Sustainable Fashion, Unsustainable Advertising: A Case Study of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

Moda Sustentável, Publicidade Insustentável: Estudo de Caso em Pequenas e Médias Empresas

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This article discusses how sustainable fashion brands, characterised as small and medium-sized enterprises, can align their advertising initiatives and strategies with the principles of sustainability and the market. Based on the master's thesis entitled *Alternativas Entre Luxo e Desperdício: Publicidade no Contexto da Moda Sustentável* (Alternatives Between Luxury and Trash: The Advertising in the Context of Sustainable Fashion; Silva, 2024), the text addresses the evolution of fashion, contextualising the transition from an industry focused on mass

production to a sector that increasingly incorporates social and environmental concerns. The central discussion focuses on the challenges faced by small and medium-sized brands in communicating sustainable values in a market still characterised by traditional practices and excessive consumerism. The marketing and advertising strategies adopted by four brands, two Brazilian and two Portuguese, are analysed, along with their impact on public perception and engagement with responsible consumption.

The focus is on developing advertising language and other resources aimed at presenting the differentials of sustainability, using green marketing and seeking a balance between profitability and ethics. The article presents reflections and recommendations for advertising in the context of sustainable fashion, encouraging small and medium-sized brands to refine their strategies and consumers to adopt more conscious practices, highlighting advertising as an essential tool to drive change in the market and contribute to a more sustainable future for the fashion industry.

Keywords: fashion, sustainability, advertising, social responsibility

Moda Sustentável, Publicidade Insustentável: Estudo de Caso em Pequenas e Médias Empresas

Este artigo discute como marcas, caracterizadas como pequenas e médias empresas, de moda sustentável podem alinhar suas iniciativas e estratégias publicitárias aos princípios de sustentabilidade e do mercado. Tendo como base de pesquisa a dissertação de mestrado intitulada Alternativas Entre Luxo e Desperdício: Publicidade no Contexto da Moda Sustentável (Silva, 2024), o texto aborda a evolução da moda, contextualizando a transição de uma indústria focada na produção em massa para um setor que, cada vez mais, incorpora preocupações sociais e ambientais. Discute-se centralmente os desafios enfrentados por pequenas e médias marcas em comunicar valores sustentáveis em um mercado ainda caracterizado por práticas tradicionais e por um consumismo excessivo. São analisadas as estratégias de marketing e publicidade adotadas por quatro marcas, duas brasileiras e duas portuguesas, e seu impacto na percepção pública e no engajamento com o consumo responsável.

O foco recai no desenvolvimento de uma linguagem publicitária e outros recursos voltados para apresentar os diferenciais da sustentabilidade, no uso do marketing verde e na busca pelo equilíbrio entre lucratividade e ética. O artigo apresenta reflexões e recomendações para a publicidade no contexto da moda sustentável, incentivando as pequenas e médias marcas a refinarem suas estratégias e os consumidores a adotarem práticas mais conscientes, destacando a publicidade como ferramenta essencial para impulsionar mudanças no mercado e contribuir para um futuro mais sustentável para a indústria da moda.

Palavras-chave: *moda, sustentabilidade, publicidade, responsabilidade social*

Introduction

As we move into the second decade of the 21st century, driven largely by the impact of new technologies, advertising is reaffirming its position as an essential tool for promoting behavioural change in a range of sectors, including fashion. The growing urgency for practices that align economic development with environmental and social responsibility has become a central theme (Comissão Mundial sobre Meio Ambiente e Desenvolvimento, 1987), influencing everything from consumer habits to the strategic organisation of industries in the face of the challenges posed by climate change and its impact on the planet.

Among the most impactful and frequently criticised industries is fashion. Known both for its significant social and cultural impacts and for being one of the most polluting industries in the world (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017; United Nations Environment Programme, 2019), fashion faces the challenge of transforming its production and consumption model. The large-scale production model, popularised by fast fashion, has brought accessibility and innovation but has also left serious problems such as excessive consumption of natural resources, increased waste and labour exploitation (Anner, 2020; Fashion Revolution, 2022).

In this context, sustainable fashion has emerged as a plural movement that seeks to balance production with ethical and environmental concerns (Gwilt, 2014; Müller & Mesquita, 2018). However, the consolidation of this movement and the implementation of its proposals depend, to a large extent, on how brands communicate their practices and values to the public. Advertising, in this sense, is positioned as a strategic pillar for the sector.

