laery et al. (2014; 2017; 2019) also suggest that consumers are more likely to change their behavior when they believe that their actions can impact solving a problem. To promote SRC, it is crucial for SF entities, NGOs, and governments to emphasize the human-based impacts of the apparel industry in their messaging. Enhancing consumer awareness of the human costs associated with consumption habits, and encouraging support for businesses that transparently ensure ethical treatment of workers in their supply chains contributes to SRC.

After the discussion of the DSP, with its emphasis on growth and economic profits, understanding the consumer and firm dilemmas regarding sustainability, and the key elements of SRC that would lead to SFO, we are ready to move to green advertising, encompassing both green marketing (GM) and green demarketing (GDM), with a specific emphasis on the latter. The next section focuses on the influence of green advertising on consumer brand attitudes, environmental reputation, distinctions between product and institutional advertising, and the role of status signaling.

4. Sustainability Communication

4.1. Green Marketing (GM)

Sustainable branding and advertising have now become a strategic resource for gaining a competitive advantage (Kong et al.,2021). Therefore, effectively communicating sustainability initiatives to consumers is crucial for companies (Yang et al., 2015). The existence of the attitude-behavior gap presents both opportunities and challenges for advertisers. Rathee and Milfeld (2023) conducted empirical research, consolidating findings on the efficacy of sustainability advertising. Their research provides valuable insights into how green narratives supporting sustainability messages can successfully address the attitude-behavior gap.

Sustainability, as articulated by the definition from Brundtland (1987), involves the development that fulfills current needs while also safeguarding the capacity of future generations to fulfill their own needs. A fundamental aspect of sustainability lies in its long-term orientation (Catlin et al., 2017; Simpson and Radford, 2012). The essence of CSR is to contribute to society beyond legal obligations (Diehl et al., 2015), with the ESG providing measurable objectives for CSR initiatives (Antea Group, 2021). From a business perspective, there has been a shift from the shareholder view, which primarily focuses on financial performance, to the stakeholder view, incorporating environmental and social considerations (Cowan and Guzman, 2020). This transition aligns with the concept of the TBL, encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability (Catlin et al., 2017; Elkington, 1997). The concept of sustainability takes a comprehensive approach, aiming to develop products with minimal environmental impact and ensure responsible resource use, such as waste reduction and zero-emissions practices (Rathee and Milfeld, 2023). Hence, consumers anticipate that companies go beyond mere economic self-interest and contribute to positive societal impacts (LaVoi and Haley, 2021).

Green advertising is characterized by claims that highlight a product's environmental benefits and encourage the adoption of environmentally friendly behaviors (Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2009). While environmental sustainability advertising, emphasizes a company's sustainable characteristics or products (Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2009). Cowand and Guzman (2020) discovered that incorporating sustainability signals can improve overall firm performance. Products with sustainable packaging exhibit a growth rate seven times higher than their traditional counterparts (Crawford, 2020) and a significant 85% of individuals have expressed a willingness to purchase more sustainable products (Business Wire, 2021; Xu et al., 2021). The term "green messages" encompasses various definitions and criteria (Kilbourne, 1995; McDonagh and Prothero, 2014). Generally, a green message is one that exhibits a positive connection between a product and the environment, encourages green consumption or lifestyle, and/or highlights the organization's eco-friendly image (Banerjee et al.,1995). These messages are commonly employed to promote environmentally friendly features of products or demonstrate a brand's commitment to environmental preservation (Matthes, 2019; Leonidou et al., 2011), often as a response to increased CSR practices (Nyilasy et al., 2014). However, the key determinants of a successful sustainability advertisement and the factors motivating consumers to engage in sustainable actions remain essential questions. Despite the growing acceptance and utilization of green messages (Segev et al., 2016), creating effective green campaigns that positively influence brand evaluations and consumer eco-friendly behaviors remains challenging (Amatulli et al., 2017). Numerous studies suggest that poorly executed green messages may have adverse effects on brand evaluations or purchase intentions (White et al., 2011; Newman et al., 2014; Chang et al., 2015; Amatulli et al., 2017).

Advertising's impact is studied in a sequential process, starting with individual exposure and attention to ads (Lee and Cho, 2020; Loo et al., 2015). Exposure encompasses both the selection of and attention to messages, with consumers having the ability to avoid ads mechanically through actions like skipping or muting (Fransen et al., 2015), and cognitively ignoring commercial messages. This is followed by the development of explicit and implicit attitudes toward ads, products, and brands, ultimately influencing behavior outcomes resulting from these attitudes (see Rathee and Milfeld, 2023, and the references therein). Rathee and Milfeld (2023) indicate that various factors influence the effectiveness of sustainable advertising. These include ad context, source characteristics, and message design, all of which play significant roles in shaping the impact of sustainability advertisements:

- **Ad context** encompasses factors beyond the direct control of an ad, incorporating macroeconomic and environmental influences such as culture, crises, and ad execution, all of which mold the reception of sustainability advertising. Crises like the COVID-19 pandemic have heightened consumer engagement in sustainable behavior and a preference for sustainable products (Emmert, 2021; Lou et al., 2022). Cultural practices also exert an influence on attitudes toward sustainability (Komatsu et al., 2019). Societal orientations, including individualism and collectivism, contribute to shaping prosocial attitudes and behaviors (Komatsu et al., 2019; Lee and Haley, 2020). Preferences for advertising appeals vary among different age groups, with millennials favoring horizontal individualism emphasizing uniqueness and equality, while the elderly lean towards vertical collectivism, providing a sense of fulfilling duties to society (Lee and Haley, 2020). Normative influence, encouraging conformity to social norms, significantly influences sustainable consumer behavior (Khare et al., 2013). Research by Salazar et al. (2013) indicates that information from social groups, particularly family and friends, influences the likelihood of choosing environmentally friendly products. Recommendations from peers and family contribute to higher adoption of sustainable choices. Additionally, people in developing countries may prioritize local environmental issues, while those in developed countries express concern about global issues, aligning with research indicating that consumers in developed countries are more willing to pay a premium for sustainable products (Lee et al., 2017). Essoussi and Linton (2010) found that consumers' willingness to pay premium prices for recycled products is directly related to the perceived functional risk associated with the product category. This highlights the importance for companies to also consider and address the perceived functional risk linked to recycled products, as it significantly influences sales.
- **Source characteristics**, a key factor in message acceptance, comprises three dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness of the company and endorsers (Haley, 1996; Tormala et al., 2006). Expertise pertains to the perceived competence of the source from the receiver's standpoint, trustworthiness is associated with the source's objectivity and attractiveness involves the likability of the source (Haley, 1996). The attractiveness dimension is particularly crucial, as consumers expect companies to align with and share their values (Silberstein, 2022). Additionally, a company's reputation significantly influences the reception of its messages; negative reputation raises questions about the company's intentions (Bartels et al., 2020). Certified B Corporations have established greater credibility

compared to larger well-known brands (LaVoi and Haley, 2021; Olsen et al., 2014). Companies with a purpose-oriented focus, such as those with a social mission, are perceived as more authentic in communicating sustainability messages compared to business-oriented organizations (LaVoi and Haley, 2021). Skepticism often arises when companies in controversial industries engage in sustainability advertising. Firms promoting products or services that deviate from social norms, may seek to bolster their corporate image through sustainability efforts (Oh et al., 2017). Despite the negative environmental and social impact associated with the FF industry, many companies within this sector have incorporated sustainability into their marketing communications (Teona et al., 2020). As anticipated, consumers are more inclined to accept environmental claims from luxury brands as opposed to FF brands, possibly influenced by status considerations (Kong et al., 2021; Teona et al., 2020). Nonetheless, luxury brands are also perceived as less environmentally friendly, and sustainability advertising can have adverse effects on the pillars of luxury brand identity, including quality, prestige, and exclusivity (Kong et al., 2021). This sheds light on certain limitations to the halo effects associated with adverse industry perceptions while highlighting a potential tradeoff with established brand associations. In addition, the influence of social media endorsers has emerged as a new form of interpersonal influence, with their persuasiveness depending on factors such as the number of followers and perceived similarity with social media users (Pittman and Abell, 2021; Schouten et al., 2020). This aspect is particularly crucial to consider in the realm of sustainability advertising.

- **Message design** can dramatically impact an ads effectiveness through subtle changes in the content or structure. The style of delivering a message is crucial for advertising effectiveness. Yang et al. (2015) identified concrete appeals as persuasive, credible and memorable. Concrete appeals in contrast to abstract ones, are specific, easily verifiable, lead to greater purchase intentions, enhanced curiosity, and price acceptability (Hur et al., 2020). However, using abstract appeals can be more effective than concrete appeals when the visual and verbal elements don't match (Hur et al., 2020). Messages can also either adopt a narrative style, presenting information as a story, or a non-narrative style, using direct persuasive appeals (Yang, 2015). Non-narrative styles appeal to logic and reason, while narrative ads persuade through emotional engagement, effectively overcoming resistance (Brechman and Purvis, 2015; Kim et al., 2022). Amatulli et al. (2017) found that messages framed negatively were more successful than than those framed positively in motivating pro-environmental behaviors, while White et al. (2011) demonstrated that the effectiveness of message framing depended on consumers' mindset levels.

Research indicates that ad processing can be enhanced by aligning ad content and context congruency, such as presenting sustainability ads on platforms like websites and magazines surrounded by related content (De Pelsmacker et al., 2002). Aligning visual and written elements with the same emotional tone, known as visual-verbal congruence, enhances information processing and retention (Hur et al., 2020). For instance, combining pleasant nature scenery with a substantive green message can positively impact attitudes toward brands (Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2009). On the other hand, incongruence between a verbal sustainability claim and the visual appearance of the package can evoke more negative emotional responses among consumers with low environmental concern compared to those with high environmental concern (Magnier and Schoormans, 2015). This underscores the importance of presenting a cohesive sustainability image through an ad's visual elements, including product packaging.

