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ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MARKETING STRATEGIES TARGETING SPANISH CONSUMERS OF FASHION. SUSTAINABILITY AS A FORM OF HAPPINESS MANAGEMENT

Gloria Jiménez-Marín

Araceli Galiano-Coronil

Luis Bayardo Tobar-Pesántez

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to understand the perception and purchase intentions of Spanish consumers towards sustainable fashion and to see if this can guide the marketing strategy for sustainable fashion.

Design/methodology/approach – A mixed methodology has been designed to test the categories: knowledge, environmental concern, product-related features and social influence.

Findings – The results of this study suggest that some implications and advice on sustainability marketing strategy could help companies to develop sustainable fashion for Spanish consumers.

Originality/value – The originality of this study lies in the focus on sustainability to achieve happiness and satisfaction of people as a form of governance from a social point of view.

Keywords Marketing, Communications, Happiness, Sustainability, Advertising, Social, Companies

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

More and more fashion companies are incorporating sustainability into their business model and opting for slow fashion as a formula compatible with the interests of consumers. However, there is an open debate about the profitability for the industry of this production process, and many experts are skeptical and consider that fashion brands are still dependent on hyper-consumption and low prices to achieve their commercial goals (Jiménez-Marín, 2016; Hansen and Schaltegger, 2013; Fletcher and Grose, 2012).

The development of sustainable products and business practices are a way for fashion companies to react to criticism of their unsustainable behavior (Grant, 2011), with negative consequences for environmental quality and human well-being, by producing carbon emissions, poor working conditions, excessive waste and chemical use (Han *et al.*, 2010). Pui-Yan and Choi's (2012) study confirms that a large proportion of organizations believe that green efforts benefit brand reputation and attract new customers.

The role of consumers and their buying attitudes are aspects that do not go unnoticed in communication and marketing strategies as it seems to be proven that social media users express greater concern about who produces and how fashion is produced (Ha-Brookshire and Norum, 2011). More and more people prefer to buy fair trade clothes, with higher quality and exclusivity in the garments, at better prices and which are produced with materials that are less harmful to the environment (Puig, 2017). In parallel, there is growing expert interest in analyzing ethical, environmental and sustainability issues related to affordable, trend-sensitive and fast fashion (Chen *et al.*, 2019; Joy *et al.*, 2012). The scrutiny to which the fashion industry is subjected given the increasingly polluting conditions in the supply chain is undeniable. Despite constant publicity about environmental impacts, the sector continues to grow thanks to the rise of fast fashion. Based on the manufacture, frequent consumption and ephemeral use of garments, it is known as McFashion, owing to the speed with which consumer desires are successfully satisfied (Gupta and Gentry, 2018).

The consumer society must be able to observe and understand that there is an alternative to “fast fashion,” which is “slow fashion,” which implies the need to empower all the agents involved in the process of manufacturing and acquiring fashion. In this sense, this paper draws on commercial and social marketing ideas for social and commercial ends to achieve behavior change towards a more sustainable clothing buying.

According to the literature reviewed, knowledge, environmental concern, social influence and product-related characteristics are identified as main questions for this study.

Happiness and the achievement of well-being was an identifiable objective that historically moved individuals and social groups and that, today, continues to be the leitmotiv of policies, economics and thought (Ravina-Ripoll *et al.*, 2019). A transversal concept but one that needs to be defined and sequenced to better understand many of the keys that characterize the era of the pursuit of happiness through fashion and, above all, through sustainable consumer behavior.

For this idea to emerge from the core of fashion, it requires, among other things, a governance model or a social and corporate culture (Li *et al.*, 2014) where the happiness of human capital is directly linked to aspects such as production, efficiency and sustainability.

