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A Study on Consumer Perception and Behavior towards Sustainable Fashion Brand Image under the Consumer Value Theory

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate consumers' perception and behavior towards sustainable fashion brand image within the framework of Consumer Value Theory. Consumer Value Theory emphasizes that consumers, in their purchasing decision-making process, consider not only the utilitarian value of products but also emotional, social, and environmental values, among other factors. To gain deeper insights into how these values are manifested in sustainable fashion brands, this research seeks to measure the importance consumers attach to different values and their impact on brand image. The survey results reveal that enhancing aesthetic value in attire, establishing resonance with peers, and enhancing personal image and confidence in social situations are all significant factors for consumers when selecting sustainable fashion brands. Modern consumers are increasingly concerned about whether brands adhere to sustainable development principles, including environmental and health friendliness, waste reduction, resource conservation, and positive environmental impact. These factors not only influence consumers' purchasing decisions but also enhance the brand's reputation and image in the market. However, through the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA), this study also identifies areas that require priority improvement, including reducing waste and resource consumption, bringing happiness and positive emotions, and increasing consumer acceptance of innovative products. In summary, this study employs purposive sampling and snowball sampling to comprehensively explore consumer perceptions and behaviors towards sustainable fashion brand image under the framework of consumption value theory, providing important references for brand marketing strategies.

Keywords: Consumer Value Theory ; Sustainable Fashion Brand ; Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA)

1. Introduction

As the global sustainability agenda continues to advance, sustainable fashion has become a significant trend in the fashion industry. Sustainable fashion brands are committed to respecting the environment and society in their production, manufacturing, and sales processes to reduce

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resource consumption and negative environmental impact. However, despite an increasing number of brands incorporating sustainability into their business strategies, there still exists a certain level of disparity in consumer perception and evaluation of these brands.

Motivated by reflections prompted by real-life cases, this study aims to address the issue. In recent years, many well-known fashion brands have launched sustainable collections in response to societal demands for sustainability. However, the image and position of these brands in the minds of consumers are not always secure. Many consumers have doubts about whether brands genuinely fulfill sustainability commitments and whether product quality is affected, which may impact consumer trust and loyalty towards sustainable fashion brands.

Therefore, this study aims to explore consumers' perception and behavior towards sustainable fashion brand image, focusing particularly on the influencing factors under the framework of Consumer Value Theory. By measuring the importance consumers place on sustainable values and how these values influence their perception and selection behavior towards brand image, we aim to gain deeper insights into the motivations and reasons behind consumers' attitudes and behaviors towards sustainable fashion brands. This will provide valuable market insights for sustainable fashion brands, helping them better position themselves, improve products and services, and enhance competitiveness in the market.

Through an in-depth investigation of consumers' perception and behavior towards sustainable fashion brand image, we will be able to offer substantial recommendations and guidance for the development and brand marketing strategies of sustainable fashion brands.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sustainable Fashion Brand

"Sustainable fashion brands" refer to fashion brands that prioritize environmental, social, and economic sustainability throughout their production, manufacturing, and sales processes. These brands are committed to reducing resource consumption, minimizing negative environmental impacts, while also focusing on enhancing social welfare and protecting workers' rights. Sustainable fashion brands typically utilize eco-friendly materials, advocate for fair trade, and seek innovative solutions to address sustainability challenges in the fashion industry. In exploring sustainable fashion brands, numerous international literature provides valuable insights. Firstly, Chen et al. (2019) examined consumers' perception of sustainable fashion brand image, emphasizing the relationship between brand credibility and brand image. Subsequently, Tseng and Lien (2020) studied consumers' purchase intention towards sustainable fashion brands, highlighting the impact of brand image and brand loyalty on purchasing behavior. Furthermore, Lai and Chen (2021) further explored the shaping of sustainable fashion brand image on social media, emphasizing the importance of brand visibility on social media for consumer perception. In terms of supply chain management, Shih and Chen (2018) investigated sustainable supply chain management models for sustainable fashion brands, proposing an integrated framework incorporating environmental, social, and economic factors. Lastly, Wu and Lin (2019) focused on the innovation strategies of sustainable