Consumer trust in green advertising has reached unprecedented levels (Segev et al., 2016). Chen and Chang (2012) demonstrated that trust serves as an antecedent variable for purchase intention; when consumers trust companies' claims about the environmental attributes of their products, they are more likely to have a higher purchase intention toward green products. It is important to remark, that in sustainability advertising, there exists an information asymmetry, where consumers are often unable to observe a company's sustainability commitment. Consequently, consumers rely on heuristics to assess the credibility of an advertisement (Cowan and Guzman, 2020). For example, sustainability advertising may negatively impact brand and product perceptions due to consumers employing a zero-sum heuristic, perceiving a tradeoff between sustainability and product quality (Xu et al., 2021). This "sustainability liability" or the functional risk underscores the challenge of balancing product function and sustainability (Luchs et al.,2012). To address this, advertisers should focus on highlighting specific product features producing environmental benefits, emphasizing durability, and exploring the balance between performance and sustainability claims (Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2009; Simpson and Radford, 2012). Using popularity appeals and identifying thresholds for message believability are strategies to mitigate the perceived tradeoff and enhance the sustainability appeal without compromising product functionality (Olsen et al., 2014; Xu et al., 2021).

Advertisement effectiveness also depends on the consumers involvement with the product category as well as with the relationship with the brand (Chang et al., 2015; Cho and Taylor 2020; Nagar, 2015; Su et al., 2020). Advertisers should employ green advertising strategies when consumers are highly engaged with the product, since green advertising positively influences consumers' perceptions of a brand, making them more likely to buy eco-friendly products even at a slightly higher cost (Rathee and Milfeld, 2023).

In summary, GM is a strategic approach that focuses on promoting environmentally friendly products and practices. It aims to attract environmentally conscious consumers by highlighting the sustainable attributes of products and services. What distinguishes GM from conventional marketing is its emphasis on sustainability and environmental impact, rather than on the functional benefits of the product. GM includes strategies like eco-labeling, sustainable packaging, and CSR initiatives, which resonate with consumers who prioritize ecological conservation. However, as environmental issues become more pressing, the limitations of GM become apparent, leading to the emergence of GDM.

As we will see in the next section, GDM goes beyond promoting green products since it seeks to reduce overall consumption to alleviate environmental stress. This shift is motivated by the growing recognition that sustainable consumption patterns must also address the issue of overconsumption. GDM adds value by encouraging consumers to adopt minimalist lifestyles, to buy less, choose higher-quality and durable goods. It involves campaigns that highlight the negative environmental impacts of excessive consumption and advocate for mindful purchasing decisions. By promoting reduced consumption, GDM complements GM, which primarily focuses on the product's green attributes. Together, they aim to foster a more sustainable market environment. A development in marketing practice taking a further step to discourage or transform certain consumption patterns can be identified. This new kind of marketing can be denoted as GDM and is related to, but not the same as, GM.

4.2. Green Demarketing (GDM) Engagement Areas

In the realm of environmental consciousness, brands have traditionally employed GM strategies to promote eco-friendly consumption, advocating for the purchase of sustainable products and emphasizing their environmental benefits. These initiatives have aimed to reform consumer behavior while addressing pressing environmental concerns. However, a paradigm shift has emerged in recent years with the advent of GDM, challenging the conventional wisdom of encouraging consumption as a means of sustainability. Three areas of engagement within GDM were pinpointed as potential catalysts for fostering SRC in the fashion industry:

- **Branding:** Brand environmental reputation,
- **Advertising:** product vs. institutional advertising,
- **Consumer Behavior:** status signaling through conspicuous anticonsumption.

These three areas will be discussed in the following subsections 4.2.1. - 4.2.3. Traditionally, brands have predominantly communicated green products through green environmental messages or GM, which promote environmentally friendly consumption and highlight product benefits (Reich and Soule, 2016). These messages aim to inform consumers about the advantages of eco-friendly consumption (Kilbourne, 1995; McDonagh and Prothero, 2014; Amatulli et al., 2017). For example, H&M's "Go green, wear blue" campaign promotes environmental sustainability through jeans made with organic cotton (H&M, n.d.). Similarly, Topshop collaborated with "Reclaim to Wear" to create a capsule collection from discarded materials (Bouchet, 2013), while Zara launched the "Join Life" collection made of organic cotton, reused plastic, and recycled wool (Zara, n.d.). These campaigns utilize green environmental messages, aiming to reform market practices to address environmental issues (Kilbourne, 1995), although they are commonly employed to advertise eco-friendly products (Leonidou et al., 2011; Joshi and Kronrod, 2019). However, such messages can also aim to reduce consumption (Kilbourne, 1995; Yakobovitch and Grinstein, 2016).

Recently, an alternative approach known as GDM has been proposed. GDM involves reducing overall consumption within a category to benefit the environment (García-de-Frutos et al., 2018), in contrast to the previously discussed green environmental messages which encourage consumption of eco-friendly products to contribute to environmental sustainability. A GDM message might advocate for reduced clothing purchases, while a green environmental message might promote recycling or highlight environmentally friendly materials used in clothing production. Notable GDM examples include Patagonia's "Don’t buy this jacket" campaign (see Figure 2) and Vitsœ's (2013) anti-obsolescence videos aimed at curbing overconsumption. Luxury brand Crockett and Jones also employed this strategy, educating consumers to make more conscious consumption choices and buy fewer products (Vilasanti da Luz et al., 2020).

A demarketing strategy incorporates several elements of environmental marketing campaigns, including advertising, public relations, and the management of the 4Ps (Grinstein and Nisan, 2009; Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015). While the term GDM is relatively recent, the research supporting the core concept of reducing overall consumption to promote environmental sustainability is older (Sekhon and Armstrong Soule, 2019). Early academic research on demarketing was primarily linked to demand suppression for products harmful to public health, such as tobacco, drugs, and alcohol (Pechmann et al., 2003), or conservation campaigns for resources like water and electricity (Press and Arnould, 2009; Allcott, 2011). For example, Yakobovitch and Grinstein (2016) proposed a consumer boomerang effect based on materialist traits when using demarketing as a social norm in energy-saving campaigns.

Figure 2: GDM campaign Patagonia (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015, p.1407)

In a related vein, several studies investigate consumer responses to GDM as sustainability initiatives undertaken by specific brands or products. These studies emphasize GDM as the promotion of a particular branded product as a substitute for others within its segment, thereby reducing overall category consumption (García-de-Frutos et al., 2018; Kropfeld et al., 2018; Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015; Reich and Armstrong Soule, 2016; Sekhon and Armstrong Soule, 2019). For instance, Miklós-Thal and Zhang (2013) identified the use of demarketing to establish a perception of high quality in consumers' minds.

Armstrong Soule and Reich (2015) investigated consumer perceptions regarding companies' motivations for adopting GDM strategies, finding that consumers' attitudes toward the product were more positive when they perceived the company's motivation as genuine rather than self-serving.

More recently, Sekhon and Armstrong Soule (2019) suggested that brands could assist consumers in finding symbolic meanings when reducing their consumption levels through explicit GDM actions. The efficacy of each type of green message may vary across brands. To determine which type elicits the most favorable brand evaluations, it is essential to consider several key factors. For example, product type (Olsen et al., 2014) and consumers' individual characteristics (Tucker et al., 2012) are known to influence consumer perceptions of green advertising. Additionally, brand characteristics, such as positioning strategy, should impact consumer judgments (Vilasanti da Luz et al., 2020).

Furthermore, there are two opposing mechanisms that influence consumers' attitudes toward a GDM message. On one side, GDM messages benefit from their sustainability focus. On the other side, these messages often suffer from low processing fluency and heightened skepticism. Processing fluency refers to the subjective ease or difficulty encountered in processing a message (Graf et al., 2017; Schwarz, 2008). Hansen et al. (2008) demonstrated that messages challenging to process are often perceived as less truthful. Unconventional messages, such as those associated with GDM, often evoke skepticism and reactance (Germelmann et al., 2020; Campbell and Kirmani, 2000; Reich and Armstrong Soule, 2016).

In the fashion industry, Patagonia is exploring innovative business approaches, incorporating GDM messages to promote repair services and clothing resale markets (Granskog et al., 2020). A rising environmental concern and the economic impact of the COVID-19 recession have prompted consumers to increasingly embrace the sustainable "reuse" paradigm, limiting their spending on new fashion items. Reflecting on these shifts, Patagonia aligns with consumer trends by planning the introduction of a clothing rental service for its products (see also https://www.renttherunway.com). Paradoxically, by criticizing consumerism, Patagonia has experienced tremendous growth in sales (Bloomberg, 2021). REI also closed its shops on Black Friday, proposing consumers to spend time outside in nature instead of shopping (Sekhon and Armstrong Soule, 2019). Similarly, The Glad Products Company promoted its ForceFlex garbage bags, emphasizing how important it is to reduce the amount of plastic sent to landfills (Reich and Armstrong Soule, 2016). These examples align with strategic demarketing and GDM as discussed in Section 3.3. By differentiating their message and engaging consumers to reduce consumption, these brands have positioned as authentic while generating profits at the same time.

To summarize, GDM integrates environmental marketing to promote sustainability by reducing consumption. While research supports its effectiveness, GDM messages encounter challenges like skepticism. Brands like Patagonia and REI have used GDM to promote repair services and outdoor activities, enhancing profits and authenticity. However, more research is required to grasp consumer acceptance and bridge attitudes with sustainable behavior. Three important aspects related to the successful applicability of GDM need to be emphasized: the importance of brand environmental reputation and perceived motive of a firm’s demarketing message, the effectiveness of demarketing messages when they are targeted towards the more general long-term strategy of a firm rather than to the promotion of particular products, and, finally, the role of signaling. These topics will be discussed in the next three subsections.