It is known that collective happiness is determined by multiple factors such as the development of an innovative and green economy (Villena Manzanares and Galiano-Coronil, 2017), as well as the construction of a welfare state under the synergies of sustainability or social dialogue (Ravina-Ripoll *et.al*, 2018). Although the term is attracting increasing interest, the truth is that there is still little scientific research aimed at empirically studying the term “Happiness Management” in the era of Industry 4.0

(Nogueira *et al.*, 2017). By promoting the construction of a sea of more innovative, sustainable, ecological and creative ecosystems and productive fabrics in the digital society, according to this discipline, a fairer, kinder and, overall, happier context will also be achieved, consequently developing the term “happisophy” (Ravina-Ripoll *et al.*, 2017). Thus, the study of the bases that can generate happiness, subjectively or empirically, involves understanding the strategic development and marketing processes of this industry where sustainability is becoming a guiding principle in the “happisophy.”

Because in the era of big data, human capital, among other things, requires an environment that enhances well-being or satisfaction, understood as a synonym for happiness (Mackerron, 2012). Today, no one disputes that much of the economic success of some start-ups comes mainly from having a staff of creative, innovative and happy employees (Binder and Broekel, 2012; Weymes, 2005).

This study aims to find out how the purchase intentions towards sustainable fashion garments of Spanish consumers can come to shape the organizational communication strategy from a social marketing point of view with sustainability as a basis, encouraging consumers to behave more sustainably, acquire slow fashion habits and be happier with this decision. So, the fundamental objectives are as follows:

- to find out consumers’ concerns about sustainability issues in the fashion industry;
- to identify consumers’ perceptions towards sustainable fashion garments; and to build a social marketing formula focused on sustainability for companies to develop respectable fashion in Spain

Research methodology

The hypotheses of influencing consumer purchase intentions are drawn from four aspects, including knowledge (Shen *et al.*, 2013), environmental concern (Jin, 2011), physical characteristics of sustainable apparel (Jacobs *et al.*, 2018) and social influence (McNeill and Moore, 2015).

To understand consumers’ knowledge regarding sustainable apparel, three items are derived from the work by Shen *et al.* (2012) and eight items are modified from the study by Shen *et al.* (2013). The latter eight items are adopted to further explore consumers’ knowledge of sustainable fashion in different categories, such as recycle, fair trade and locally made. The items are measured by five-point Likert scales where 1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree.” The working hypothesis is as follows:

H1. Consumers’ knowledge of sustainability in the fashion industry has a positive influence on their purchase intentions towards sustainable fashion apparel.

The second hypothesis will be used for examining how environmental concern towards

the fashion industry affects consumer purchase intentions. The six items are from the research by Jin (2011) and measured based on the scale of 1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree”:

H2. Consumers’ environmental concern towards the fashion industry has a positive influence on their purchase intentions towards sustainable fashion apparel.

The third hypothesis is to investigate how consumers perceive sustainable apparel and how the importance of product-related attributes are rated when purchasing sustainable apparel. Refer to the works by Chan and Wong (2012) and Jacobs *et al.* (2018), four items regarding the importance of physical characteristics is rated from very unimportant “1” to very important “5.” Three items modified from above research are used to measure consumer happiness towards sustainable apparel based on the scale of very bad/unsatisfied “1” to very good/satisfied “5.” Two items are adopted to understand how consumers perceive price premium level of sustainable apparel:

H3. The importance of product-related characteristics of sustainable fashion apparel affect consumers’ purchase intentions towards sustainable fashion apparel.

H4. Consumer’s happiness on product-related characteristics of sustainable fashion apparel affect consumers’ purchase intentions towards sustainable fashion apparel positively.

A mixed-method, two-phase design was adopted, where quantitative results are followed by qualitative results, which can help explain quantitative data or even extend applicability in the field of social science research (Punch, 2014). On the one hand, a survey can provide a numerical description of social phenomena or trends in a population (Denscombe, 2017) and is therefore selected for the first phase of quantitative data collection. Subsequently, in the second phase, qualitative data is collected through interviews with a selection of participants who join the survey in the first stage.

Consumer purchase intentions are measured by five items, which are derived from the studies by Mainolfi (2019). Two out of the items are linked to consumers’ willingness to pay premium for sustainable apparel.