Based on data from the dissertation *Alternativas Entre Luxo e Desperdício: Publicidade no Contexto da ModaSustentável* (Between Luxury and Trash: The Advertising in the Context of Sustainable Fashion; Silva, 2024), this article addresses the role of advertising in sustainable fashion. Through a multiple case study involving four brands — two Brazilian and two Portuguese — their communication strategies were analysed. The focus of the analysis was on how these brands seek to adopt communication practices that truly reflect their sustainable and ethical values (such as the origin of materials, low-impact production processes, and fair labour relations) and the content of their proposals.

In a market still dominated by traditional communication practices and excessive consumerism, the way small and medium-sized sustainable fashion brands use advertising is crucial to help educate consumers and promote more conscious consumption. In this sense, this article also proposes a discussion on the central role of advertising as a means of translating ethical values into clear and engaging messages, highlighting the use of green marketing and the creation of an advertising language aligned with the principles of sustainability described above. By analysing the communication strategies of small and medium-sized brands operating in Portugal and Brazil, the study seeks to contribute to the implementation of advertising strategies and actions that really work for the sector in question.

Methodology

In the empirical research that underpins this article (Silva, 2024), the main objective was to analyse advertising communication in the sustainable fashion sector, comparing strategies of Brazilian and Portuguese brands to understand how advertising can convey authentic and effective messages in this context. To this end, a case study was used, which is compatible with what was sought. According to Gil (2019), the methodology of research must be consistent with its objectives and ensure scientific rigour in obtaining results. Corroborating the above statement, the method adopted was the multiple case study.

As proposed by Yin (2015), which allows for in-depth analysis of complex phenomena within their real context, four brands were selected: Humana and Näz, from Portugal, and Daterra Project and Flávia Aranha, from Brazil. The selection of these brands was based on their relevance as representatives of the sustainable fashion sector in their respective countries and on the availability of public information about their communication and sustainability practices, allowing the proposed documentary analysis to be carried out.

Documentary research, or desk research, was the main data collection technique used to gather information on the sustainable practices and marketing strategies of the brands analysed. The method included the analysis of secondary sources, such as institutional reports, academic publications, advertising materials and digital content from the brands (websites and social media). Data triangulation, comparing information from different sources, ensured greater reliability of the findings.

Data coding was applied to structure the analysis, a common technique in qualitative research for organising information into thematic categories (Bardin, 1977/2011). The categories created included: "value propositions", "marketing strategies", "market segmentation", "innovation and differentiation", "performance impact", "cultural and ethical aspects", and "pricing strategies". The coding allowed us to identify patterns, insights, and trends in the communication of sustainable brands in advertising.

In addition, a mixed analysis approach was used, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative analysis predominated the interpretation of the brands' narratives and communication strategies, and quantitative analysis was applied to metrics such as digital engagement and market reach when data was available from secondary sources. MAXQDA software, a tool that allows the systematic organisation of qualitative data and its analysis through established categories, was used to assist in this process.

Another relevant aspect of the methodology was the comparative analysis between Brazilian and Portuguese brands. This approach made it possible to understand differences and similarities in the cultural and market contexts in which they operate. Following Eisenhardt's (1989) recommendation, the comparison between multiple cases can contribute to exploratory theoretical development. However, it

is important to recognise that the analysis of only four cases limits the statistical inference of the results to the entire universe of sustainable fashion brands in Portugal and Brazil. The findings of this study are specific to the cases analysed and serve as a basis for future research with larger samples.

The methodological structure adopted sought to ensure the reliability and depth of the analysis, allowing for a detailed understanding of communication strategies in the sustainable fashion sector based on the selected cases. The combination of methods, data triangulation, and comparative analysis contributed to a rigorous and well-founded investigation of the proposed topic.

Brief Note on Fashion in Brazil and Portugal

Fashion, a multifaceted cultural phenomenon, transcends simple individual aesthetic choices to reflect the social, historical and technological values of each era. Derived from the Latin *modus*, "mode", fashion carries in its essence the idea of a way of presenting and expressing personal and collective identities. According to Müller and Mesquita (2018), fashion goes beyond clothing, functioning as a strategic mechanism for communication and identity construction. Thus, it constitutes a symbolic language that both shapes and is shaped by cultural, social and economic norms.

Historically, fashion has evolved from a craft and regional activity to a powerful global industry. During the European renaissance, the flourishing trade in luxury fabrics such as silk and velvet transformed clothing into a distinctive symbol of social status, especially among the emerging bourgeoisie. In the 19th century, the industrial revolution, with the invention of the sewing machine, revolutionised the sector by introducing mass production, making clothes more accessible. According to Costa (2014), the advent of ready-to-wear marked the democratisation of fashion, allowing trends to reach different social classes.