4.2.1. Brand Environmental Reputation

The effectiveness of GDM strategies and consumer reactions to these unconventional messages exhibit considerable variability. CSR initiatives have demonstrated financial benefits for brands, yet consumer skepticism toward such endeavors hinges on factors like brand reputation and the nature of the message. Armstrong Soule and Reich (2015) highlight that a brand's environmental reputation plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer responses to GDM campaigns. This section explores the interplay between CSR motives, consumer perceptions, and brand reputation.

The feasibility of a GDM strategy and corresponding reactions vary, depending on the brand and message. A brand's environmental reputation significantly influences how consumers respond to a GDM campaign (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015). Ellen et al. (2006) and Vlachos et al. (2009) found that when brands promote their CSR efforts, consumers can interpret these actions as having altruistic, strategic, or exploitative motives (Armstrong Soule, 2022).

Brand characteristics, such as a strong alignment between a company's core business, values, or brand identity and the social or environmental cause it supports, influence which motive consumers perceive. Ellen et al. (2006) focus on the importance of this concept, referred to as "company-cause fit". A high degree of "company-cause fit" leads to increased perceptions of altruistic and strategic motives and reduced perceptions of exploitative motives, irrespective of the length of the brand's commitment to the cause. Ellen et al. (2006) found that the degree of company-cause fit predicted purchase intentions, with perceived altruistic and strategic motives positively influencing purchase intentions, while perceived exploitative motives having a negative impact. The length of commitment did not affect purchase intentions.

Vlachos et al. (2009) extended this research, showing that perceived altruistic motives positively influenced consumer trust and recommendation intentions, while exploitative motives had negative effects on these outcomes. In general, motives are perceived as mainly strategic in nature compared to altruistic and exploitative motives, regardless of environmental reputation or commitment length. This pattern of motive attribution indicates a generally favorable perception of brand motivations and aligns with the dual entitlement principle (Kahneman et al., 1986). This principle suggests that individuals tend to attribute positive intentions to others, assuming that they are entitled to good outcomes. When a brand has a strong environmental reputation, respondents perceived it as having more altruistic motives compared to when the brand had a poor environmental reputation. Similarly, when the commitment to sustainability was long, respondents attributed more altruistic motives than when the commitment was short (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015).

Finally, it is worth commenting on the interaction between habitual consumption and GDM. As defined by Wood and Neal (2009), habits are a form of automaticity where repeated behavior in a specific context increases the likelihood of engaging in that behavior in a similar context in the future. In the context of purchasing, routine brand choices can become accessible to consumers, increasing the likelihood of their purchase, irrespective of intentions. It is supported by quantitative modeling research that, while consumers may not always rely on habits for their purchase decisions, the demands of daily life often lead to habit-based choices (Erdem, 1996; Roy et al., 1996; Seetharaman, 2004). Habitual consumption tends to result in more favorable judgments and attitudes toward the regularly purchased brand, as consumers infer their preferences and positive brand attributes based on their past behavior, in line with self-perception theory (Bem, 1972). Individuals are thus inclined to believe that they like or prefer something when they repeatedly observe themselves engaging in that behavior. When brands habitually purchased by consumers engage in GDM, it leads to more positive attitudes and expectations, but this effect is not a protective factor against a poor environmental reputation (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015).

To summarize, the environmental reputation of a brand significantly influences consumer attitudes and expectations toward the brand and its products (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015). Strong environmental credentials lead to more favorable consumer sentiments and higher expectations for product performance. Consequently, maintaining a positive environmental reputation is crucial for successful GDM strategies. We have argued that the current environmental reputation of a brand is more impactful than the length of commitment (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015). Moreover, habitual brand-related behaviors can also be influenced by GDM initiatives, potentially leading to shifts in consumer preferences and purchasing behaviors. As brands navigate sustainability communication, preserving a positive environmental reputation is vital for success in GDM campaigns. In the next section, we explore how GDM applies to product versus institutional advertising, examining the impact of brand motives and consumer perceptions on these strategies.

4.2.2. Product vs. Institutional Advertising

The study of Herm et al. (2021) finds that sustainable ad messages, including green GDM and GM, are generally perceived more favorably than non-sustainable messages (traditional marketing – TM). Reich and Armstrong Soule (2016) explored consumer responses to GM versus GDM appeals. Their research, conducted through three experiments, reveals that consumers generally favor GM over GDM ads in product advertising contexts due to perceived genuine environmental concern. However, in institutional ad contexts, the opposite pattern emerges. Including an amplifier message about overconsumption's harm, boosts responses to GDM appeals compared to green appeals, potentially reaching a broader audience beyond hardcore green consumers (Reich and Armstrong Soule, 2016). Path analysis confirms these findings, with environmental concern inferences playing a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward the ad and brand. Environmental concern inferences act both as mediators and moderators, underscoring their impact on attitudes (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015).

In certain cases, a product GDM appeal may resemble a product quality appeal, as both incorporate an element of consumption reduction into the message. However, a key difference lies in the focus of the appeal: quality appeals highlight cost savings benefits, while GDM appeals emphasize environmental protection benefits. For instance, Glad's GDM advertisement for ForceFlex trash bags promotes using fewer bags to reduce plastic waste in landfills rather than emphasizing financial savings. GDM appeals remind consumers of the environmental benefits of reducing consumption, aiming to build a sustainable brand image rather than promoting a specific product (Reich and Armstrong Soule, 2016).

Institutional ads, unlike product ads, focus on establishing a brand's identity and long-term objectives rather than promoting specific products or services (Solomon et al., 2012; James and Vanden Bergh 1990). GDM appeals in institutional ads may be perceived as more congruent and genuine compared to GDM appeals in product ads, as they do not directly promote a specific product but instead aim to influence general perceptions of the brand (Sethi 1979). Consumers are less likely to infer genuine motives if they perceive a CSR message to be contradictory to the brand's core business (Yoon et al.,2006). Therefore, institutional ads, which present a more holistic view of the brand's identity, may address skepticism more effectively and lead to greater environmental concern inferences, regardless of the type of appeal used (GM or GDM). This suggests that the differences in environmental concern inferences observed between GM and GDM appeals in product ads may be attenuated in institutional ads (Reich and Armstrong Soule, 2016).

Furthermore, Herm et al. (2021) discuss challenges faced by GDM messages, such as low processing fluency and increased consumer skepticism, which may hinder their effectiveness compared to traditional marketing messages. These results highlight the importance of understanding how appeal type influences consumer perceptions of environmental concern, holding significance across various consumer segments regardless of individual levels of green consumerism (Reich and Armstrong Soule, 2016). To effectively convey the positive environmental impact of reduced consumption and gain consumer trust, brands employing the GDM strategy must communicate their message clearly and avoid confusion. Specifically, campaigns should focus on promoting the brand's overall identity and purpose rather than individual products, as this approach is perceived as more genuinely environmentally concerned (Reich and Armstrong Soule, 2016). As more brands adopt GDM, consumers' understanding of such messages is likely to improve over time, leading to reduced skepticism and increased persuasion.

In conclusion, brands implementing GDM must ensure their campaigns are clear and credible. Reich and Armstrong Soule (2016) found that GDM ads emphasizing a brand's identity are perceived as more authentically environmentally conscious. By focusing on brand promotion in GDM messages, consumer skepticism may decrease. As more brands adopt GDM, consumer understanding and acceptance of such messages are likely to grow, potentially reducing skepticism as processing fluency improves (Herm et al., 2021).

4.2.3. Status Signaling through Conspicuous Anticonsumption

Returning to the example of Starbucks, refusing single-use cups is inherently an anticonsumption action, but it appeals mainly to a small subset of highly environmentally motivated or affluent individuals, as demonstrated by the Starbucks “borrow a cup” trial. The test allowed customers to order beverages in reusable cups for a $1 deposit, which is refunded along with 10 reward points upon returning the cups for professional cleaning (Tyko, 2021). To engage low to moderate environmentally motivated consumers in anticonsumption, the paper of Armstrong Soule and Sekhon (2022) explores the possibility of leveraging status motives, a widely held consumption motivation. While anticonsumption provides an avenue for self-expression (Black and Cherrier, 2010), the segment of the population identifying as anticonsumers is small, making large-scale changes challenging (Black and Cherrier, 2010). By connecting status motivation to anticonsumption behaviors, more impact can be achieved (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022).

Signaling one's worth or status to others is a central symbolic benefit of consumption (Eastman et al., 1999). As status is inferred from consumption behaviors, observers derive implications about individuals' treatment in social situations. While previous literature has predominantly concentrated on status signaling through the prominent display of luxury products and brands (Han et al., 2010), the context determines what confers status. Recent research has explored the interplay between environmental concern and social status, indicating that the need for status is evolvingly connected to environmental motives (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022). Given that the need for status is a deeply ingrained motivation shared not only by humans but also by animals (Sundie et al. 2011), the study suggests that leveraging this innate motivation to promote anticonsumption may yield greater societal impact than attempting to shift consumer attitudes and motivations towards the environment. Armstrong Soule and Sekhon (2022) propose leveraging consumers' deep-seated status motives to promote anticonsumption behaviors. They introduce a taxonomy organizing consumption behaviors based on consumers' environmental concern and need for status, identifying six categories (see Figure 3 below).

