

BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS IN GREEN MARKETING: IMPACT OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR ON SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

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Abstract. *Fashion industry has long been a significant contributor to environmental waste, yet there has been a shift towards eco-friendly*

practices as consumer awareness grows. This paper aims to explore how behavioural economics can be applied to ecological marketing interventions within the fashion industry, with a focus on green products and sustainable practices. It examines the role of cognitive biases, social norms, and emotional drivers in shaping consumer preferences for eco-friendly fashion. Additionally, the paper empirically investigates how selected fashion brands leverage these insights to foster climate-conscious purchasing behaviours, thereby contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). By reviewing successful green marketing strategies and consumer behaviour, this paper provides valuable insights for businesses on implementing effective sustainable marketing strategies that align with global sustainability initiatives. The findings suggest that strategies such as eco-labeling, transparency, social proof, and emotional branding can help shape consumer behavior and contribute to global sustainability goals. The study highlights the importance of understanding consumer psychology and behavior in promoting sustainable fashion consumption.

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Introduction and Background

The fashion industry is one of the largest offenders when it comes to environmental degradation, contributing significantly to pollution, textile waste, and carbon emissions (Lee, 2008). As the world becomes increasingly

aware of the fashion industry's environmental impacts, there is growing pressure on brands to adopt greener, more sustainable practices. However, transitioning to sustainable consumption presents a complex and daunting challenge. One key barrier is the entrenched consumption habits that perpetuate the fast fashion cycle. The constant cycle of new trends and seasonal collections makes it difficult to encourage consumers to change their purchasing behaviours (Polonsky, 1994). While consumers are more conscious about their purchase's impact on the environment now, behavioural change within the fashion industry has been slower than anticipated. There are many reasons for this discrepancy between knowing and doing. Despite being aware of the adverse environmental effects of fast fashion (Polonsky, 1994) many consumers still prioritize convenience, aesthetic and price over their ethical interests. What is more, the fast fashion business model, based on quick production and trend-chasing, gives firms scant reason to create anything that lasts season after season – especially when it comes to the growing number of environmentally-aware customers.

A change has been noted in this narrative in recent years, perhaps due to the rise of sustainable fashion. This increasing interest is hailed by a greater understanding of climate-induced changes, and human-made green scaping coupled with growing aspiration for ethical consumption (Kapoor et al., 2021). Attention is shifting, and consumers are growing more mindful of the environment, issues of waste, water and even carbon footprint, which is something consumers are now wanting to know more about from the brands they buy from. As a result, consumers are purchasing products that align with these eco-friendly values. But awareness-raising on its own is inadequate to bring about change.

The difficulty is in changing consumer behaviour via successful green marketing which addresses mental/psychological, emotional and social mechanisms that lead to decisions. Behavioural economics provides us with some interesting ideas on how these factors could shape consumer behaviour around sustainability (Ray & Nayak, 2023). It takes account of consumers hardly making decisions with only rational attitude and people can keep buying unsustainable product when they know it is bad for environment. Fundamental concepts in the field of behavioural economics, judgments heuristics, social norms, and emotion are critical in influencing consumer preferences (Tversky, & Kahneman, 1974).

The fashion industry's unsustainable practices contribute significantly to environmental degradation, pollution, and waste, despite growing consumer awareness of these issues. The entrenched fast fashion business model and consumer habits hinder the adoption of sustainable consumption practices, highlighting the need for effective green marketing strategies that address psychological, emotional, and social mechanisms influencing consumer

behavior. How can fashion brands leverage behavioral economics principles to promote sustainable fashion consumption and drive meaningful behavioral change among consumers?

This paper examines the use of behavioural economics to greening in the fashion marketing industry. These psychological findings can be applied by fashion brands to help move consumers toward sustainable consumerism by tackling biases, social pressures, and emotional motivators. The paper investigates key theories of behavioural economics such as status quo bias, loss aversion and social identity theory, and the implications for Green Marketing Strategies in support of eco-friendly fashion. It also explores to what extent these principles are already being implemented in the fashion industry in support of sustainable behavior, and to what degree there is potential to work towards the global sustainability targets, e.g. SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) (White et al., 2019).