In this historical process, haute couture represents the pinnacle of exclusivity, with tailor-made pieces and highly detailed manual work. Iconic brands such as Chanel, Dior and Givenchy continue to personify this category, which is seen as an expression of luxury and art in clothing. Ready-to-wear democratised fashion by offering quality clothing with accessible designs and large-scale production, making trends more widely available. More recently, as a product and producer of the present day, fast fashion has introduced rapid cycles of production, consumption and disposal. According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017), fast fashion contributes significantly to global greenhouse gas emissions and generates vast volumes of textile waste. In short, fashion is an international economic force that shapes cultural and social patterns, moving billions of dollars annually and influencing markets and behaviours on a worldwide scale (Amed et al., 2023).

As the central focus of this article, which discusses the importance of advertising in the sustainable fashion industry, the case studies analysed are located in

Portugal and Brazil. Portugal is widely recognised for its tradition and innovation in the textile and clothing industry. The country has a robust textile sector that stands out for its quality and capacity for innovation, especially in the production of sustainable fabrics. In addition to the textile sector, Portugal also has strong leather and cork industries that are internationally recognised for the quality of their materials, with cork being a notable example of a sustainable raw material with diverse applications, including in fashion.

According to the Fashion Revolution (2023) report, the country has made progress in implementing ethical and transparent practices in the production chain. Events such as ModaLisboa, Portugal Fashion and Modtissimo celebrate national creativity and promote the sector internationally. Sustainable initiatives have gained momentum, with Portuguese brands using innovative materials and eco-efficient production methods, positioning Portugal at the forefront of sustainable fashion by integrating the circular economy and traceability (Rodrigues, 2021).

In Brazil, fashion reflects the country's cultural diversity and creative wealth. Historically influenced by European fashion, Brazilian clothing has incorporated elements from indigenous, African and local cultures, acquiring its own characteristics. Events such as São Paulo Fashion Week have consolidated Brazilian fashion on the global stage. Currently, emerging initiatives are investing in innovative solutions, such as biodegradable fabrics and production processes with low water consumption. The sector also acts as a platform for social discussions, addressing diversity and inclusion (Passos, 2021).

In addition to its important economic role, Brazilian fashion also exerts a strong influence on the construction of identities and cultural narratives. Regions such as the Northeast stand out for their appreciation of handicrafts, embroidery, crochet and the use of natural fibres, promoting an original fashion with a strong identity and sustainable appeal (Santana & Coppola, 2021). Designers such as Ronaldo Fraga and Isaac Silva have been protagonists in inserting social issues into the fashion discourse, valuing Black ancestry, traditional knowledge, and cultural resistance. Fashion in Brazil, therefore, is also a political and representational tool that communicates stories of territories, marginalised populations, and social movements. In economic terms, the sector is one of the largest employers in the manufacturing industry, with women accounting for more than 70% of jobs (Associação Brasileira da Indústria Têxtil e de Confecção, 2023), which highlights its relevance for both development and social inclusion.

The Socio-Environmental Impacts of Fashion *versus* Sustainable Fashion

It is important to reiterate that the fashion industry is recognised as one of the largest sources of environmental impact and natural resource consumption in the world. According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017), the sector is

responsible for approximately 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Textile production consumes large volumes of water, with fabric dyeing and finishing accounting for about 20% of global industrial water pollution (United Nations Environment Programme, 2019). These processes often use harmful chemicals that contaminate waterways and compromise ecosystems. The production chain of cotton, one of the most widely used materials, consumes vast amounts of water and depends on pesticides and chemical fertilisers that pollute the soil and water bodies. In addition, synthetic fabrics such as polyester, which account for about 60% of textile fibres, generate ocean pollution from microplastics during washing (Boucher & Friot, 2017), threatening marine ecosystems and the food chain.

Beyond environmental concerns, the fashion industry is notorious for poor working conditions in its production chain. The collapse of the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh highlighted a tragedy resulting from exploitation, with low wages, exhausting working hours and a lack of safety. As highlighted by the Clean Clothes Campaign (n.d.) website, "on 24 April 2013, the Rana Plaza building came crashing down, killing 1,134 people and leaving thousands more injured" (para. 4). Despite reforms, labour rights violations persist, making effective monitoring of the sector difficult due to the complexity of supply chains.

On the other hand, growing consumer awareness is driving movements for greater transparency and ethical practices. The demand for sustainability and a circular economy is pressuring brands to adopt more responsible practices (Fashion Revolution, 2022). Outside the fashion market, but with great relevance to this industry and the entire planet, sustainability is a very current and comprehensive concept that seeks to balance human needs with environmental preservation, social equity, and economic development (Comissão Mundial sobre Meio Ambiente e Desenvolvimento, 1987). The "sustainability tripod" structures this approach on three pillars: environmental, economic, and social.