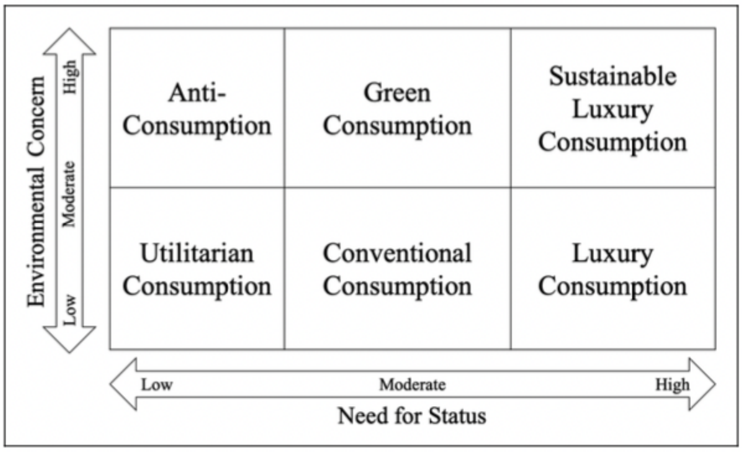


Figure 3: Taxonomy of behavior patterns based on need for status and environmental concern (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022, p.313)

- Intrinsic motivations drive the **anticonsumption** practices among consumers with high environmental concern and low need for status.
- Consumers with low need for status and low to moderate environmental concern engage in **utilitarian consumption** driven by functional needs.

- Moderate to high need for status with moderate to high environmental concern combined leads to **green or sustainable luxury consumption**.
- Consumers with high need for status and low in environmental concern are inclined towards **traditional luxury purchases**.
- The largest consumer group consists of those with low to moderate environmental concern and moderate need for status. This group is likely to engage in **conventional consumption and FF**. These consumers constitute a significant portion of the market, driven by everyday concerns rather than environmental priorities. They prioritize status and may perceive reduced consumption as a threat to their social standing. Messaging that emphasizes sacrificing consumption for the greater good may alienate consumers who see environmental concern as a luxury, as it may seem impractical to them (Holt, 2014). However, these consumers might be motivated by messages that frame personal sacrifices as a way to enhance social status or demonstrate competitive altruism (Van Vugt et al., 2007). Thus, while sacrifice-focused messaging may initially alienate, status-oriented messaging can effectively engage these consumers by aligning with their desire for social recognition.

The taxonomy suggests that conspicuous anticonsumption signals can stimulate anticonsumption behavior among most consumers. Nonetheless, reducing consumption on a societal scale presents challenges as consumption fulfills both functional and symbolic needs for individuals (Jackson, 2005; Park et al., 1986). While functional benefits are essential for survival and cannot be replaced when consumption is reduced, symbolic benefits offer a potential avenue for persuading consumers to consume less.

Green brands, such as Tesla and Patagonia, signal status as environmental consciousness becomes increasingly valued (Griskevicius et al., 2010). Consequently, both luxury and green consumption yield symbolic benefits through enhanced status inferences (Sekhon and Armstrong Soule, 2019). However, when individuals abstain from consumption, there is no observable signal to convey their motives. Observers may perceive financial constraints as the primary motivation behind anticonsumer behavior, thus associating it with lower socioeconomic status. Repairing an item signals resource constraints, leading to lower perceived socioeconomic status, with repairing a low-status brand exacerbating this effect. However, individuals repairing a high-status brand, such as Gucci, exhibit higher perceived status compared to the repair condition, suggesting that the use of a prestigious brand reduces the negative status perceptions linked to the anticonsumption act of repairing. Similarly, a familiar brand known for its environmental consciousness can counteract the negative status inferences associated with anticonsumption by highlighting environmental motives (Sekhon and Armstrong Soule, 2019).

Motivations for not consuming are often ambiguous, despite the accompanying lifestyle and behavioral costs, which are offset by associated financial benefits. Anticonsumers not only miss out on the positive signal of prosocial motives typically associated with green product consumption but also risk sending a negative signal of financial strain. In essence, anticonsumers forfeit both the functional benefit of consumption and face a dual penalty in terms of symbolic benefits, possibly being viewed as lower in status. Figure 4 below demonstrates this disadvantage, highlighting how anticonsumers may lose out on both functional and symbolic benefits compared to conventional, luxury, and even eco-friendly consumption. These individual expenses can significantly demotivate anticonsumption efforts, making it twice as difficult for consumers to shift away from consumption (Sekhon and Armstrong Soule, 2019).

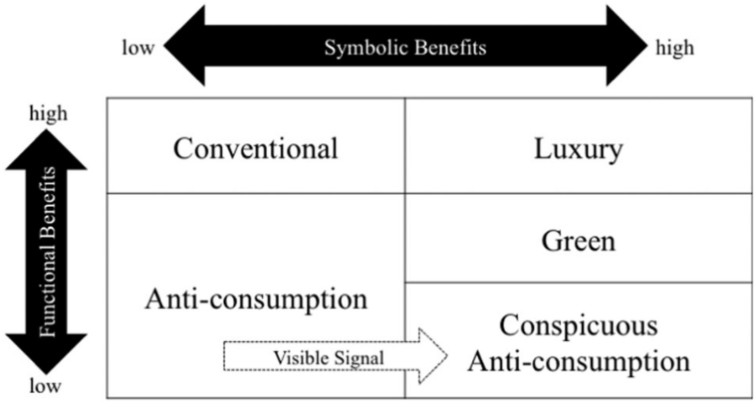


Figure 4: Symbolic and functional benefits across consumption types (Sekhon and Armstrong Soule, 2019, p.281)

Anticonsumption, like traditional consumption, serves as a self-expressive function, communicating consumers' values and identities (Belk et al., 1982). However, since anticonsumption actions are often less visible, they pose a reputational challenge. Brand-provided GDM symbols, such as Patagonia's "Worn Wear" patch on repaired items, can help overcome this challenge by making anticonsumption actions more visible and appealing to status-conscious consumers (Sekhon and Armstrong Soule, 2020). The concept termed "conspicuous anticonsumption" involves brands or consumers making impactful yet visible anticonsumption actions known to others, thus enhancing their appeal, particularly to status-oriented individuals. Also, REIs GDM strategy #OptOutside campaign allows observers to decode meanings and infer motives behind actions. For instance, an Instagram post featuring an outdoor landscape paired with #OptOutside not only signifies a hiking trip but also communicates the decision to refrain from Black Friday shopping due to environmental concerns. This campaign exemplifies GDM and conspicuous anticonsumption, where visible signals communicate environmental rather than financial reasons for reduced consumption, potentially conferring status upon the anticonsumer and enhancing brand perception (Sekhon and Armstrong Soule, 2019). Incorporating visible anticonsumption signals not only elevates the status of the anticonsumer but also reflects positively on brands that provide such signals, addressing concerns about overconsumption while maintaining competitiveness.

The study of Sekhon and Armstrong Soule (2019) presented here highlight the ambiguity surrounding symbolic benefits associated with anticonsumption actions. Without a clear signal, observers may misinterpret anticonsumption actions as being driven by financial limitations rather than intentional choices. However, when a brand communicates its GDM initiatives through informative and visible signals, it bestows symbolic meanings upon anticonsumption actions, leading to positive outcomes for both the anticonsumer and the brand. Additionally, the study identifies opportunities for brands to contribute to meso-level solutions to environmental issues and drive large-scale change. By understanding the social dynamics surrounding anticonsumption behaviors, brands can leverage societal and cultural structures to promote change (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022).

5. GDM in the Fashion Industry

5.1. Fast Fashion vs. Luxury Fashion

Mass-market or FF brands are known for their affordable offerings, while luxury brands emphasize prestige and uniqueness (Fuchs et al., 2013). Mass-market brands, associated with constant consumption, may not benefit from demarketing, unlike luxury brands that prioritize rarity and quality (Kapferer, 2006). FF is identified as the primary source of irresponsible behaviors in both company and consumer practices by both practitioners and academics (see Cavender et al., 2021, and the references therein).

Fashion originated in the Middle Ages when the bourgeois imitated the nobles, leading to a differentiation trend. The fashion industry was historically characterized by craftsmanship and exclusivity, with tailors and seamstresses creating unique products for individuals. This contrasts with the mass industrialized manufacture prevalent in contemporary times. The industrial revolution marked a shift in fashion production, moving from manual craftsmanship to mechanized processes in factories, emphasizing mass production. Each decade brought new fashion styles that were influenced by social, economic, and political circumstances, thereby making fashion a significant indicator of each era. Industrialization made fashion more democratic and accessible, but it also led to increased environmental issues and pollution, with the fashion industry being the second-largest contributor to global pollution. The rapid growth and focus on profits ignored the environmental consequences, with significant oil consumption for materials like polyester, which takes centuries to decompose. Furthermore, there are ethical concerns regarding human labor conditions in the industry that resemble aspects of slavery and exploitation (Silva Solino et al., 2020).

FF brands are characterized by inclusivity, affordability, abundance, and accessibility, often employing mass-production and short-term cycles with little emphasis on product exclusivity (Park and Kim, 2016; Stillman, 2003; Fuchs et al., 2013). Conversely, luxury brands prioritize uniqueness, excellent quality, selective distribution, and moderate advertising, embodying notions of social elevation, timelessness, and pricelessness (Berthon et al., 2009; Kapferer and Bastien, 2009; Kapferer and Michaut, 2015). LF brands often focus on maintaining high profit margins, long-term sustainability, and exclusivity, while FF brands prioritize high volume sales, short-term profitability, and trend-driven consumption. Demarketing strategies, which seek to reduce consumption, are not a primary focus for either sector, although luxury brands may indirectly promote responsible and long-term buying habits through their messaging and brand image. Luxury brands are closely associated with status signaling, hedonic pleasure, strong consumer-brand relationships, and a sense of exclusivity (Tynan et al., 2010). They distinguish themselves through their creative and extravagant products that emphasize sophistication (Kapferer, 2006). Luxury and FF brands represent opposing ends of brand positioning strategies, with various other brand types existing between these two extremes. For example, Ralph Lauren is considered a premium brand that offers higher quality, yet maintains lower prices compared to LF brands.