Apart from collecting consumer perceptions as independent variables and consumer purchase intentions as dependent variables, the demographic data of age, gender, education level and monthly income (Wang and Heitmeyer, 2006) are collected as control variables (Punch, 2014) to study the influences of demographic factors.

1.1 Quantitative data analysis: surveys

A voluntary (i.e. snowball and self-selection) sampling (Saunders *et al.*, 2019) is adopted to collect valid opinions from 100 generic Spaniards. The survey is conducted using an online self-completion questionnaire via Google Form. The questionnaire was constructed using the service provided by the online survey company “SurveyCake.” To efficiently measure consumers’ perceptions and purchase intentions, closed questions with five-point Likert scales are adopted (Teater *et al.*, 2017). Prior to data collection, a pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted to ensure that all wordings can be easily and clearly understood.

Spanish consumer purchase intentions are measured by five items, which are derived from the studies of Rodríguez Becerra and Ve´lez (2018). In addition to collecting consumer perceptions as independent variables and consumer purchase intentions as dependent variables, demographic data on age, gender, educational level and monthly income (Caro and Martinez de Albéniz, 2012) are collected as control variables (Punch, 2014) to study the influences of demographic factors. SPSS software v.27 was used with descriptive statistics to identify consumer profiles. Subsequently, a factor analysis is performed to confirm that all factors used in the following analysis are valid and uncorrelated with each other. The validity and reliability of the quantitative data is assessed. Finally, the data are analyzed using linear regression models in SPSS (Teater *et al.*, 2017).

Subsequently, factor analysis will be conducted to confirm all factors used in the following analysis are valid and are not correlated to each other. Validity and reliability of the quantitative data will be evaluated. Finally, the data will be analyzed through linear recession models in SPSS (Teater *et al.*, 2017) to test the hypotheses in this study.

The online self-completion questionnaire was viewed by 1,044 times. A total of 449 questionnaires were completed, and 438 out of 449 questionnaires were deemed effective. Most of the respondents were female (90%). The respondents aged 18–44 accounted for 98.4% of total respondents: 17.4%, 55.7% and 25.3% of them were aged 18–24, 25–34 and 35–44, respectively. The education level was mainly undergraduate (56.4%) and postgraduate and above (42.9%). In total 61.6% of the respondents had monthly income less than NTD 50,000 and 30.1% of participants had monthly income ranging NTD 50,000 to NTD 99,999. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

1.2 Quantitative data analysis: interviews

The semi-structured interview was adopted because the researcher can focus on the specific topics and allow flexibility to explore more of the participants’ ideas. The interview structure contains consumers’ perceptions of sustainability and sustainable

clothing, their experiences of buying sustainable clothing and the reasons and motivations for buying sustainable clothing.

A small sample of participants is chosen to join the survey in the first phase. The individual's interview is recorded using handwritten notes, and audio and relevant sections are then transcribed into a transcript or set of notes (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Qualitative interview data can provide more information outside of the limitations formed by the closed-ended questionnaire. Six participants were interviewed (Table 2).

2. Findings

Interesting research areas were detected in the items: knowledge (problem recognition and information search), environmental concern (problem recognition and information search), product-related characteristics (evaluation of alternatives) and social influence (evaluation of alternatives).

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Traits</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>(%)</i>
Gender	Male	44	10.0
	Female	394	90.0
Age	18–24	76	17.4
	25–34	244	55.7
	35–44	111	25.3
	45–54	4	0.9
	55+	3	0.7
Education level	High school and below	3	0.7
	Undergraduate	247	56.4
	Postgraduate and above	188	42.9
Income per month	NTD 0–49,999	270	61.6
	NTD 50,000–99,999	132	30.1
	NTD 100,000 +	36	8.2

<i>ID</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Education level</i>	<i>Income (NTD/M)</i>	<i>Frequency per month</i>	<i>Spent per time (NTD)</i>	<i>Shop in physical stores or online</i>
P1	Female	60	High school	0–49,999	0.5–1		Physical stores
P2	Female	35	Postgraduate	<10,000	4		Physical stores
P3	Male	37	Postgraduate	100,000 +	1		Both
P4	Female	34	Postgraduate	1–2,000	<1		Physical stores