The environmental pillar, which is highly impacted by the fashion industry and market, focuses on ecosystem preservation, rational use of resources, and climate change mitigation. Examples include Portugal's National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 (República Portuguesa, 2019) and Brazil's ABC Plan (Ministério da Agricultura, Pecuária e Abastecimento, 2021), which promote sustainable practices to reduce carbon emissions and encourage energy transition.

The economic pillar aims at an inclusive growth model, job creation and sustainable financial v iability. In Brazil, the Plano ABC encourages low-carbon agriculture, which is relevant to sustainable fashion through the production of natural fibres with a lower i mpact. In Portugal, companies such as Tintex Textiles represent industrial innovation by developing sustainable fabrics with low environmental impact, demonstrating the application of sustainability in the textile sector. These examples, although different (public policy and business initiative), illustrate efforts within the economic pillar of sustainability in each country, seeking to reconcile development with environmental responsibility.

The social pillar addresses inclusion, justice and respect for human rights. Projects such as Eco-Escolas in Portugal and the National Environmental Education Policy in Brazil (Ministério da Educação, 2024) strengthen education for sustainability and citizen engagement.

From the perspective of sustainability and its pillars, fashion seeks to do its part and transform its traditionally impactful model into a more ethical and responsible sector. Müller and Mesquita (2018) highlight the use of recyclable materials, reduction of resource consumption and the valorisation of fair labour. Within the concept of sustainability, the circular economy (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017) is central to promoting reuse and extending the useful life of products. In this perspective, Portugal stands out with initiatives such as the Sustainable Fashion Manifesto of the National Association of Clothing and Apparel Industries and the actions of companies such as Tintex Textiles. In Brazil, several brands are investing in recycled materials, traceability and low-impact processes (Fashion Revolution, 2023). Movements such as Slow Fashion (Gwilt, 2014) promote conscious consumption. These commitments to sustainability are in line with the sustainable development goals, especially Goal 12 (United Nations, 2015). A responsible attitude is being demanded by the new consumer (Amed et al., 2023).

Considering the complexity of the sector with all its variables, the transition to sustainable models requires coordinated efforts between governments, companies and consumers. Education for conscious consumption, appropriate marketing and advertising, incentive policies and transparency requirements are crucial. The future of fashion depends on innovation, ethics and environmental commitment (Fletcher, 2014).

About Marketing and Advertising in Fashion

Technological advances have significantly improved communication, marketing and advertising tools, transforming the way we share information and interact. According to Kotler et al. (2016/2017), digital communication has not only facilitated information sharing but also transformed social and consumer dynamics, strengthening communities and changing consumers' relationships with brands. Marketing has evolved to incorporate customer-centric approaches, social and environmental concerns, and digital tools that enhance interaction between brands and consumers. Today, concepts such as relationship marketing, digital marketing, influence marketing, and green marketing stand out for their emphasis on customisation, meaningful experiences, and social and environmental responsibility.

In the fashion industry, which is characterised by its dynamism and innovation, marketing is essential for shaping consumer behaviour and sustaining brand image. In this way, marketing promotes not only products but also cultural and social values. Müller and Mesquita (2018) point out that fashion marketing,

in its traditional model, often encourages a culture of continuous consumption, sometimes disregarding environmental impacts.

With the advent of digital technology, social networks and e-commerce platforms have transformed marketing and advertising communication in the sector, enabling direct interaction with consumers and agile adjustments to strategies. For Kotler et al. (2016/2017), spontaneous conversations between consumers have more credibility than traditional advertising campaigns. They emphasise that fashion marketing is crucial for brand building through the communication of stories, values, and aesthetics, as well as differentiating brands and connecting them emotionally to consumers.

The challenge for brands, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, is to capture the attention of increasingly critical and conscious consumers and convert them into brand advocates. To do this, advertising needs to become increasingly professional. With regard to sustainable fashion brands, Silva's (2024) study points out that, in general, some of them face significant challenges in the professional use of advertising and its tools to become competitive and, at the same time, effectively communicate their ethical values and social and environmental responsibility. Instead of taking advantage of the distinctive characteristics of sustainable fashion, some insist on traditionally using advertising resources with a strong focus on price, promotion and placement, failing to apply more efficient techniques and appeals that are more appropriate to the potential strategic audience. Silva (2024) suggests that effective advertising in sustainable fashion should align authentic narratives with sustainable practices, promoting the timelessness and durability of products. In this context, advertising should go beyond promotion and sales, contributing to educating and engaging consumers in a more conscious and responsible purchasing and consumption process, differentiating the brand and creating empathy with its audience. It is essential to convey the brand's concrete values. Müller and Mesquita (2018) emphasise that advertising campaigns need to highlight the positive impact of sustainable choices, emphasising reuse, recycling and the circular economy.