The FF system, evolving from Quick Response Management (QRM), is described as a method that produces what consumers desire on a large scale with quick market responses (Silva Solino et al., 2020). Comparable to fast-food, it prioritizes rapid distribution, low prices, and frequent turnover in styles, being brought to the market swiftly (Fletcher, 2010). FF is regarded as a transient consumption and production model, encouraging mass production with variety and limited stock, prompting consumers to make quick purchases before items become outdated or exit the market (Silva Solino et al., 2020). Brands like Zara follow the FF approach, which is characterized by outsourcing, mass production and overconsumption, that leads to a cheaper and rapid production. Quantity over quality counts in this sector and it is said, that for every five garments produced, three end up destroyed and discarded each year (Hewitt et al., 2023). This rapid-paced fashion system contributes to the depletion of natural resources. The goal of the mass-market is to make mass-produced products widely accessible (Stillman, 2003). The mass-market positioning appears incompatible with demarketing, since the objective of GDM is to reduce consumption within a product category by advocating for consuming fewer but higher quality products to conserve resources (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015). Given these conflicting objectives, consumers are likely to distrust GDM advertisements for FF brands (Vilasanti da Luz et al., 2020). GDM strategies are typically not employed in FF, as the core business models of FF companies thrive on promoting frequent consumption, rapid style turnover, and low prices to drive increased purchasing. However, some FF brands have taken steps towards incorporating sustainability into their operations, aiming to address environmental and social concerns. While these actions may not align with GDM, they do promote more conscious consumption through GM. Examples include H&M's recycling program, Zara's commitment to sustainable fabrics, ASOS's Circular Fashion initiative, and Primark's sustainability efforts. Also, H&M, Zara, and C&A have introduced clothing lines made with organic cotton (H&M, 2014; C&A, n.d.; Zara, 2019). Despite these initiatives, the primary focus of FF companies remains on offering affordable, trend-driven items with rapid turnover, and encouraging consumers to shop frequently.

From a historical perspective, luxury was once a domain predominantly reserved for royalty. The democratization of luxury began during the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, facilitated by mass production techniques that enabled broader distribution (Chandon et al., 2016). The evolution of luxury took a significant turn between the 1980s and 1990s, marked by the transformation into "masstige" or mass-marketed-prestige, driven by increasing consumer wealth (Cavender and Kincade, 2015). Although the financial crisis of 2007-2008 initially impacted revenues, the industry swiftly rebounded with the emergence of luxury markets in Russia, China, and the Middle East, ushering in a new era of growth (Dewey, 2009). This expansion attracted new luxury brands seeking larger volumes and higher margins, resulting in an intensely competitive industry characterized by mass-produced luxury that caters to rising consumer demand (Kapferer and Michaut, 2015). Consequently, the business model shifted towards an "abundant-scarcity" framework, offering expensive products manufactured in low-wage countries, even if these practices diverge from the foundational principles of luxury (Kapferer, 2015). As the luxury sector embraces mass marketization strategies, it faces the imperative of adapting to the expectations of socially conscious consumers (Bain & Company, 2015; Kapferer, 2015). This necessitates a delicate balance between the evolving demands of a broader consumer base and the preservation of the core principles that define luxury. Luxury products, traditionally associated with excess and waste, have historically been viewed as incompatible with sustainability (Dubois and Laurent, 1994). However, recent studies suggest that luxury brands can integrate sustainability in their operations like Brunello Cucinelli (Liedong et al., 2022) and confer status through costly signaling (Griskevicius et al., 2010). The relationship between luxury brand positioning and sustainable consumption has been extensively studied in recent years (Torelli et al., 2012; Achabou and Dekhili, 2013; Janssen et al., 2014; Kapferer and Michaut, 2015). On one hand, there is an expectation for luxury products to prioritize sustainability due to their inherent characteristics like quality and craftmanship (Achabou and Dekhili, 2013). However, several researchers highlight compatibility issues between luxury and sustainability, citing conflicting values (Torelli et al., 2012; Kapferer and Michaut, 2015). For example, Dion and Borraz (2017) argue that luxury consumption reinforces social stratification, emphasizing social differences. Achabou and Dekhili (2013) claim that luxury items may lose perceived quality if they incorporate recycled materials. Beckham and Voyer (2014) note that environmental features in luxury products may diminish their luxurious and desirable qualities. These studies indicate that not all green actions align with the luxury brand positioning, potentially leading to negative brand evaluations. Nonetheless, other studies have proposed that luxury products could align with the CSR agenda by emphasizing durability over ephemerality (Janssen et al., 2014; Sun et al., 2018). Luxury's inherent characteristics, such as commitment to higher quality standards and timeless products, position luxury goods as essential in reducing consumption, thereby conserving natural resources (De Angelis et al., 2017). Additionally, both luxury and green consumption can serve as status symbols for consumers (Berthon et al., 2009; Griskevicius et al., 2010). These studies suggest that GDM may align well with the luxury brand positioning, provided that the reduction in consumption is justified by the high quality, durability, and exclusivity of luxury products. Therefore, leveraging luxury characteristics through demarketing to promote environmental well-being could facilitate conscious consumption, without altering the core features of luxury brands.

Ad credibility significantly influences brand evaluation. A mismatch between the green message and brand positioning may lead to perceptions of lower credibility. For example, a FF brand utilizing GDM strategies might be poorly evaluated because demarketing conflicts with the encouragement of overconsumption typically associated with FF brands. Conversely, when FF brands employ green environmental messages (GM), the advertisement is likely perceived as more authentic and believable since no inherent conflict exists. Similarly, luxury brands face challenges when using green environmental messages (GM) as consumers may doubt the ability to maintain quality and exclusivity while incorporating green attributes like recycling materials. However, GDM and luxury share common attributes such as status, uniqueness, scarcity, and high-quality connotations, which may enhance ad credibility when used together (De Angelis et al., 2017; Miklós-Thal and Zhang, 2013; Reich and Armstrong Soule, 2016).

In a nutshell, GDM leads to more positive brand evaluations for luxury brands, while GM perform better for FF brands. The study of Vilasanti da Luz et al. (2020) reveals that the alignment of luxury brands with GDM and FF brands with GM leads to better consumer evaluations, with ad credibility mediating this effect. This underscores the importance of consumer belief in the credibility and sincerity of green arguments, which is influenced by the perceived match between brand characteristics and the type of green message.

5.2. Slow Fashion (SF)

In contrast to the FF model, which prioritizes rapid production and consumption, SF advocates for a more deliberate and conscious approach to clothing production and consumption (Fletcher, 2010; Pereira and Nogueira, 2013; Watson and Yan, 2013). While terms like eco, ethical, slow, and circular fashion are used interchangeably to describe sustainable fashion practices (Orminsky et al., 2021), slow fashion specifically emphasizes transparent and responsible production processes, highlighting durability, comfort, and local and environmental considerations. GDM aligns well with the slow fashion industry, as their values are congruent, as previously discussed in the chapters referencing Patagonia. Despite its positive principles, SF faces challenges such as high production costs, aesthetic concerns, and a lack of understanding among consumers (Silva Solino et al., 2020).

Beyond companies, society itself is recognizing the importance of viewing fashion through the sustainable lens, leading to a shift towards more conscious consumption. This shift is reflected in the exploration of the term 'sustainable fashion' for a more precise and assertive discourse. The SF movement emerges as an antithesis to FF, aiming to address the negative impacts of contemporary fashion (Fletcher, 2010; Watson and Yan, 2013). The main goals of SF are sustainability, ethics, and durability. Localism and timelessness are also significant, along with objectives such as exclusivity, authenticity, functionality, comfort, and equity. The movement seeks to minimize the environmental and ethical consequences associated with the accelerated pace of fashion, promoting conscious consumption, and integrating ideological values into clothing production. The term 'movement' is predominant in references regarding SF, accounting for 59.18% of mentions, contrasting with the usage of 'model' in FF discourse. Quality emerges as the most discussed differentiation objective, transitioning from the quantity-focused FF. Sustainability, ethics, and durability are also frequently cited as differentiation objectives, aligning with the basic principles of the SF movement. Despite SF embodying positive principles like sustainability, conscious consumption, and ethical practices, research highlights negative aspects such as high production and commercialization costs. Other concerns include aesthetic characteristics, delays in collection launches, and a lack of understanding about the movement. Durable, comfortable, and sustainable raw materials are also noted as contributing to elevated costs, making the final price of SF pieces higher than those produced in FF. Rusticity, valued by some consumers of SF, is identified as a negative barrier, hindering broader acceptance among the majority due to its perceived anachronistic aesthetic. (Silva Solino et al., 2020)

The concept of SF draws inspiration from the slow food movement, which originated in Italy in 1986 as a response to the fast-food culture. The slow food movement advocates for choosing local, healthier food produced through slow and natural processing methods to support local economies and environmental sustainability (e.g., Slowfood.com). In alignment with this ethos, SF prioritizes the quality of apparel products, utilizing natural and durable materials and it is a movement centered around a sustainable profile for a product's entire production chain. This approach aims to encourage consumers to wear clothing for an extended period, thereby reducing the negative environmental and social impact associated with the production of apparel (Sung and Woo, 2019). In terms of lifestyle, SF represents a sustainable and ethical way of living, promoting a deliberate and conscious approach to consumption. It goes beyond industrial interests, emphasizing a slower and more thoughtful rhythm of life. This lifestyle encourages individuals to prioritize self-worth over the demands of the fast-paced social environment. In the realm of production, SF serves as a mechanism for deceleration, aiming to reduce production cycles and prioritize quality over quantity. While different areas may have varying focuses, a common thread is the emphasis on centralized development and a more careful, conscious experience. The understanding prevails that any action involved in this process affects the external environment. As various sectors strive to slow down production processes while incorporating environmental and ethical awareness, the SF movement is gaining traction and expanding as a replicable business model across different industries. (Silva Solino et al., 2020)

The involvement of FF organizations in sustainability alliances, such as The Sustainable Apparel Coalition or Ellen Macarthur Foundation, adds to the complexity of understanding SF, as these companies invest in sustainability initiatives while maintaining business practices that fuel overconsumption through obsolescence. This dual messaging might contribute to consumer beliefs that FF companies are as ethical as other fashion retailers genuinely engaged in corporate sustainability, potentially limiting awareness of industry irresponsibility. Consequently, such dynamics may impede the broader acceptance of the SF movement among consumers. In the consumer irresponsibility scale, price was identified as a key driver of FF consumption. This suggests a practical implication for budget-friendly SF brands, such as Pact, EcoVibe Apparel, and Threads 4 Thought, to communicate that, like other apparel categories, they offer a range of price points suitable for various budgets. Positioning themselves as viable alternatives to FF by offering both trend-driven and classic design styles could increase consumer awareness of fashion alternatives within the SF market, potentially fostering SRC motivation (Ertekin and Atik, 2015). Addressing barriers to mainstreaming the slow fashion movement, like consumer awareness and market influence, may involve highlighting human concern as a motivator for sustainable fashion choices and educating consumers about the social impacts of fast fashion, promoting responsible shopping practices. (See Cavender et al., 2021, and references therein)

In conclusion, the SF movement represents a shift towards sustainability and ethics in the fashion industry. By prioritizing quality, durability, and responsible production practices, SF offers a viable alternative to the unsustainable practices of FF. However, challenges such as high production costs and consumer misconceptions hinder its widespread acceptance. Overcoming these barriers requires efforts to educate consumers about the environmental and social impacts of FF, as well as initiatives to make sustainable fashion more accessible and affordable. The SF movement has the potential to transform the fashion industry into a more sustainable and ethical sector, benefiting both the environment and society.