			1–2,000		
P5	Female	29	Postgraduate	0–49,999 3,000	4
P6	Female	23	Undergraduate	0–49,999 500–1,000	1
					Physical stores
					Online stores

Related to the first item, problem knowledge, previous studies note knowledge is a determinant of sustainable purchase behavior (Peattie, 2010). *HI* was supported in this study, indicating that Spanish consumers' knowledge of sustainability in the fashion industry has a positive influence on their purchase intentions towards sustainable fashion apparel. Consumers who are more knowledgeable about sustainability in the fashion industry have stronger purchase intentions. Shen *et al.* (2012) observe knowledge has positive influence of consumers' support for socially responsible business and therefore positively impacts sustainable purchase behavior. In consumer-decision making process (CDMP), consumers' knowledge is reflected at the first stage as problem recognition and information search. Consumers are likely to change their behaviors when receiving information which elicits them to think differently about their consumptions (Hobson, 2003).

However, Spanish consumers encounter a lack of knowledge of sustainability in the fashion industry or simply have concepts that are not very approximate or correct. Questions K1–K3 were to explore Spanish consumers' knowledge of sustainable fashion. The descriptive data of K1–K3 is located at neither agree nor disagree level (mean \pm SD as 3.43 \pm 0.95, 3.15 \pm 0.94 and 2.46 \pm 0.90), reflecting rough understanding of sustainability in the fashion industry. Among the three measurement items, K3 regarding the knowledge of retailers who sell sustainable items shows the lowest mean value, indicating no or little relevant information of sustainable retailers in Spain. Lack of knowledge and non-availability of information possibly lead to the barrier for adopting sustainable purchase behavior (Muthu, 2019; Sethi, 2014). When the interviewees were asked whether they bought sustainable apparel before, none of them bought sustainable apparel (P3, P5).

Interviewees showed knowledge regarding environmental protection in sustainable fashion but did not mention other aspects, such as vintage, artisan, custom made, locally made (Shen *et al.*, 2013) and none of them mentioned the perspective related to people, such as safe working environment or fair labor treatment. The limited understanding of sustainable fashion and the non-availability of the information are obstacles to engaging sustainable purchase behavior among Spanish consumers. Conversely, after knowing fair labor treatment is one perspective of sustainable fashion, one interviewee demonstrated greater purchase intention towards sustainable apparel, which is in accord

with previous studies (Shaw *et al.*, 2006) (P4).

Results imply fostering knowledge and understanding of sustainable fashion has potential of encourage sustainable purchase behavior, which is in line with the supported *H1* that knowledge of sustainable fashion has a positive influence on consumers' purchase intention. Greater knowledge helps consumers to expand the choice they have. Furthermore, actions and efforts are required to popularize the information of sustainable fashion as well as the appropriate retail environment as the limited understanding of sustainability and low availability of information and retailers were found.

With respect to recognition of environmental concerns and search for information on the matter environmental concern is one of the most important factors for research of sustainable consumer behavior (Kostadinova, 2016).

H2 was supported in this study, representing environmental concern of the issues in the fashion industry positively affects Spanish consumers' purchase intentions towards sustainable apparel. The results are in line with previous studies. Jin (2011) demonstrates that environmental concern is significantly related to purchase of sustainable apparel. Paul *et al.* (2016) find that environmental concern is positive to purchase intention of green products. During CDMP, consumers' environmental concern is reflected at the first stage as problem recognition. Consumers concerning environmental issues in the fashion industry may search sustainable apparel and then have more chances of purchasing it, which is consistent to those of Diamantopoulos *et al.* (2003) who find green consumers purchase more green products.

Environmental concern shows the highest standardized beta coefficient (0.34) among the four factors, which means environmental concern is the most influential factor on purchase intention among all factors studied. The questions EC2–EC5 were to understand Spanish consumers' environmental concern by the scale of 1 as “strongly disagree” and 5 as “strongly agree.” The descriptive data shows mean value of the questions was above 4.00, ranging from 4.00 to 4.34, representing the high degree of environmental concern within Spanish consumers. The results are consistent to previous studies that a growing number of Spanish have concern of environmental issues and demonstrate corresponding purchase intention towards sustainable items (Lu *et al.*, 2015).