The use of storytelling has been widely advocated as an effective way to communicate values. However, Silva's (2024) study points out that, in the communication of the sustainable fashion sector analysed, some brands insist on telling stories similar to those of the general fashion market, missing the opportunity to highlight their major ethical and environmental differentials. It is important to understand that by sharing real and unique stories about the origins of materials, the production process, the social impact of production practices, and human relations in the workplace, companies humanise their brands and strengthen their credibility (EcoDebate, 2020).

These strategies also strengthen credibility and create a culture of transparency, an essential element in building trust with well-informed consumers (Kotler et al., 2016/2017). In the context of sustainable fashion, this requires the disclosure of verifiable data on production chain practices, the traceability of raw materials, the reduction of carbon emissions, and the use of renewable resources, among

others. This level of transparency not only attracts conscious consumers but also promotes cultural change (Black, 2012).

Applying this transparency to advertising strategies, guided by technically elaborate buyer personas based on research, enables and lends persuasive power to fair pricing policies for responsible products. Differentiated audiences that value sustainability are often willing to pay more for products that deliver greater value. Another relevant aspect is that in a scenario dominated by digital communication, social media marketing plays a central role in promoting sustainable fashion, allowing for audience segmentation and engagement. According to Monteiro (2023), digital campaigns with ethical influencers aligned with brand values can amplify sustainability messages. Digital advertising for sustainable fashion should educate and engage consumers, demonstrating that conscious choices benefit the planet while ensuring quality and style. Adopting an advertising strategy aligned with sustainability values not only strengthens brand identity but also paves the way for a more ethical, responsible and truly growing industry.

Sustainable Fashion Brands, Marketing and Advertising

This discussion on the marketing and advertising strategies adopted by four sustainable fashion brands, two Brazilian and two Portuguese, based on data obtained in Silva's (2024) research, reveals similarities and differences in how these brands use online and offline advertising, events, press relations, public relations, and strategic partnerships to strengthen their identity and expand their market presence. Table 1, Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4 provide relevant data that enable an analysis of how brands implement their strategies.

	Key element	Humana	Näz	Daterra Project	Flávia Aranha
Advertising strategies	**Communication:** how the brand communicates, advertising campaigns, online presence, and use of influencers.	Uses its network of stores and online platforms to educate consumers and publicise its contribution to social and environmental projects.	Communicates its mission and processes through clear storytelling on its website and social media.	Uses social media to convey its values, transparency in the supply chain and commitment to sustainability.	Uses QR codes on labels to educate consumers. Promotes workshops on natural dyeing.
	Market segmentation: the brand's target audience.	Conscious consumers who are concerned about social impact and want to pay little for the product.	Consumers who are engaged and concerned about the environmental impact of their purchases.	Consumers who value ethics and sustainability in their fashion choices; vegan consumers.	Conscious consumers who are engaged in sustainability, culture, and social solidarity.
	Advertising: promotional, institutional, social responsibility, public relations, and press relations.	Promotional on the website, social media, points of sale, newsletter, and email marketing; events; publications in newspapers and magazines.	Promotional on the website, social media and points of sale; presence at events, publications in newspapers and specialised magazines.	Social media; does not have a website; presence at events; publications in newspapers and specialised magazines.	Website and social media; promotional material at points of sale; presence at events; publications in newspapers and magazines.

Table 1: *Coding of data into criteria and key elements — advertising strategies*
Note. Adapted from Silva (2024), p. 48.

	Key element	Humana	Näz	Daterra Project	Flávia Aranha
Innovation and differentiation	**Innovative products and services:** the way the brand is innovating in products or services to be more sustainable. **Technology:** use of innovative technologies to reduce environmental impact.	Innovates through a model of clothing reuse and recycling, in addition to its unique approach of using profits to support social development projects in Portugal and Africa.	It offers a line of clothing made from recycled cotton, demonstrating a commitment to innovation and sustainability.	Innovates with the use of organic and recycled materials and production practices that limit environmental impact, focusing on durable and timeless products.	Innovates through the use of traditional techniques adapted to modernity, such as dyeing with natural materials. New techniques for washing and dyeing used garments.