5.3. Overview of Demarketing Application across FF, LF, SF

Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) argue that individuals are adopting a more socially responsible role toward a sustainable apparel system. Jung and Jin (2014; 2016) highlight the importance of consumers transitioning from a focus on quantity to quality, from traditional shopping to second-hand shopping, and from irresponsible disposal to conscious disposal. The SF movement may lead to higher production costs, but it also enhances product quality, promoting longevity and facilitating second-life alternatives such as donations and resale platforms. Co-creation of clothing between consumers and companies is a key characteristic of SF, allowing consumers to be more aware of the garment-making process, thereby increasing responsibility and the value of the co-created garment (Cataldi et al., 2010; Jung and Jin, 2014; Fletcher, 2010). But which segments in the fashion industry benefit more from GDM strategies?

Stella McCartney is a luxury brand with a strong emphasis on sustainability, while Patagonia is a premium SF brand that actively promotes sustainable principles in its production processes. Unlike LF or FF brands, which may adopt green actions or strategies, SF brands inherently prioritize environmental values in all their communications (Banerjee et al., 1995; Yang et al., 2015). Because SF brands consistently promote environmental sustainability through their advertising efforts, their motivations for green advertising are perceived as more genuine compared to other brands (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015). Consequently, they are seen as legitimate to have more flexibility in choosing the type of green advertising appeal they want to use (Lee et al., 2018). As a result, SF brands benefit from both GM and GDM advertising messages, as their brand positioning supports positive brand evaluations regardless of the approach, with Patagonia serving as evidence of this argument (Vilasanti da Luz et al., 2020).

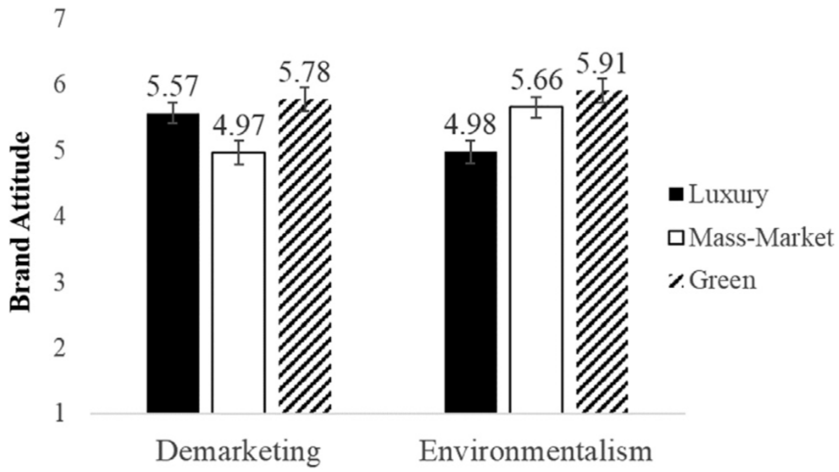


Figure 5: Brand attitude, brand positioning and type of green message (Vilasanti da Luz et al., 2020, p.32)

The study of Vilasanti da Luz et al. (2020) explores the effectiveness of green advertising for different fashion brands. Their paper indicates that willingness to buy is higher when there is an alignment of GDM and luxury positioning, or alternatively, green environmental messaging (GM) and FF positioning. This offers additional evidence of ad believability as a mediator, illustrating that the congruence between brand positioning and green message improves brand evaluation and willingness to buy because consumers perceive the message as more believable. The authors conducted a two-way ANOVA with two green message conditions (demarketing or GDM vs. environmentalism or GM) for brand attitude as a dependent variable. The results are presented in Figure 5, where the y-axis shows that participants exhibit a more favorable brand attitude toward luxury brands when they employ GDM compared to environmentalism or GM messages (MDemarketing = 5.57, MGreen environmentalism = 4.98). Brands with a green mission statement receive equally positive evaluations regardless the use of GM or GDM (MDemarketing = 5.78, MGreen environmentalism = 5.91). Since mass-market is associated with constant consumption, these brands may not benefit from demarketing (MDemarketing = 4.97, MGreen environmental = 5.66) unlike luxury brands that prioritize quality and scarcity. Hence, brand positioning significantly influences the outcome of green environmental messages. This underscores the importance of consumer belief in the credibility and sincerity of green arguments, which is influenced by the perceived match between brand characteristics and the type of green message. Specifically, ad believability positively influences brand attitudes when a luxury brand utilizes GDM or when a mass-market brand employs GM. However, the impact on brand attitudes diminishes when a mass-market brand adopts demarketing or when a luxury brand utilizes green environmental messaging, as these messages are perceived as less believable. Consumers require the message to be perceived as trustworthy, convincing, honest, and authentic for a positive brand evaluation to occur (Vilasanti da Luz et al., 2020).

Brands with a fundamental green positioning like green or SF derive equal benefits from following either type of green message. Brand attitudes are equally and positively influenced by demarketing messages used by LF and SF (green) brands, as well as by GM when used by FF and SF (green) brands. Regardless of the marketing approach, GM or GDM, SF brands with a fundamental commitment to sustainability derive equal benefits in terms of positive brand attitudes. Moreover, alignment between brand positioning and messaging is crucial, as inconsistencies may lead to negative brand evaluations and lower willingness to buy.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

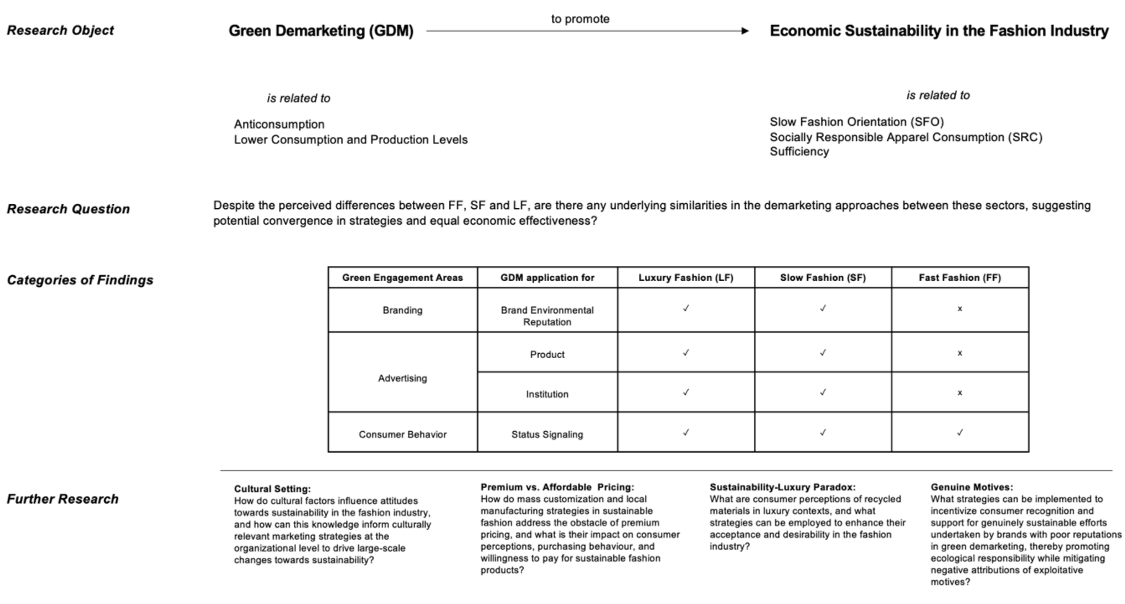
6.1. Summary of Findings

This master thesis provides insights for leveraging green strategies and it investigated demarketing and economic sustainability within the fashion industry, addressing the main research question: "Do similarities exist between fast, slow, and luxury fashion in terms of GDM strategies, and are these equally effective across all three segments?". The findings indicate that LF and SF exhibit similarities and can effectively employ GDM strategies for the three discussed green engagement areas: brand environmental reputation, product and institutional advertising, and consumer behavior. Nevertheless, **all sectors share a common trait in the latter area: status signaling through conspicuous anticonsumption signals**. **This GDM strategy promotes competitive altruism across consumers, thereby enhancing economic sustainability in the fashion industry.**