Arguments and debates of the relationship between environmental concern and behavior are fierce (Kim and Choi, 2005). Bamberg (2003) claims environmental concern is an indirect determinant of environmental behavior. He expresses consumers highly concerning environment are likely to perform green behavior is because of their strong evaluation of the beliefs specific to green behavior. Mainolfi (2019) concludes

environmental concern positively affects consumers' self-identity as green consumer, products beliefs and therefore willingness to pay a price premium. By contrast, Pagiaslis and Krontalis (2014) argue the direct, significant and positive impact of environmental concern on purchase intention, which is consistent with the supported *H2* in this study. Additionally, this can be seen in some interviewee's descriptions (P1).

Furthermore, the interviewees showed high level of environmental concern also took proactive actions in searching sustainability-related information (P1, P5).

Results reflect those of Pagiaslis and Krontalis (2014) who find that environmental concern has a positive impact on environmental knowledge. Conversely, the interviewee who cared less about environmental issues revealed low interest in buying sustainable apparel (P3). These quantitative and qualitative results suggest that environmental concern of the issues in the fashion industry positively affects Spanish consumers' purchase intentions towards sustainable apparel. Furthermore, combining with high degree of environmental concern found among Spanish consumers, it therefore raises the possibility of potential of developing sustainable fashion in Spain.

Regarding product-related characteristics and evaluation of alternatives, research notes consumers' knowledge and environmental concern are not converted into sustainable purchase behavior owing to other factors affect consumer behavior in the same time (Berberyan *et al.*, 2018). Price, quality and design/style of sustainable apparel were included in regression analysis. *H3a* and *H3b* were supported confirming the negative influence of importance and positive influence of satisfactory level of product-related characteristics on consumers' purchase intention. Reflecting in CDMP, it matches the stage of evaluation of alternatives. The more consumers are satisfied with the product attributes of sustainable apparel, the stronger their purchase intentions are. On the other hand, the higher the importance of the product attributes is rated, the lower level of consumers' purchase intentions is found.

The questions PRCI1–PRCI4 are to understand the importance of price, quality, design and sustainability when purchasing sustainable apparel. The mean value of all items is at located at high level (4.23–4.46) except the mean value of sustainability is at medium level (3.75). Although question of sustainability (PRCI4) was screened out prior regression analysis owing to failing in unidimensional, the descriptive data provides insights of what consumers think. The results suggest that price, quality and design are important to consumers when buying sustainable apparel whilst imply sustainability may be the last factor consumers consider. Solomon (2016) argues that sustainability is beyond consumers' consideration when buying apparel. This can be found in the interviews.

Thus, results are consistent with previous research that consumers are motivated by

personal needs when purchasing apparel and the needs precede sustainability consideration (Joergens, 2006). Sustainability is assumed to be an add-on value during evaluation of alternatives in CDMP.

Regarding satisfactory level of price, quality and design (i.e. questions PRCH1–PRCH3), the mean value of all items is located at low to medium level (2.96–3.45). It can be assumed that Spanish consumers perceive sustainable apparel are with high price, ordinary quality and design. The results are in accord with the studies that general perceptions of sustainable apparel are with high price and less stylish (Hill and Lee, 2012). Consequently, the high degree of emphasis on product attributes and the low-to-medium satisfactory level of product attributes are assumed to be the barriers to purchase of sustainable apparel.