Table 2: *Coding of data in to criteria and key elements — innovation and differentiation*
Note. Adapted from Silva (2024), p. 49.

	Key element	Humana	Näz	Daterra Project	Flávia Aranha
Pricing strategies	**Pricing model:** how the brand positions its products on the price spectrum.	Affordable prices due to its business model based on recycled clothing, making sustainable fashion more accessible. Relying on traditional promotions and offering discounts through a loyalty programme.	Offers affordable prices considering the quality and sustainability of the products, attracting a wider audience interested in sustainable fashion.	Products tend to be priced higher due to the quality of the materials and the ethical production process, reflecting the added value of sustainability and exclusivity.	Products positioned in a higher price segment reflect the craftsmanship and sustainability of the materials.

Table 3: *Coding of data in to criteria and key elements — princing strategies*
Note. Adapted from Silva (2024), p. 50.

	Key element	Humana	Näz	Daterra Project	Flávia Aranha
Brand positioning	**Brand identity:** how the brand defines its identity as sustainable fashion.	Business model that incorporates recycling and reuse practices for clothing and fashion accessories.	Minimalist and durable design. Values local production and suppliers.	Use of organic and recycled raw materials and ethical production processes.	Tradition and craftsmanship, transparency in the production chain.
	Value proposition: what the brand offers that sets it apart from others.	Social development projects through profits from the sale of second-hand clothing.	Quality and sustainability are central to its identity.	Limited production. Local labour. Community relations and limited production to avoid waste.	Use of natural materials and the revival of ancestral dyeing techniques.

Table 4: *Coding of data into criteria and key elements — brand positioning*
Note. Adapted from Silva (2024), p. 47.

Marketing and Advertising Strategy: Perspectives

Multiple perspectives are presented on each brand under analysis, examining their advertising and, consequently, their marketing, with emphasis on the variables identified.

Humana

When analysing Humana's marketing and advertising strategy, the brand seems to adopt a hybrid communication approach, combining offline and online strategies. In offline advertising, the brand uses advertisements in specialised magazines and leafleting at events to increase its v isibility. Participation in sustainable fashion fairs strengthens its image among consumers concerned about the socio-environmental impact of the textile industry.

In online advertising, Humana has an active presence on social media (Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn). However, email marketing and content marketing campaigns are underutilised to highlight the differences between the store network, and the absence of an educational blog reduces public engagement with information about circular fashion, leaving campaigns focused on promotion and price.

In terms of events and education, the brand organises and participates in workshops, lectures and conferences on sustainable fashion, reinforcing its position

in the sector and creating connections with the public. In terms of press relations, the brand invests in press releases and media coverage to increase its credibility. In public relations initiatives, the institution's involvement with sustainable fashion organisations and environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) strengthens its support network and demonstrates a genuine commitment to its causes.

Humana also enters into partnerships, fostering collaboration with digital influencers, local designers and NGOs, expanding its reach and strengthening its message about the circular economy. However, the brand needs to reinforce its transparency in communication, responding to criticism about the actual destination of the funds raised, as it faces much criticism from the digital audience.

Näz

Näz's marketing strategy combines physical stores and digital platforms, with an emphasis on its own e-commerce and partnerships with marketplaces focused on sustainable fashion. The brand participates in international fairs and events to reinforce its visibility and strengthen its identity in the sector.

In the advertising field, the company adopts a hybrid a pproach. Offline advertising includes advertisements in specialised magazines and leafleting at sustainability events, as well as participation in ethical fashion fairs, creating direct contact with consumers. Its online advertising is well structured, with an active presence on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn, as well as email marketing campaigns and content marketing through a blog on its official website. The brand also uses Google Ads for audience segmentation.

In addition, Näz invests heavily in events, workshops and lectures, consolidating itself as a benchmark in the sustainable sector and creating connections with its audience. Its press office plays an important role in ensuring its presence in the main fashion and sustainability media outlets. In the field of public relations, the brand engages with conferences and industry organisations, strengthening its image as a company committed to ethical fashion.

Partnerships with national suppliers, environmental NGOs, and digital influencers expand its reach and strengthen its message of sustainability. Social responsibility is also an essential pillar of the brand, with initiatives such as recycling campaigns, community projects, and participation in networks that promote better working conditions in the fashion industry.

Näz's pricing policy is not discussed transparently in its communications. This may reinforce the perception that the brand only caters to a cultural elite willing to pay to differentiate themselves without necessarily democratising access to sustainable fashion. Overall, Näz positions itself as an innovative brand and a benchmark in the sustainable fashion sector, combining innovation and social and environmental responsibility.