Sustainability research in marketing requires a macro-marketing perspective to redefine the relationship between marketing and sustainability (Kilbourne et al., 1997). Macro-marketing refers to the study of marketing's impact on society and the broader economy, focusing on large-scale issues such as sustainability, public policy, and social welfare, and a key macro-marketing issue is the tension between sustainability objectives and the conflicting priorities of the DSP (Gollnhofer and Schouten, 2017). Addressing this issue needs the collective effort of different stakeholders, including consumers and businesses, beyond government policies (see Lawrence and Mekoth, 2023, and the references therein). Sinha et al. (2023) conducted a comprehensive review assessing the status and future trajectory of sustainable fashion across the production-to-consumption continuum. Their analysis revealed that sustainability has emerged as a focal point in the fashion sector and that GDM poses both challenges and opportunities for promoting sustainable consumption. The practicality of a demarketing management strategy can be called into question since it diverges from the norm of creating demand. While encountering potential resistance, demarketing aligns with the principles of sustainable (de-)growth, anticonsumption and sufficiency, signaling a paradigm shift in marketing practices (Peattie and Peattie, 2009). From a profit-driven perspective, reducing consumption entails curbing demand creation. However, **Miles and Covin (2000) argue that environmental responsibility can enhance both marketing and financial performance and serve as a crucial factor in the success of firms.** For example, Ferguson and Toktay (2006) suggest that remanufactured products, including used clothing, may not necessarily cannibalize new sales and could even deter low-cost competitors. Brands like Eileen Fisher provide evidence that selling used clothes may not reduce sales of new products, and it may open access to additional customer groups and income streams, aligning with the SF concept (Freudenreich and Schaltegger, 2019). Moreover, GDM strategies require clear communication to convey their positive environmental impact effectively, with varying impacts across different consumer segments (Reich and Armstrong Soule, 2016; Vilasanti da Luz et al., 2020).

Despite increasing consumer interest in sustainability, a noticeable disparity exists between consumer attitudes and actual purchasing behaviors. Widespread consumer skepticism surrounds green labels and sustainability advertising. The use of terms like “green” and “eco-friendly” often lack substantive meaning (Haaland, 2021). Consequently, **businesses must move beyond greenwashing tactics and adopt genuine sustainability practices to rebuild consumer trust.** Similarly, consumers' perceptions of CSR efforts emphasize the importance of the alignment between the brand and the perceived motives. **Brands with a strong environmental reputation are more likely to be perceived as altruistic,** underlining the significance of authenticity and consistency in CSR messaging (Armstrong Soule, 2022; Ellen et al., 2006). **The findings of Reich and Armstrong Soule (2016) suggest that consumer attitudes toward GDM appeals depend significantly on the type of advertising used.** When advertising a specific **product**, traditional GM appeals are preferred, likely due to the inherent contradiction between encouraging consumption and advocating for reduced consumption. Conversely, in **institutional advertising**, where no specific product is promoted, GDM appeals are perceived more favorably than traditional GM appeals. Adding an amplifier message about the harms of overconsumption to GDM institutional ads enhances their attractiveness beyond that of traditional GM ads (Reich and Armstrong Soule, 2016). **The intersection of status motives and anticonsumption behaviors through GDM presents opportunities for broadening the appeal of sustainability initiatives (Sekhon and Armstrong Soule, 2019), since the desire to convey status to others is deeply rooted in human psychology (Cheng et al., 2010).** In consumption settings, signaling theory explains how brands use product design and advertising to communicate identities, while individuals convey information about themselves through possessions (Belk, 1988). In society and in the marketplace, asymmetric access to information often occurs, where one party possesses knowledge that the other does not. To bridge this gap, individuals use signals to convey information about themselves to others (Spence, 2002). Contemporary research confirms that people make judgments based on possessions, and consumption choices are driven by the desire to project a certain image, such as status (Wilcox et al., 2009). Veblen (1899) argued that status is demonstrated through displays of wealth rather than actual accumulation, known as conspicuous consumption. **Fashion brands can assist consumers and the environment through GDM while at the same time staying financially viable.** In this sense, Armstrong and Soule (2022) contribute to the exploration of how for-profit companies can maintain profitability while supporting reduced consumption and production through GDM. **The paper highlights that satisfying symbolic needs can enhance brand equity and revenue potential without increasing the production of material goods (Armstrong and Soule, 2022).** Nonetheless, a significant obstacle to anticonsumption stems from consumers' desire for status, achievable through the consumption of both green and luxury products (Brisman, 2009). Although costly signaling theory (Griskevicius et al., 2007) supports the notion that prosocial and green behaviors convey status (Barclay and Willer, 2007), **anticonsumption actions are often difficult to observe in the marketplace and can signal financial strain** (Belk, 1988). As consumption choices serve as signals of identity (Belk, 1988), the absence of such signals, like choosing public transportation over car ownership, can lack of an environmental motive. Hence, **providing visible signals of environmental motives for reduced consumption can mitigate negative interpretations (Sekhon and Armstrong Soule, 2020).** For example, Patagonia's Worn Wear patch clarifies the motive behind repairing a jacket, enhancing perceptions of socio-economic status and environmental consciousness (Sekhon and Armstrong Soule, 2020). This signal boosts positive perceptions of both the consumer and the brand. **Thus, when the need of a consumer for status is moderate to high and the environmental concern is moderate to low, the presence of an anticonsumption signal is associated with a greater willingness to pay for lower-status branded products like FF (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022). This suggests that a conspicuous anticonsumption signals, like for example a sticker encouraging to reuse, can enhance the appeal of a lower-status or conventional FF brand. Essentially, such a signal serves as an alternative means to attain or signal status instead of purchasing high-status brands. This suggests that FF and LF brands can benefit from GDM consumer behavior strategies like conspicuous anticonsumption signals.** On one hand, it enhances LF characteristics such as quality, uniqueness, and exclusivity. On the other hand, FF brands can generate revenues and mitigate the negative impact of overconsumption by developing recycled and organic products and conspicuous anticonsumption signals to their clothing (Vilasanti da Luz et al., 2020). While sacrifice-focused messaging may initially alienate, status-oriented messaging can effectively engage FF consumers by aligning with their desire for social recognition. **FF consumers, like their luxury and slow fashion counterparts, also seek social recognition. Therefore, anticonsumption signals, though initially dissuasive, can motivate FF consumers to reduce their consumption for environmental reasons, as it enhances their social status and aligns with the growing trend of environmental consciousness (Van Vugt et al., 2007).** Also, if FF consumers seek social recognition and are highly involved with the brand, they may be willing to use recycled clothes and pay more, demonstrating anticonsumption. **By paying more, they may also view clothes as durable rather than disposable, which reflects anticonsumption behavior through an extended product lifespan.** The presented results reveal observable trends indicating a convergence among FF, SF, and LF in incorporating GDM strategies. Noteworthy trends include sustainability initiatives across all sectors, emphasizing transparency, ethical practices, quality over quantity, circular fashion initiatives, and consumer education. **However, despite this convergence, the core values and strategies of each segment remain distinct. FF** is characterized by high turnover and trend-focused designs, **SF** prioritizes ethical and environmentally responsible practices, while **LF** maintains a focus on exclusivity, craftsmanship, brand prestige, with varying degrees of sustainability integration. It is noteworthy that LF is argued to contribute to sustainability by promoting low consumption levels through high prices, but the concept doesn't necessarily align with the high sustainability standards in production (Joy et al., 2012; Keith and Silies, 2015;

Schemken and Berghaus, 2018; Freudenreich and Schaltegger, 2020). By comparing the characteristics between luxury and sustainability, some elements of contradiction and similarities become identifiable. For example, elements associated with ostentation are opposed to fairness. But the preservation of handmade traditions and heritage could agree with sustainability. Through the promise of longevity and durability, the luxury sector has a great opportunity to attract and retain environmentally conscious consumers (Shimul et al., 2019), hence, both sides of the luxury vs. sustainability paradox could work in harmony (Kapferer, 2009). **If the production process is treated with respect, natural resources have a high quality, ethical practices are followed and artisans are treated well, sustainability could be mirrored in the LF industry (Wong and Dhanesh, 2016).** Russ Klein, CEO of the American Marketing Association, emphasizes the moral imperative of considering social impact and urges the marketing industry to rethink profit motivations in favor of anticonsumption (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022). While sustainability encompasses environmental, social, and economic dimensions, research has primarily concentrated on environmental aspects. However**, in the context of fashion, consumers exhibit a stronger inclination towards social factors such as fair labor practices. Hence, social sustainability plays a paramount role in shaping consumer preferences**, particularly within the SF movement, where consumers value authenticity, transparency, and localism (Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; Watson and Yan, 2013). Understanding cultural normative factors is equally crucial, as recommendations from peers and family members significantly influence sustainable choices (Khare et al., 2013; Luchs and Mooradian, 2012). Emotional and social appeals are central in the promotion of fashion, since consumers feel attracted to status, identity construction and beauty ideals (Barnes, 2013). Figure 6 synthesizes the main research goals, findings, and future research for the topics discussed above:



Green Engagement Areas	GDM application for	Luxury Fashion (LF)	Slow Fashion (SF)	Fast Fashion (FF)
Branding	Brand Environmental Reputation	✓	✓	x
Advertising	Product	✓	✓	x
	Institution	✓	✓	x
Consumer Behavior	Status Signaling	✓	✓	✓

Figure 6: Research goals, findings, and future research (compiled by the author)

From a macro-marketing perspective, the imperative is not merely to adopt greener alternatives but to promote an anticonsumption ethos, reversing the culture of consumerism (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022). Recent studies suggest that anticonsumption is more effective in reducing environmental impact compared to conventional green consumption behavior (Kropfeld et al., 2018). However, both consumers and brands may prefer shifting to green options, despite the limited impact of green consumption on altering the DSP, which often reinforces materialism, consumerism, and economic growth, hindering individual consumption reductions (Howard-Grenville et al., 2014, Kilbourne et al., 2009; Gorge et al., 2015). Traditionally, the focus of the DSP has been on maximizing profits through increased sales to a broad consumer base in both fast and luxury fashion sectors. Departing from this conventional approach, demarketing is often viewed as unconventional and risky, as it challenges established norms of business growth. However, companies like Patagonia and REI demonstrate that prioritizing environmental values over quantity and price can lead to exceptional sales performance in the SF sector. Their advocacy for sustainability may serve as a catalyst to reshape the industry discourse, even within luxury and fast fashion markets. **Figure 7 below summarizes the previously discussed topics about DSP, GDM, CSR and status signaling and shows that fashion brands can function as agents of sufficiency and EOA, serving as intermediaries between observers and consumers. With the use of GDM strategies like conspicuous anticonsumption signals, fashion brands can harmonize status expectations among stakeholders, assuming a custodial role for the planet and facilitating significant change.**