Price is often considered as the main barrier of sustainable purchase behavior (Kostadinova, 2016). In total 89% ($N = 389$) of the participants were aware of a premium for sustainable apparel. In total 31% ($N = 136$) and 38% ($N = 166$) of the participants thought the price of sustainable apparel is higher than generic apparel by 11–20% and 21–30%, respectively. The satisfactory level of price is located at low level (mean 6 SD as 2.96 6 0.70) and is the lowest one among all product attributes, implying the concern for high price of sustainable apparel. Previous study notes that although consumers are aware of the issues in the fashion industry, price outweighs their concern in consumer purchase behavior (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). This can be seen in interviewees' descriptions ("I am willing to support sustainable apparel. However, if the price of sustainable apparel is outrageous, I will not buy it because I am not able to afford it" [P1]); "I would like to buy sustainable apparel. I think the general perception of sustainable apparel is expensive. The state of economy in Spain is not as good as that of other countries. You must have financial ability first and then consider purchase (of sustainable apparel)" [P6]).

Findings show consumers' concern of price and perceptions of high-priced sustainable apparel act as barrier to purchase sustainable apparel, which is in line with previous studies (Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013).

Quality (Jacobs *et al.*, 2018) and design (Joy *et al.*, 2012) are other important factors affecting consumers' purchase intention towards sustainable apparel. Interestingly, the mean value of importance of quality (4.46) and design (4.29) are comparable to that of price (4.23), which means quality and design cannot be compromised when buying sustainable apparel. Fashion consumers purchase apparel because of its symbolic value, such as fashionableness (Jin, 2011), as can be seen in P2 interviewee's description.

Fashion is a symbolic production and consumers construct their identity and express themselves through clothing choices (Sanz-Marcos *et al.*, 2020). To encourage

consumers' purchase intentions, the functional values of sustainable apparel, such as design and quality, should not be compromised.

Related to social influence and its evaluation alternatives, and as mentioned in the literature review, social influence can affect individual's perceptions and therefore behaviors (Risselada *et al.*, 2014). *H4* was supported, indicating social influence has positive influence on consumers' purchase intentions towards sustainable fashion apparel. The result is in accord with previous study that the information from social group positively affects individual's probability of purchasing sustainable products (Salazar *et al.*, 2013). The questions of SI1–SI4 were to understand the social influence level among Spanish consumers. The mean value of the questions ranges from 3.72 to 3.89, suggesting the social influence is at medium to high level. The results can be attributed to the individuals tend to behave consistently to their social groups. No obvious difference is found between the influence from friends (mean \bar{M} SD as 3.86 6 0.69) and family (mean \bar{M} SD as 3.89 6 0.66). In CDMP, the information from social groups may help consumers to evaluate the alternatives they have.

Half of the interviewees expressed they will refer to the opinions and information from their social groups. This type of social influence is closer to informational social influence (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955), which means individual trusts the information from their social groups and regards the information as reality. The information from individuals' social groups enhances individuals' understanding of some concepts or phenomena. This can be seen in some interviewees (P5). However, when the interviewees were asked if they ever received sustainability-related information from their social groups, none of them received sustainability-related information from their social groups, such as friends or family.

The supported *H4* indicates social influence has positive influence on Spanish consumers' purchase intentions towards sustainable fashion apparel. The mean value of the measurement items implies that social influence level is medium to high. Furthermore, the findings suggest the popularization of sustainability-related information may help social influence become more impactful on sustainable purchase behavior.

2.1 Hypotheses testing

The four hypotheses were tested through linear multiple regression analysis. *H1* was supported ($b = 0.15$; $t = 3.64$; $p < 0.001$), which indicated the positive influence of knowledge of sustainable fashion on consumers' purchase intentions. *H2* to examine environmental concern of the fashion industry was supported ($b = 0.34$; $t = 7.97$; $p < 0.001$) and confirmed the positive impact on consumers' purchase intentions.

Regarding

product-related characteristics, the influence of importance (*H3a*) and consumers' happiness level (*H3b*) on purchase intention were supported. *H3a* ($b = -0.08$; $t = -2.14$; $p < 0.05$) and *H3b* ($b = 0.14$; $t = 3.46$; $p < 0.001$) showed the negative and positive effect on purchase intention, respectively. *H4* to examine the social influence effect was

supported ($b = 0.27$; $t = 6.39$; $p < 0.001$) and confirmed the positive impact on purchase intention. The adjusted R^2 of the overall regression model was 0.36, which indicated 36% of variance in purchase intention was explained by the proposed model. In addition, no concern of multicollinearity was confirmed because tolerance was greater than 0.1 and valor in factor was smaller than 10 (Pallant, 2010). The testing results of hypotheses are presented in Table 3.