Literature Review

The fashion industry's environmental realities have brought sustainable fashion and green marketing to the fore. As stated by Polonsky (1994), consumer choice cannot be simply attributed to rational economic considerations, but is determined by also psycho- emotional and social ones. Cognitive biases including the status quo bias, loss aversion and anchoring are particularly relevant to the area of sustainable fashion and they influence consumer decisions (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

For example, status quo bias drives consumers' preference for known over more environmentally-friendly products, even if the latter are environmentally more beneficial (Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988). Consumers also anchor on sustainable products' prices, which leads them to believe that eco-friendly products are not affordable even though they offer long-term value (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Moreover, loss aversion—the feeling of being hurt more by the loss than one gains from acquiring the equivalent in value—may discourage consumers from buying eco-friendly fashion if they believe that it is less fashionable or lower in status than traditional options (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

Social norms and peer group influence also have a strong impact on consumption behaviour especially in the sustainable fashion context. Social proof, the concept that people are more likely to follow behaviors they see others engage in, has been found to be influential in the realm of sustainability decision-making. Cialdini (2003) suggests that if it is socially normative (i.e., people think that others are doing it) or a prominent other

(e.g., a celebrity) advocates an environmentally-friendly behavior, then people are more likely to engage in such behavior. This has been exploited by many fashion brands which work with influencers to endorse sustainable products and harness social norms in encouraging an ecofriendly behavior among consumers (Jin & Phua, 2014).

A combination of behavior economics and green marketing on fashion industry has become a new perspective for green consumption encouragement. This environmental aspect combined with the psychological characteristics of people is intentional because products cannot just be green, but also the actions of agencies and media to stimulate the eco-emotions of the target of environmentally friendly goods are developed (Spargoli & Chéron, 2013). Product presentation and consumer response to products Recent studies indicate that sustainability is the best strategy to use when trying to help a business especially since people have been thought to be using a green product and other research associates the emotional aspect of how people are affected by the environment (Thompson & Malaviya, 2013). Emotion based branding that associate guilt, pride or responsibility with purchasing has been shown to be effective in motivating consumers to select more sustainable product options (White et al., 2019).

Emotional factors in green marketing have become more and more important. Marketers can form significant emotional connections with consumers through using emotional appeals (Ray & Nayak, 2023) that emphasize the environmental benefit of a product/brand or the brand's stance on sustainability (Thompson & Malaviya, 2013). Emotion can be a very powerful tool due to the process of emotional branding, with all its implications in terms of building consumer loyalty by suggesting that one is a socially responsible (Stella McCartney, Patagonia (they are liars) and considering its environmental impact (Shen & Tam, 2015).

Notwithstanding the increasing studies of sustainable consumption and green marketing, there are some voids. Despite the extant research on cognitive biases, most of the experimental literature concerning these behavioral economics principles, as they pertain to the fashion industry, is scarce (Patino, 2014). The majority of studies has concentrated on consumer attitudes or purchase intentions, and customer's actual purchase behavior has been largely neglected, particularly in connection with sustainable fashion (Shen et al., 2014).

A related shortcoming is the long-term effect of green marketing strategies. There is evidence to show the short-term influences of sustainable advertising on consumer behaviour, but little is known about the longer-term impact. Do people continue to choose sustainable fashion (or dis-conscientiously consume) long after this honeymoon effect has worn off? It is

suggested that studies of the long-term impact of green marketing strategies on sustainable behavior should be pursued (Polonsky, 1994).