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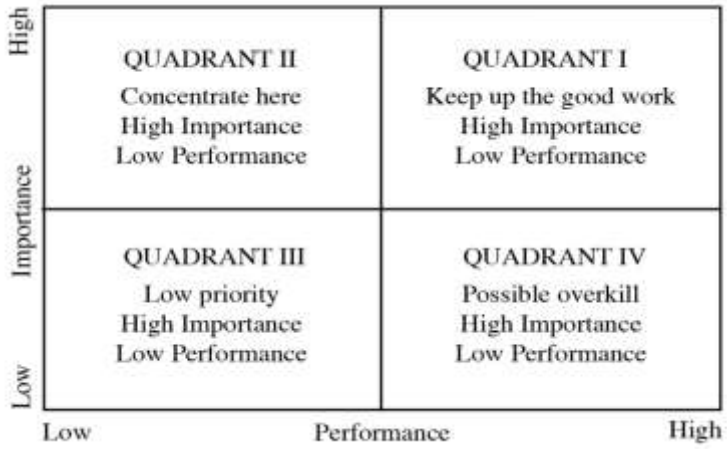
fashion brands, emphasizing the importance of innovation in the brand's successful transformation process. These studies provide valuable theoretical foundations and empirical support for understanding the perception and consumer behavior towards sustainable fashion brand image.

2.2 Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA)

Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) is considered a vital tool for evaluating business performance, providing managers with key insights for resource planning and operational strategies (Smith & Jones, 2018). Figure 1 illustrates four two-dimensional improvement strategies constructed based on consumers' perceptions of service attributes (importance) on the X-axis and their actual post-experience performance (satisfaction level) on the Y-axis (Brown et al., 2019). Utilizing a standardized questionnaire to assess each consumer's perceived satisfaction and importance levels, and calculating their averages to determine the coordinates of the matrix center. Subsequently, corresponding plots are drawn in the matrix based on the two-dimensional characteristics of quality attributes. Mapping each quality attribute based on quadrant and scale position in the matrix aids in understanding areas requiring improvement and those that can be maintained (Garcia & Martinez, 2021).

These analytical outcomes offer crucial insights for fashion brands, enabling managers to better comprehend consumer needs and evaluations of brand quality. This study will explore the perception and behavior of sustainable fashion brand imagery under the framework of consumer value theory. This research direction aims to gain deeper insights into consumer preferences and behavioral patterns concerning sustainable fashion brands (Huang & Wang, 2019). (as shown in Fig. 1.)

Figure 1. IPA Quadrant Chart.



3. Research Method

This This study aims to explore consumer perceptions and behaviors regarding sustainable fashion brand image within the framework of consumption value theory. It focuses on the

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functional, social, emotional, novelty, and situational value dimensions in the theory as indicators to measure the importance consumers place on brand image. To further analyze the importance consumers attach to different values and their impact on brand image, this study will employ methods such as Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA). Through IPA analysis, the study can compare the importance consumers place on different values with the actual performance of the brand image, thereby identifying the strengths and areas for improvement in consumer perceptions.

Additionally, this study will use purposive sampling and snowball sampling to understand consumer awareness and preferences towards sustainable fashion brands, as well as their evaluations of the brand image. By comprehensively applying these methods, the study aims to thoroughly investigate consumer perceptions and behaviors towards sustainable fashion brand image under the consumption value theory, providing important references for brand marketing strategies.

4. Finding and Discussion

According to Consumer Value Theory (Sheth et al., 1991), there are five consumer values that influence purchasing decisions:

1. Functional Value: Consumers consider the quantifiable or non-quantifiable functionalities, utilities, or physical attributes of a product to satisfy their needs. Functional value is often associated with factors such as price, performance, usage, and quality, and is assessed through the evaluation of product attributes and the influence of reference groups.

2. Social Value: Consumers establish connections with social groups by using products or brands, enhancing their utility. This value is related to consumers seeking social identification, conformity to social norms, and increasing social status, often found in highly visible products or items shareable with others.

3. Emotional Value: Using a product triggers emotional or mood changes in consumers, which can be positive or negative. Emotional value is related to product aesthetics, user experience, advertising content, and purchase environment, and may lead to impulse purchases or unplanned consumption.

4. Novelty Value: Consumers choose novel products out of curiosity, satisfying their desire for knowledge acquisition or novelty. This value often arises from unfamiliar or more complex items, such as newly launched products or products with entertainment attributes.

5.Contextual Value: Products provide additional functionalities or social values in specific situations, influencing consumer behavior. However, the value of a product may decrease as the context changes, such as umbrellas being valuable only on rainy days.