Relation to surveys, and regarding knowledge, the mean value of questions of K1–K11 ranged 2.46–4.26, indicating divergent understanding of different aspects in sustainable fashion. Environmental concern, measured by questions EC1–EC6, was at high level with all mean values equal to or above 4.00. The questions PRC11–PRC14 and PRCH1–PRCH3 were to understand the importance and satisfactory level of product-related characteristics, respectively. The importance was located at medium to high level with sequence as quality (mean = 4.46), design (mean = 4.29), price (mean = 4.23) and sustainability (mean = 3.75). The satisfactory level of sustainable apparel was located at low to medium level with sequence as quality (mean = 4.46), design (mean = 3.20) and price (mean = 2.96). Regarding social influence, the mean value of questions SI1–SI4 ranged 3.72–3.89. Purchase intention, measured by questions PI1–PI5, was at medium to high level with mean value ranging 3.33–3.90.

3. Conclusions

Certain ideas relating to the sustainability–environment pair emerge as the main conclusions. The support of these concepts helps to obtain a model of governance based on social responsibility as a vehicle that leads to happiness in consumption. This is particularly relevant in the fashion sector, based on beauty, improved physical appearance or public health and well-being, by encouraging the consumption (and, therefore, the production and cultivation) of organic, ecological and biological materials.

Demand and interests of sustainable products in the fashion industry are growing, but consumers fail to purchase sustainable products, which drives volume research to understand the factors affecting sustainable purchase behavior. This study aims to investigate how Spanish consumer perceptions and purchase intentions towards

sustainable fashion apparel guide marketing strategy of sustainability and the key factors of encouraging consumers to behave more sustainably. The corresponding objectives to achieve the aim are to: explore consumers' knowledge and concern of sustainability issues in the fashion industry; identify consumers' perceptions towards sustainable fashion apparel; investigate key elements affecting consumers' purchase intentions; using the results to formulate a marketing strategy of sustainability for companies to develop sustainable fashion in Spain. Four aspects regarding sustainable purchase behavior emerging from literature review were knowledge, environmental concern, product-related characteristics and social influence.

Table 3 Hypotheses tests ($N = 438$)

<i>Path coefficient</i>	<i>Standardised beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Significance level</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Tolerance</i>	<i>VIF</i>
<i>H1: KN → PI</i>	0.15	3.64	0.000	Supported	0.91	1.10
<i>H2: EC → PI</i>	0.34	7.97	0.000	Supported	0.79	1.27
<i>H3a: PRCI → PI</i>	-0.08	-2.14	0.033	Supported	0.95	1.05
<i>H3b: PRCH → PI</i>	0.14	3.46	0.001	Supported	0.89	1.12
<i>H4: SI → PI</i>	0.27	6.39	0.000	Supported	0.82	1.22
Adjusted R^2	0.36					

Notes: KN = knowledge; EC = environmental concern; PRCI = importance of product-related characteristics; PRCH = happiness of product-related characteristics; SI = social influence; PI = purchase intention. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

This study has confirmed the influence of knowledge, environmental concern, product-related characteristics and social influence on Spanish consumers' purchase intentions towards sustainable apparel, and evaluated demographic factors did not show significant relationship to consumers' purchase intentions. The influence of each individual factor and insights from qualitative data is presented below.

The results confirmed that knowledge has a positive influence on consumers' purchase intentions, which is in accord with previous studies (Dickson, 2000; Shen *et al.*, 2012). Besides, consumers are likely to change their behaviors when receiving information which stimulate them to think differently about their fashion consumption (Pedroni and Pe´rez- Curiel, 2019). However, Spanish consumers are found lack of knowledge of sustainability or only have rough concepts. Meanwhile, little information of retailers who sell sustainable apparel is available. Lack of concrete knowledge can lead to the barrier to consumers' sustainable consumption (Connell, 2011). Conversely, greater knowledge helps consumers to expand the choice they have. The results imply improving knowledge and understanding of sustainable fashion has potential of encourage sustainable purchase behavior.