The influence of digital media on sustainable fashion consumption is another promising area of study. Given the widespread use and reliance on social media and influencer marketing, there is a need to investigate how digital platforms can be harnessed among young consumers for promoting the consumption of more sustainable fashion. However, in the green marketing literature, studies on contribution of digital influencers and social media trends to consumer behavior are lacking (Kapoor et al., 2021). Overall, a gap still exists in the empirical research on the social dimensions of BA in terms of developing enduring behavior changes and the leveraging of digital media for sustainable fashion consumption.

In the light of the above literature, it is evident that there is very limited research on behavioral economics in sustainable fashion. There is a need of proper understanding of long-term effects of green marketing. Besides, there is a limited focus on actual purchase behavior. The current research looks into the applying behavioral economics principles in the fashion industry.

Conceptual Model

The study is about the relationship between behavioral economics, green marketing strategies, and sustainable fashion consumption. The independent variables are cognitive biases (e.g., status quo bias, loss aversion, anchoring bias), emotional motivators (e.g., guilt, pride, responsibility), and social norms and peer influence (e.g., social proof, social identity theory). Green marketing strategies will work as moderating variable. While sustainable fashion consumption is the dependent variable. This conceptual model can serve as a foundation for understanding the complex relationships between behavioral economics, green marketing strategies, and sustainable fashion consumption.

Conclusion

This study takes a qualitative approach to investigate the interplay between behavioral-economics-based principles and green marketing strategies in the fashion industry. The central aim is to uncover cognitive biases, social norms and emotional drivers that drive consumer behavior – specifically to what degree this applies to sustainable fashion.

The study follows a descriptive and exploratory approach to organize and present the existing literature, and a framework to help visualizing the possible application of behavioral economics in building the go to market strategies. The primary method used is an extensive review article of scholarly articles, books, case studies, and industry reports to assess the intersection of behavioral economics with consumer behavior and eco-fashion.

Data for the present study are secondary in nature and have been used from academic journal articles, books, industry reports and case studies of those fashion brands, which have been able to develop and use effectively green marketing campaigns in business. Grace Beverley Cycle savvy: Some of the more notable mentions within the luxury sector include Patagonia, Stella McCartney and Reformation, all of which are known for their brands sustainability credentials and the triumph of their green marketing campaigns. Data in the study is collected from reliable sources such as Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, Journal of Business Research and other peer reviewed journals about sustainable business practices.

The selected literature was analyzed using content and thematic analysis techniques. This study employed content analysis to uncover how behavioral economics principles (e.g., cognitive biases, emotional appeals, social norms) have been used in green advertising. Generated patterns, themes, and strategies were then labelled through a thematic analysis process to help to visualize and organize how fashion brands are impacting consumer perceptions and behaviours in sustainable fashion.

The limitation of this study is that secondary data (not based on surveys or interviews) was used. Therefore, the findings rely on the validity and reliability of existing literature which may not reflect changing patterns in green marketing and consumer in fashion. In addition, this investigation is constricted by findings based on small sample sizes, which might not be apposite of the absolute scope of the fashion industry.

Framework of the Study: Concepts and Theories

In relation to the objectives, the study uses the principles of behavioral economics to study the effect of consumer behavior on sustainable fashion. Behavioral economics questions the old belief that consumers always make decisions based solely on rational cost/benefit calculations. Rather than addressing consumer's rationality and the egoistic motives of economic consumption, it emphasizes the importance of the mind and a consumer's psychological, emotional and social life as instruments through which decisions to consume can be influenced, especially with regard to sustainable consumption.

The notion of cognitive or psychological biases is at the heart of behavioral economics, which is characterized by a systematic deviation from rational behavior. For example, the status quo bias (Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988) explains consumers' reluctance to replace existing product designs with more sustainable ones. Also, loss aversion (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979), means consumers are more sensitive to potential losses than to commensurate gains and that can prevent them from buying environmentally friendly fashion when they perceive those products as less fashionable or lower status, though

environmentally friendly fashion products bring them environmental benefits in the long term.