Daterra Project

Daterra Project seeks to consolidate its presence in the sustainable fashion market through concept stores and strategic partnerships, as well as an emerging digital presence. The brand has environmental certifications, collaborates with NGOs, and participates in sustainable fashion events and educational initiatives to promote awareness of sustainability.

In the advertising field, its offline activities are based on leafleting at events and participation in trade fairs, reaching a niche audience but with limitations in terms of impact measurement and geographical reach. Its online advertising, despite its presence on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, lacks structure, and it has no robust email marketing campaigns, content marketing, or an organised website, which hinders its potential for segmentation and digital engagement.

The brand also invests in events, workshops, and lectures, creating connections with the public and strengthening its sustainable identity, although limited resources impact the frequency and scope of these actions. Its press office is still modest, depending on the media's interest in increasing its visibility. However, its public relations, through participation in conferences and engagement with industry organisations, help to consolidate its image as an ethical and environmentally responsible brand.

Partnerships with NGOs, local designers, and influencers are key to expanding Daterra's reach and strengthening its message. In addition, the brand stands out for its strong social responsibility initiatives, including recycling campaigns, community projects, and training for women in disadvantaged communities.

Despite its genuine commitment to sustainability, Daterra Project's marketing strategy still faces challenges. The absence of a structured digital approach, the lack of a functional website and well-developed online campaigns limit its expansion. To consolidate its market presence, the brand needs to invest more in digital, integrating measurable advertising practices and expanding its communication with new audiences.

Flávia Aranha

Flávia Aranha's strategy combines traditional and digital methods to expand its reach and consolidate its identity in the sector. In the advertising field, the brand uses advertisements in specialised magazines and participates in fairs and events, reinforcing its presence in the sustainable market.

Its online advertising is sophisticated, with a strong presence on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn, as well as email marketing and content marketing campaigns, ensuring precise segmentation and detailed performance analysis. The brand also invests in QR codes on labels to provide information about its production, reinforcing transparency.

Flávia Aranha stands out at events, workshops and lectures on sustainable

fashion, strengthening its connection with the public and consolidating its image in the sector. Its press office is robust, ensuring presence in the main media outlets, which enhances its credibility and reputation.

In addition, its public relations strategy involves participating in conferences and engaging with industry organisations, reinforcing its commitment to ethical and sustainable practices. Partnerships with NGOs, local designers and digital influencers are key to expanding its reach and consolidating its message of sustainability. The brand also invests heavily in social responsibility, promoting recycling campaigns, community projects and humanitarian initiatives, such as its response to the climate disaster in southern Brazil.

Its identity is perceived as geared towards consumers with higher purchasing power, which may limit its expansion. However, the continuous integration of sustainable practices and its well-structured approach have consolidated Flávia Aranha as a benchmark in the sustainable fashion market in Brazil (Silva, 2024).

Summary of the Analysis of Brand Communication Strategies

- Offline advertising: brands use traditional channels, such as advertisements in specialised magazines and flyers at events. Humana, Näz and Flávia Aranha rely on these media to strengthen their presence in the sector, while Daterra Project has little activity in this segment (Silva, 2024).

- Online advertising: the digital environment is essential but with variations in approach. Humana and Näz have a strong presence on social media, while Flávia Aranha refines its visual communication and identity. Daterra Project has a limited online presence.

- Events and press relations: Näz, Flávia Aranha and Humana invest in events and workshops to engage consumers. Daterra Project also participates but with limited visibility. In press relations, Humana and Flávia Aranha stand out in the media, while Näz and Daterra Project face difficulties.

- Public relations and partnerships: all four brands seek to strengthen their institutional presence through partnerships. Flávia Aranha and Näz demonstrate greater synergy in authentic partnerships. Humana, as an NGO, has strong social ties, but its communication is sometimes similar to that of fast fashion. Daterra Project faces challenges in expanding its network.

- Advertising strategies: the research reveals that the brands use a combination of offline and online advertising, events, press relations, public relations and partnerships. Effectiveness varies according to identity and segmentation. Humana focuses on price promotions, while Näz and Flávia Aranha have a more authentic approach that is aligned with sustainable values. Daterra Project faces challenges in communication.

- Critical analysis of cases: the cases studied by Silva (2024) show that the four brands share a commitment to sustainable fashion, but the effectiveness of communication varies significantly. Näz and Flávia Aranha stand out in consistency and engagement, while Humana and Daterra Project face challenges in digital adaptation and differentiation.