Consumer choices are determined by the overall assessment of these five consumer values. Therefore, a weighted judgment formula and a threshold value can be derived to evaluate consumer choices (including purchase decisions, product types, and brand selections). In future marketing research for similar products or categories, predictions about consumer responses

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can be made based on this judgment formula and threshold value.

IPA Questionnaire Reliability Analysis. Reliability refers to the consistency or stability of scores obtained from a scale, with higher values indicating greater stability. In this study, we employed Cronbach's α coefficient to assess the internal consistency of the scale and evaluate the reliability of the measurement questionnaire. According to Wu (1990), when the α coefficient exceeds 0.7, it indicates high reliability of the scale, which is one of the most common ranges for reliability assessment.

This study began in March 2024, using purposive sampling and snowball sampling for the IPA, and collected a total of 100 valid questionnaires. According to the results in Table 4.1, the Cronbach's α values for both the importance and satisfaction sections of the IPA questionnaire were greater than 0.70, indicating consistency or stability among the items. The overall reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's α value of 0.975, which falls within a very high reliability range, therefore all items were retained.

In conclusion, the IPA questionnaire utilized in this study demonstrates excellent reliability, with a high level of confidence, enabling effective assessment of consumers' perceptions of sustainable fashion brand imagery. (as shown in TABLE I.)

Table 1. Reliability Test of the IPA Questionnaire

Questionnaire Items	Importance	Satisfaction
1. High elasticity and flexibility	.895	.898
2. Enhancing the aesthetic value of clothing	.905	.892
3. Highlighting individual style	.906	.892
4. Adhering to sustainable development values	.906	.893
5. More environmentally friendly and health-conscious	.909	.893
6. Reducing waste and resource consumption	.910	.889
7. Generating positive environmental impact	.905	.892
8. Establishing resonance with surrounding communities	.905	.894
9. Bringing positive emotions and happiness	.906	.891
10. Increasing awareness of fashion brands	.910	.898
11. Embracing innovative products	.908	.892
12. Eager to try new things and innovations	.906	.895

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Questionnaire Items	Importance	Satisfaction
13. Aligning with contemporary social trends	.901	.894
14. Enhancing image and confidence in social settings	.907	.892
15. Demonstrating a commitment to environmental protection and sustainable living	.905	.894
Mean (M)	.911	.900

Based on the consumption value theory and the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA), the study identified four quadrants encompassing 15 data points of importance and satisfaction to explore consumer behavior regarding the perception of sustainable fashion brand image. (as shown in TABLE II. and Fig. 2)

According to the results of the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA), we can delve into the specific circumstances of Taiwanese consumers' perception and behavior towards sustainable fashion brand image. Firstly, attributes such as "high elasticity and flexibility" and "positive impact on the environment" are overly emphasized in consumers' minds. However, the actual importance of these attributes is not as high as consumers expect, indicating consumers have overly high expectations for these attributes. Brands should reallocate resources in this situation, shifting focus to attributes that consumers consider important and are currently underperforming, to more effectively meet consumer needs and enhance brand performance.

Secondly, in attributes such as "enhancing the aesthetic value of clothing," "establishing resonance with surrounding groups," and "enhancing image and confidence in social situations," the brand's performance is relatively excellent, and these attributes are also highly important to consumers. This indicates that the brand has a competitive advantage in these areas and should continue to maintain and strengthen these advantages to consolidate its leading position in the market. In contrast, attributes such as "highlighting personal style," "adhering to sustainable values," and "enhancing awareness of fashion brands" are of lower importance, but there is still room for improvement in their performance. Brands can gradually promote the development of these minor improvement areas after ensuring the stability of main advantageous attributes, to achieve comprehensive brand enhancement.