Emotional motivations also predominate in consumer decision making. Emotions such as guilt, pride, and responsibility can act as motivators of buying decisions (White et al., 2019). For instance, if and when consumers feel guilty about environmentally harmful conventional fashion, they may feel drawn to buying better eco-friendly alternative options. It is this emotional appeal which forms one of the most salient features of emotional branding – a marketing method designed to facilitate a profound emotional bond between consumers and brands (Thompson & Malaviya, 2013). Others, like Patagonia and Stella McCartney, have successfully leveraged emotional branding to convince customers of the positive ecological impact of their products, leading them to feel good about their purchase and increasing their commitment to sustainability.

Besides these emotional triggers, habit and peer pressure is a very strong determinant of consumer behavior. Behavior that appears popular or acceptable is more likely to be mimicked, in line with social proof (Cialdini, 2003). 4 Introduction Concerning sustainable fashion, this means that consumers are more inclined to buy ecofriendly clothes when they see others, in particular opinion leaders such as celebrities or social media endorsers, do so. This supports the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) which argues that people derive much of their self-concept from their membership of social groups and their adoption of norms and values from that group. With sustainability becoming more mainstream, buying sustainable fashion has been one expression measure for consumers to signal consumer's responsibility to environment (Aronson, et al., 2019).

These knowledge from behavioral economics, other than emotion and social, can be used to design the successful greenmarket mix. Fashion brands who implement these principles in their marketing strategies—eco-labeling and transparency, for example—support consumer to be more mindful when making decisions in a sustainable way and an emotional bond with the product can be created in the process.

In short, the proposed framework of this study is based on a discursive model which incorporates the behavioral economics (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), prospect theory, social identity theory, and emotional branding (Thompson et al., 2014). The purpose of this model is two-fold: on the one hand, it is intended to show how psychological, emotional and social constructs shape consumers' sustainable fashion consumption and on the other to argue how fashion marketers undertake sustainable fashion marketing activities.

Results and Discussion

This paper examines the impact of behavioral economics on consumer behaviour in sustainable fashion. The paper analyzes how cognitive biases, social norms, emotional motivators, and green marketing tactics interact to impact consumer purchase decisions. Key insights from a careful literature review are considered that could be invaluable for fashion brands to apply these principles to encourage sustainable fashion consumption. The results of this study are presented with an extended discussion, with attention given to the influence of conscious and unconscious processing, social norms, emotions and applied implications for green marketing strategies.

One key finding in this study is that cognitive bias has a substantial effect on sustainable fashion consumer purchase decisions. Cognitive bias represents the systematic departures from rational judgement that cause consumers to opt for non-sustainable, non-environmentally-friendly products, even when they know that they ought to choose sustainable ones. The most well-known cognitive bias established is status quo bias, which accounts for consumers' aversion to changes, even if greener products can offer unambiguous environmental benefits (Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988). Consumers in general are slack to adopt sustainable fashion; they are not so familiar with it or they are concerned that it lacks style. This, in turn, points to the need for marketing strategies that can make sustainable fashion more attractive, and less as an alternative to mainstream fashion.

It also has demonstrated that anchoring bias drives consumer decision for sustainable fashion. Anchoring is the process by which consumers pay too much attention to a product's initial price, while ignoring its overall worth; example, best and life quality (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). To offset this bias, fashion brands would need to educate consumers about the long-term collective benefits of sustainable fashion by placing a clear emphasis on product longevity and lesser environmental harm.

Loss aversion and social proof

Loss aversion is also a major factor in consumer behavior. Consumers' concern of a loss is greater than his or her desire for an equivalent gain (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Mohr, Fuxman, & Mahmoud, 2022). This also translates to the fashion world that consumers would be apprehensive in purchasing sustainable products if they think they are not as stylish, or fashionable. Fashion brands can help to do this by championing the style credentials of sustainable fashion, using celebrity endorsements and influencer collaborations to drive the message that eco-friendly clothing can be on-trend and cool.