From a social marketing perspective, this lack of awareness is one of the main barriers

to changing behavior to increase willingness to purchase sustainable fashion clothing (Harris *et al.*, 2016). Social norms are also another barrier that needs to be addressed. Overconsumption, driven by the fashion industry social pressures and the media for consumers, makes wearing the same clothes frowned. It would be convenient that these barriers disappear so that wearing the same or repairing clothes socially acceptable and achievable garments are needed. Potential interventions include social marketing campaigns designed to challenge and shift social norms (e.g. involving opinion formers or highlighting the value of investing in clothes) (Song and Ko, 2017). The importance and happiness about product-related characteristics of sustainable apparel were confirmed to affect consumers' purchase intentions negatively and positively, respectively. The results are in line with previous studies that price, quality and design of sustainable apparel affect consumer purchase behavior (Shaw *et al.*, 2006; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Joy *et al.*, 2012). Reflecting in CDMP, product-related characteristics are involved in the stage of alternative evaluation. Spanish consumers show the high degree of emphasis of product attributes and perceive sustainable apparel with high price, ordinary design and quality, which are assumed to be the barriers of buying sustainable apparel. Additionally, sustainability is scored as the last important item among Spanish consumers when purchasing sustainable apparel, which corroborates the findings of the previous work (Joergens, 2006) that consumers' personal needs take precedence over sustainability consideration when purchasing apparel. Price is often regarded as the first criteria when choosing sustainable apparel (Meyer, 2001). Interestingly, the importance of quality and design is at comparable level with price among Spanish consumers, which can be attributed to the previous research that consumers construct their identity and express themselves through clothing choices (Sanz-Marcos, *et al.*, 2020), and therefore the functional values cannot be compromised. Results confirmed social influence has positive impact on consumers' purchase intentions towards sustainable apparel, which is consistent to previous research (Salazar *et al.*, 2013). Consumers receiving positive information from their social group during evaluation of alternatives in CDMP are more likely to purchase sustainable apparel. This type of social influence belongs to informative social influence (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955). Although social influence is at medium to high level, Spanish consumers seldom receive sustainability-related information from social groups, which echoes the findings in this study that blurred knowledge and no-to-low available information of sustainability, as Visser (2020) noted. So, results imply improving consumers' knowledge of sustainable apparel may further reinforce the effect of social influence. The adoption of a mix-method design helped to address the aim and corresponding objectives in this study. The quantitative results attained the objectives of understanding consumers' knowledge, environmental concern and perceptions towards sustainable

fashion. Testing hypotheses achieved the objective of investigating key factors affecting consumers' purchase intentions and confirmed the influence of knowledge, environmental concern, product-related characteristics and social influence. Subsequently, the qualitative results further underpinned the hypotheses, provided insights beyond the framework and enriched the extent to which marketing strategy of sustainable fashion can formulate.

4. Practical implications

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in purchasing behavior towards sustainable products in fashion industry. Many studies analyze this phenomenon, but there are not so many studies focusing on Spanish consumers.

Thus, this study analyzes the factors that influence the perception of sustainable fashion and purchase intention on the part of the Spanish market. Therefore, after seeing the results, the increase in intentionality and the effects of satisfaction, well-being and, therefore, happiness in consumers, this study contributes to the approach of sustainability as the basis of the guiding principles of happiness in the management of happiness in corporate management and social governance, in favor of a climate of improvement at all levels of management of fashion companies in Spain. Similarly, the study is also one of the few studies that analyses the concepts of happiness-governance-sustainability-fashion, which is especially important in a country like Spain, one of the great exporters of fashion design.

The results of the study imply that, it has been established the prototype of Spanish consumers regarding their perceptions towards sustainable apparel and key factors affecting their purchase behavior.

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