Among the key advertising strategies for sustainable fashion that are theoretically supported in this study, the following stand out:

- Content marketing: creating educational materials (blogs, videos, guides) about production processes, materials used and the positive impact of the garments. This addresses the need to educate consumers, which is observed in the difficulty of transparent communication by some brands.

- Storytelling and sensory branding: sharing real stories about the origin of the garments, artisans and the positive social/environmental impact of the brand. This strategy counters the observation that some brands do not effectively exploit their unique narratives.

- Experience marketing: promoting direct interactions (concept stores, pop-up stores, events, workshops) that allow consumers to experience the brand's proposal. This strengthens the connection and demonstrates the authenticity of practices, addressing the need for greater practical engagement.

- Relationship platforms: using tools such as targeted email marketing and online communities to encourage participation and strengthen the connection with the brand. This addresses the lack of structured digital relationship strategies observed in some brands.

- Gamification and digital engagement: implementing reward programmes for sustainable customer actions. This approach can increase loyalty and encourage responsible consumption behaviours.

- Verified certifications and seals: clearly disclosing environmental and social certifications. This directly responds to the need for transparency and helps reduce consumer mistrust of greenwashing.

- Strategic use of influencers and brand ambassadors: collaborating with influencers and ambassadors who are genuinely aligned with sustainability and credible on the topic. Case studies have shown the importance of consistent partnerships.

As the theoretical framework of this article points out, for a brand to stand out in the sustainable fashion market, its advertising strategy must be differentiated and focused on building value and trust. Transparency, combined with clear, educational and authentic communication about production practices and the supply chain, is essential to consolidate the brand image. Partnerships with NGOs and industry institutions reinforce authenticity and position brands as leaders.

In an increasingly digital market, investing in a consistent online presence with a well-structured website and optimised e-commerce platforms is crucial. In short, effective advertising for sustainable fashion must be ethical, technically well designed and focused on building lasting relationships with consumers. The more informed and engaged customers are, the greater their willingness to pay a premium for quality, differentiated, exclusive products that are aligned with social and environmental values. In this way, brands not only boost sales but also educate and transform perceptions of sustainable consumption, helping ethical fashion to consolidate itself as a new market model.

Owning to the inherent limitations of the research, which investigated only four brands in two specific countries, and the absence of other empirical research tools and additional data, broad generalisations should not be made based on its results. However, the study is relevant in that it highlights the fundamental need for small and medium-sized sustainable fashion companies to adapt and improve their advertising communication. Due to this initial relevance, the research underscores the importance of further studies to build a more robust understanding and enable conclusions applicable to a broader market context.

Conclusion

The research conducted by Silva (2024) analysed the advertising communication strategies of four sustainable fashion brands, two in Brazil and two in Portugal, seeking to understand how they approach the communication of their values in a complex market. The results indicate that, by adopting innovative communication strategies aligned with their values and sustainable production processes, the Flávia Aranha and Näz brands demonstrate communication more consistent with the concept of sustainable fashion than Humana and the Daterra Project. The latter, although engaged in social or environmental projects, often resort to more traditional marketing and advertising practices, which may limit the public's perception of their sustainable differentials and, consequently, their reach in the sustainable fashion niche.

The analysis of communication actions revealed the use of offline advertising, such as leafleting and participation in industry fairs, and online advertising, mainly through social media and ads on platforms such as Google Ads. Partnerships with NGOs and local designers are also strategies employed. Flávia Aranha, Humana, and Näz demonstrate a more consistent digital presence, better exploiting online platforms for communication. However, the Daterra Project faces challenges in structuring and executing its online communication. Despite the differences, all the brands analysed have the potential to strengthen their bond with consumers and deepen the communication of their commitment to sustainability, promoting environmental and social engagement.

Based on the analysis of specific cases, the study illustrates challenges and opportunities for implementing advertising with particular criteria and focuses

on the sustainable fashion sector more broadly. The findings suggest a need for greater transparency and authenticity in brand communication. For sustainable fashion to achieve its purpose of transforming the industry, small and medium-sized brands need to adopt a genuinely committed stance towards minimising environmental and social impacts and invest in effective a d vertising. This advertising should go beyond simple information, seeking to create a relationship of trust and loyalty with consumers based on the authenticity of the brand's practices and a clear understanding on the part of consumers of what defines sustainability in fashion.

In this sense, various advertising tools and approaches, based on the communication needs identified in the analysis of the brands studied, can be adopted to strengthen the relationship with the public and justify the perceived value of sustainable products, which often have higher prices than fast fashion. In this context, content marketing, storytelling and sensory branding, experience marketing, relationship platforms, gamification and digital engagement, certifications and verified seals, and strategic use of influencers and ambassadors stood out.

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