Finally, social proof and peer influence are two key factors that encourage sustainable behavior. As Cialdini (2003) suggests, people are more likely to

act if they think that those actions are common or socially desirable. In sustainable fashion consumers are more inclined to pick eco-friendly products if they see others, especially influential models, making similar choices. That would be consistent with social identity theory, which holds that people derive their sense of self from the groups to which they are a part. The increasing influence of ecological sustainability leads consumers to choose such fashion in order to conform to socially responsible attitudes (Aronson et al., 2019). Fashion brands can use this to their advantage by presenting sustainable fashion as a component of a cultural shift to more environmental responsible lifestyles, appealing to consumers' aspirations to be seen as environmentally responsible.

Feelings and Green Branding

Emotional triggers have been noted to be significant in promoting more sustainable consumer decisions. Emotional branding is a marketing strategy that aims to create a mutual connection with the customers, and that way the products need to make an emotional reaction of the consumer on the marketing efforts of the product. In terms of sustainable fashion, the emotional branding is particularly effective, because consumers tend to make green purchases as a way to quell feelings of guilt or to feel proud about generating a positive environmental impact.

Take Patagonia, for instance, they're killing it with emotional branding and connecting with their customers' base by playing up their environmental activism. By advertising widely that we retard our climate change by crossing out "new" in every clothing label of our shop and replace it with "used", Patagonia's marketing tells consumers that they can also make the radiate choice if they just buy the right stuff. This is a strategy that promotes a feeling of consumer responsibility for the environment, resulting in increased emotional connection to the brand and higher loyalty and repurchase (Thompson & Malaviya, 2013).

Guilt is some of the strongest emotional resonances concerning sustainable fashion. Even customers also feel guilty over the environmental impact of fast fashion industry and their hand in it. This can be used to the advantage of a brand by positioning sustainable fashion as a way to feel less guilty, focusing on one's ecological or carbon footprint of mainstream fashion. Guilt-relieving green advertising approaches influence social responsibility and prompt consumers to purchase to reduce further damage to the environment (White et al., 2019).

Plus, pride is another feeling that inspires consumers toward sustainability. Buyers feel good when they purchase products from brands that reflect their own values (e.g., brands that are considerate of the environment). Fashion

brands can leverage this pride by reinforcing that their products are coming first in the race to solve the world's ecological problems, rewarding consumers for their earth-friendly choices and affirming the power of their commitment.

The results of this study suggest a number of green marketing strategies fashion businesses may adopt to promote sustainable consumption. These are things like eco-labelling, storytelling, and transparency that can help consumers trust and make more sustainable purchasing decisions.

Eco-labels are identified to be one of the most commonly used resources in green marketing. For instance, a consumer can have confidence that what they are buying is produced in environmentally and socially responsible manner. Fair Trade certification and the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) are also certifications consumers can trust to know about the products they buy. There are evidences demonstrating that the level of marketing communicative transparency influences consumer trust with implications on sustainable consumption choices (Jin & Phua, 2014). Fashion brands can use tags and certifications shown on their products to aid consumers in evaluating the sustainable sustainability of their purchases.

Narratives or stories are also central to green marketing. Apparel brands are able to cultivate stronger emotional ties to consumers who find that the story behind a product, the process by which it is made, how it makes the world a better place, are all intelligible and relatable. For example, Stella McCartney has successfully used storytelling to magnify the environmentally and animal-friendly advantages of its product offerings, giving consumers a sense of ownership in the brand's mission toward sustainability (Mohr, et al., 2022; Shen & Tam, 2015). The concept of storytelling brings a human element to the brand, creating social empathy and encouraging consumers to purchase in a sustainable way.