Table 2. IPA Analysis Results

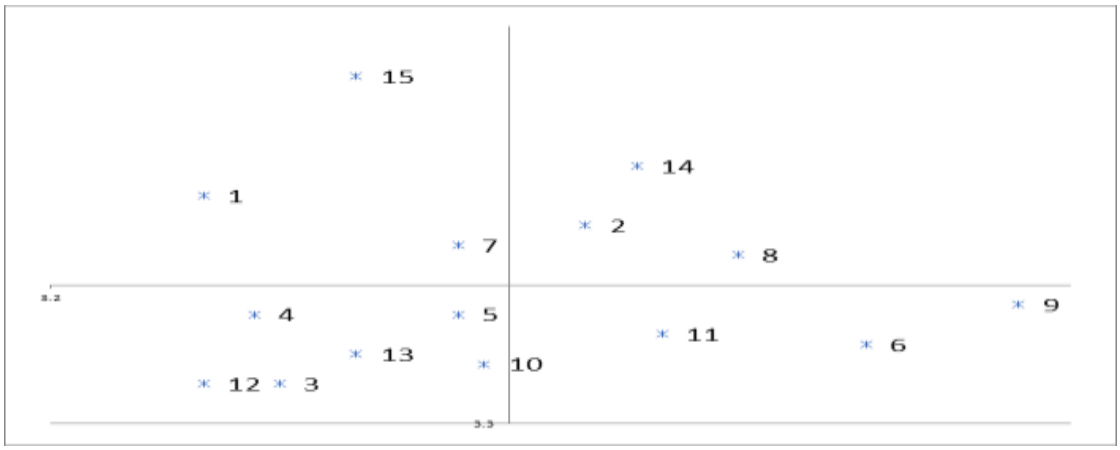
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 Questionnaire Items	Importance (M=4.23)	Satisfaction (M=3.29)	Quadrants
1. High elasticity and flexibility	3.53	3.26	Overemphasized
2. Enhancing the aesthetic value of clothing	3.5	3.41	Dominant Maintain
3. Highlighting individual style	3.34	3.29	Minor Improve
4. Adhering to sustainable development values	3.41	3.28	Minor Improve
5. More environmentally friendly and health-conscious	3.41	3.36	Minor Improve
6. Reducing waste and resource consumption	3.38	3.52	Priority Improve
7. Generating positive environmental impact	3.48	3.36	Overemphasized
8. Establishing resonance with surrounding communities	3.47	3.47	Dominant Maintain
9. Bringing positive emotions and happiness	3.42	3.58	Priority Improve
10. Increasing awareness of fashion brands	3.36	3.37	Minor Improve
11. Embracing innovative products	3.39	3.44	Priority Improve
12. Eager to try new things and innovations	3.34	3.26	Minor Improv

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 Questionnaire Items	Importance (M=4.23)	Satisfaction (M=3.29)	Quadrants
			e
13. Aligning with contemporary social trends	3.37	3.32	Minor Improve
14. Enhancing image and confidence in social settings	3.56	3.43	Dominant Maintain
15. Demonstrating a commitment to environmental protection and sustainable living	3.65	3.32	Overemphasized

Figure 1. PA Matrix Distribution



Finally, the analysis results indicate that "reducing waste and resource consumption," "bringing positive emotions and happiness," and "being willing to accept innovative products" are

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attributes highly valued by consumers and areas that brands need to prioritize for improvement. These attributes are of great importance to consumers; however, brands' performance in these areas has not yet met consumer expectations. Therefore, brands should prioritize allocating resources to these areas to enhance their performance in reducing waste, promoting positive emotions, and fostering innovation in products to meet consumers' core needs. Overall, Taiwanese consumers' awareness of sustainable fashion brands needs to be strengthened, particularly regarding their understanding of specific measures businesses are taking to practice sustainable development. Brands should intensify consumer education, highlighting their efforts in environmental protection and sustainable development, thereby enhancing their brand image and increasing market competitiveness.

5. Conclusion

This study delves into Taiwanese consumers' perception of sustainable fashion brand image through the lenses of Consumer Value Theory and Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA). Several significant findings emerged. Firstly, consumers exhibit overly high expectations for certain attributes such as "high elasticity and flexibility" and "positive impact on the environment," yet their actual importance falls short of expectations. Brands need to reallocate resources to effectively meet consumer needs.

Secondly, brands excel in aspects like enhancing the aesthetic value of clothing, resonating with surrounding groups, and boosting confidence in social situations. These attributes are highly important to consumers, and brands should maintain and strengthen these advantages to solidify their market leadership.

Lastly, while some attributes like "highlighting personal style" and "adhering to sustainable values" are of lower importance, there is still room for improvement. After ensuring stability in primary advantageous attributes, brands can gradually enhance these secondary areas to comprehensively uplift brand image.

In summary, for sustainable fashion brands, it's recommended to prioritize communication and interaction with consumers, deeply understanding their needs and expectations, and continually improving products and services based on consumer feedback. Additionally, brands should uphold sustainable values, continuously enhance product quality and design to meet consumers' dual pursuit of fashion and environmental friendliness. Through these efforts, sustainable fashion brands can earn consumers' trust and support, securing long-term success in the market.

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