Figure 7: Demarketing as a tool for aligning expectations between fashion stakeholders (compiled by the author)

This thesis provides a comprehensive literature review analyzing the link between market positioning, marketing messages, and sustainability practices in the fashion industry. **Fashion brands can reshape consumer views and desires, shifting satisfaction from products to experiences, conspicuous to conscious consumption, and frequent purchases to preserving existing items (Moss, 2018). Symbolic benefits motivate a wide range of consumers, even those not**

inherently inclined towards anticonsumption. Thus, brands can enhance status across a broad consumer base while addressing overconsumption concerns through authentic demarketing strategies. This approach not only fosters positive brand perceptions but also maintains a competitive market position. In a nutshell, human desire for status makes demarketing and conspicuous anticonsumption effective for promoting competitive altruism and creating a win-win-win situation. Hence, GDM emerges as an innovative strategy benefiting fashion companies, the environment, and society (Sekhon and Armstrong Soule, 2019).

6.2. Future Research

In the dynamic landscape of contemporary marketing, sustainability has become of crucial importance for brands aiming to resonate with the evolving values of consumer. GDM, designed to curb excessive consumption, stands out as a novel strategy in this pursuit. However, its effective implementation hinges upon a thorough understanding of consumer perceptions and motivations. At the same time, the luxury fashion sector must balance traditional ideas of being exclusive and opulent with increasing demands for sustainability and fairness. This section critically examines these complexities and offers recommendations for future research.

Marketing managers venturing into GDM need a deep understanding of consumer perceptions and motivations. Armstrong Soule and Reich (2015) stress the significance of assessing current consumer perceptions of brands, as attributions of motives to GDM messages significantly shape attitudes towards products. Future research would need to study how genuinely sustainable efforts by brands with poor reputation in GDM can be rewarded by consumers, thus fostering ecological responsibility while circumventing exploitative motive attributions.

The challenge of premium pricing associated with SF poses a formidable barrier to its widespread adoption. While strategies such as mass customization and local manufacturing show promise in mitigating this hurdle, their effectiveness requires further exploration. Specifically, research could explore how mass customization and local manufacturing impact consumer perceptions, purchasing behavior, and willingness to pay for sustainable fashion products.

Furthermore, investigating the cultural and societal factors influencing attitudes towards sustainability in fashion, encompassing norms, values, and beliefs, would allow to inform culturally relevant marketing strategies. García-de-Frutos et al. (2018) highlight the importance of examining mesolevel solutions within organizations to catalyze responsible behaviors and societal transformation, including strategies for the seamless integration of sustainability into corporate culture and operations.

The LF industry confronts the CSR-luxury paradox, having to cope with contradictions between self-oriented luxury values and CSR. Wong and Dhanesh (2016) propose that luxury brands can resolve this paradox by aligning strategic motives with socially responsible actions. Emphasizing authenticity and transparency in communicating socially responsible initiatives is crucial, given consumers' adeptness at discerning self-serving promotional tactics (Nielsen, 2015). Furthermore, understanding consumer perceptions of recycled materials in luxury contexts and exploring strategies to augment their acceptance and desirability represent pivotal areas for future research.

In the digital era, social media platforms emerge as potent tools for promoting sustainable fashion practices and engaging consumers. Research should investigate effective strategies for leveraging social media to showcase sustainability initiatives and advocate for sustainable fashion principles.

In conclusion, the future of sustainable marketing, particularly in the fashion industry, hinges on a deeper understanding of consumer perceptions and motivations. Future research should focus on the following areas: how brands with poor reputations can gain consumer trust through genuine sustainable efforts; the impact of premium pricing on consumer behavior and willingness to pay; cultural and societal factors influencing attitudes toward sustainability; strategies for integrating economic sustainability into corporate culture; resolving the CSR-luxury paradox through authenticity and transparency; and leveraging social media to promote sustainable fashion practices. Addressing these research areas will provide critical insights for brands aiming to align with evolving consumer values.

6.3. Managerial Implications

Consumers are increasingly seeking environmentally conscious products and practices. As the primary interface between consumers, observers and products, brands and their marketing strategies play a pivotal role in driving sustainable behaviors and business models. This section provides key literature and recommendations to help marketing managers navigate the complex intersection of consumerism and sustainability.

General recommendations:

- **Leverage Marketing for Sustainability:**
  - Marketing shapes product experiences and is crucial for implementing sustainability (Fisk, 1973; Sheth et al., 2011; Sodhi, 2011; Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015; Reich and Armstrong Soule, 2016; Yakobovitch and Grinstein, 2016).
- **Develop Sufficiency-Oriented Business Models:**
  - Offer bundled services like renting (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015; Jung and Byoungho, 2016).
  - Develop new business areas and customer segments such as repair services (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015; Jung and Byoungho, 2016).
  - Promote sufficiency for competitive advantage (Bocken and Short, 2016; Hwang et al., 2016; Bocken, 2017; Sheth et al., 2011; Reich and Armstrong Soule, 2016).
  - Implement reuse, maintenance, and sharing strategies (Botsman and Rogers, 2010; Polonsky, 2011; Echegaray, 2016).
  - Develop forward-thinking ideas like reshaping consumer needs and immaterial services (Gorge et al., 2015, Herziger et al., 2017, Moss, 2018).

The four P´s for Economic Sustainability in the Fashion Industry:

- **Product Strategies:**
  - Focus on longevity through durable design and repair opportunities (Bocken and Short, 2016; Ertekin and Atik, 2015; Seegebarth et al., 2016; Jung and Byoungho, 2016).
    - Mass-market brand managers should focus on developing environmentally friendly product lines made from recycled or organic materials (Vilasanti da Luz et al., 2020).
  - Emphasize secondhand markets, rentals, and innovative technology (Ertekin and Atik, 2015; Seegebarth et al., 2016; Bocken and Short, 2016; Sheth et al., 2011; Lowe et al., 2015).
- **Promotion Strategies:**
  - Implement GM initiatives for moderate sales and GDM to discourage overconsumption (Bocken and Short, 2016; Bocken, 2017; Vilasanti da Luz et al., 2020):
    - Mass-market GM messages can be shifted from "consume more" to "consume eco-friendly".
    - Luxury consumers can be encouraged through GDM to opt for fewer but longer-lasting purchases.
    - SF brands benefit from both GM and GDM advertising messages.
  - Educate consumers on sufficiency and responsibility (Ertekin and Atik, 2015; Heath and Chatzidakis, 2012; Fisk, 1973).
  - Promote higher-quality or eco-friendly products at higher prices to encourage extended use (Fletcher, 2010).
  - Emphasize the social sustainability impacts of the apparel industry to foster SRC (Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013, Cavender et al., 2021).
  - Employ storytelling and positive role models for simplified lifestyles (Gorge et al., 2015; Seegebarth et al., 2016).
  - Focus on honesty, authenticity, transparency, and sustainability efforts to enhance positive brand evaluations (Armstrong Soule and Reich, 2015; Kotler, 2011; McDonagh and Prothero, 2014; Vilasanti da Luz et al., 2020).
  - Engage in competitive altruism by leveraging visible anticonsumption signals (Pittman and Abell, 2021; Rathee and Milfeld, 2023; Sekhon and Armstrong Soule, 2019; Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022).
  - Utilize green advertising strategies when consumers are highly engaged with the product, as green advertising enhances brand perception and increases willingness to pay for eco-friendly products (Rathee and Milfeld, 2023).

- **Price and Place Strategies:**
  - Utilize premium pricing models to encourage quality over quantity (Bocken and Short, 2016; Jung and Byoungho, 2016).
  - Encourage anti-consumption by introducing a reward system that incentivizes the use of recycled clothes (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon, 2022).
  - Create innovative experiential settings both online and offline for the fashion store (Schaefer and Crane, 2005; Ertekin and Atik, 2015; Bocken and Short, 2016; Yakobovitch and Grinstein, 2016).

The imperative for sustainability in marketing has never been more pressing. As evidenced by the literature surveyed, there exists a wealth of strategies and practices that align profitability with environmental stewardship. From embracing sufficiency-oriented business models to leveraging consumer signaling for positive brand perceptions, marketing managers wield significant influence in shaping sustainable consumption patterns. By embracing sustainability as a guiding principle, businesses not only stand to enhance their reputations but also contribute to a more equitable and resilient future for generations to come.

6.4. Limitations

This thesis provides a comparison of GDM and GM within the fashion industry, relying heavily on examples like Patagonia and REI. However, these examples may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand the scope to include GDM advertising from various brands and product categories to improve external validity.

Despite a broad search string and a sizable sample size, the restriction to specific databases and publication types may have introduced bias and excluded relevant research. Additionally, the focus on affluent societies, while neglecting those in less affluent conditions, could impact the external validity of the study. Future research should adopt more comprehensive search strategies across diverse databases and publication types and include cross-cultural investigations and diverse socioeconomic groups to enhance the reliability and generalizability of the findings.

Due to the strategic focus of this thesis, it does not address the operational resolution of the sustainability and economic profitability dilemma. A case study in all fashion segments would be suitable to measure the economic sustainability impact of demarketing advertising strategies at the operational level, providing managerial insights on potential resource savings. Finally, employing researchers to independently review the literature and assess study quality would also enhance the internal validity of the systematic literature review.

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