Challenges and Limitations

The findings of this study reinforce the efficacy of behavioral economics-informed interventions on sustainable consumer behavior. However, several limitations and challenges need to be addressed. One significant task is the long-term adaptation of sustainable behaviors. While green marketing can drive temporary fluctuations in the market, the long-term behavior of consumers remains uncertain. This uncertainty highlights the need for brands to adopt initiatives that keep consumers engaged with sustainable fashion beyond emotional appeals and social trends. To achieve this, brands must develop strategies that foster enduring behavioral changes, rather than relying solely on short-term marketing campaigns.

Moreover, the digital divide poses a challenge in promoting sustainable fashion consumption. Consumers with limited access to digital platforms may

be less likely to engage with green marketing initiatives or access information about sustainable fashion. Future research should investigate how to bridge this gap and ensure that sustainable fashion initiatives are inclusive and accessible to diverse consumer groups.

Another challenge is the risk of greenwashing, which can erode brand trust and undermine the effectiveness of green marketing initiatives. Brands must prioritize transparency and authenticity in their sustainability claims to build trust with consumers. Future research could explore the impact of greenwashing on consumer behavior and identify strategies for brands to maintain transparency and credibility in their sustainability efforts.

Cost is also a key barrier to sustainable fashion adoption. Many green items are perceived as costly, alienating value-oriented consumers. Fashion brands need to rise to this challenge by creating new, more affordable, and accessible sustainable fashion options. By driving resource efficiencies at the production level and utilizing low-cost, eco-friendly materials, brands can make sustainable fashion more appealing to price-conscious consumers. Future research should investigate the effectiveness of different pricing strategies and product design approaches in promoting sustainable fashion consumption among budget-conscious consumers.

To address these challenges, future research directions could include: First, one should investigate the role of digital media in promoting long-term sustainable behavior change. Second, developing strategies to mitigate the risks of greenwashing. Third, explore affordable and accessible sustainable fashion options. Fourth, investigate how the digital divide in sustainable fashion could be bridged. The findings of this study reinforce the efficacy of behavioral economics informed interventions on sustainable consumer behavior. However, there are some limitations. One significant task is the long-term adaptation. Although green marketing can drive temporary fluctuations in the market, the latter's long-term behavior is uncertain. This would require brands to adopt initiatives that keep the consumer engaged with sustainable fashion beyond emotions and social trends. Future research could investigate how green marketing could foster long-term behaviour change.

Cost is also a key barrier. Many green items are perceived as costly and thereby alienate the value-oriented portion of consumers. Fashion brands need to rise to this challenge by creating new, more affordable and accessible sustainable fashion. "By driving resources efficiencies at production level and via the use of low-cost, eco-friendly materials, brands can make sustainable fashion more appealing to price-conscious consumers.

Conclusion

This study reinforces the relevance of Behavioral Economics in the sustainable consumption for fashion. Fashion companies may utilize psychological insights regarding cognitive bias, emotion, and social influence to design successful green marketing strategies and induce eco-friendly purchases. Strategies such as Ecolabeling, transparency, social proof, and emotional branding allow brands to participate in global sustainability and help in shaping a more inclusive economy in the world contributing to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG12: Responsible Consumption and Production, and SDG 13: Climate Action). But there is a few interesting open thread. Firstly, rigorous research is required on the long-term effects of green marketing and the continuance of consumer behavior. It could be worthwhile for future studies to consider the increasing role of online platforms and social-media influencers as opinion leaders influencing consumer behaviour on sustainable fashion. As digital marketing matures, we anticipate that the use of social media influencers to market sustainable fashion will be an area of growing interest. Furthermore, market segmentation research is important, especially in terms of explaining how different consumer groups in diverse cultural and economic conditions react to green marketing. Such information will be useful for the development of strategies directed towards certain target groups, and will potentially increase the impact of campaigns for sustainable consumption.

The findings from this study suggest that behavioral economics can facilitate a linkage between consumers' awareness and the translation of sustainable fashion consumption from potential to actual. In today's connected marketplace, where consumers increasingly expect sustainability across all products, these findings can help fashion brands build marketing strategies that directly drive purchase and fall in line with the broader global sustainability agenda.

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