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**THE SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE IN FASHION BRAND  
MANAGEMENT**

In recent years, sustainability has become a central topic in both academic research and managerial practices within the fashion industry. Growing concerns about environmental degradation, labor conditions, and overconsumption have intensified the debate regarding the sustainability of current fashion production and consumption models [8; 13-14; 17]. The expansion of fast fashion has significantly transformed the fashion sector. Brands such as Zara, H&M, and Primark have

adopted business models characterized by rapid production cycles, frequent collection updates, and affordable prices. While these strategies have democratized access to fashion, they have also contributed to increased consumption and the acceleration of product life cycles [11]. More recently, the emergence of ultra fast fashion platforms such as Shein and Temu has further intensified these dynamics. By relying on digital technologies, data analytics, and algorithm-driven production systems, these companies can introduce new products into the market at unprecedented speed and at extremely competitive prices [4; 15]. Although these models have proven highly successful from a commercial perspective, they raise significant environmental and social concerns. The fashion industry is currently recognized as one of the most resource-intensive sectors, contributing to high levels of water consumption, carbon emissions, chemical pollution, and textile waste [9; 13].

In response to these challenges, alternative approaches such as slow fashion have gained increasing attention. Slow fashion promotes more sustainable production and consumption practices by emphasizing quality, durability, ethical labor conditions, and transparency throughout the supply chain [2; 6]. However, the transition toward more sustainable fashion systems remains complex. Despite increasing consumer awareness regarding sustainability issues, many purchasing decisions continue to be driven primarily by price, convenience, and accessibility [3]. This discrepancy between consumers' sustainability attitudes and their actual purchasing behavior represents a key challenge for sustainable fashion brands. The fashion industry has undergone significant transformations in recent decades due to globalization, digitalization, and changes in consumer behavior. Fashion has evolved beyond its functional role to become an important form of identity expression and social communication [7]. The fast fashion model is based on rapid production cycles, quick responses to market trends, and high product turnover. By offering trendy clothing at relatively low prices, fast fashion brands have expanded consumer access to fashion products. However, this model has been widely criticized for encouraging overconsumption and contributing to environmental degradation and labor exploitation [11; 13]. The emergence of ultra fast fashion represents an intensification of the fast fashion model. Digital platforms such as Shein and Temu rely on real-time data analysis and algorithm-based production strategies to rapidly respond to consumer demand [4; 15].

These companies continuously monitor online consumer behavior and introduce new products at an extremely fast pace. The constant availability of new products, combined with low prices and aggressive digital marketing strategies, encourages impulsive purchasing behavior and reinforces disposable consumption patterns [4]. In contrast to fast fashion, the slow fashion movement promotes a more responsible approach to fashion production and consumption. Slow fashion prioritizes product quality, durability, local production, and ethical labor practices [6]. This model is closely linked to the principles of the circular economy, which emphasize reuse, recycling, and the extension of product life cycles [2; 12]. By encouraging consumers to purchase fewer but higher-quality garments, slow fashion seeks to reduce the environmental impact of the fashion industry.

In Portugal, the slow fashion movement has gained increasing visibility, with local brands adopting sustainable production practices and emphasizing ethical and responsible fashion consumption [1; 5]. Despite growing environmental awareness, many consumers continue to prioritize price, convenience, and trend accessibility when purchasing fashion products [3]. This discrepancy between pro-sustainability attitudes and actual purchasing behavior is often referred to as the attitude-behavior gap, which represents a major challenge for sustainable fashion consumption [3].

This gap is caused by low environmental awareness, the high cost of sustainable goods, and the availability of cheap fast fashion [16]. As a result, sustainable fashion brands face significant challenges when competing with fast fashion companies that operate on high-volume, low-cost business models [10]. The analysis highlights the structural tensions between fast fashion and slow fashion models. Fast fashion focuses primarily on operational efficiency, rapid product turnover, and high sales volume, whereas slow fashion emphasizes product quality, ethical production practices, and long-term sustainability [11].

From a strategic perspective, these differences can be understood through frameworks such as the Business Model Canvas, which highlights variations in value propositions, customer relationships, revenue structures, and supply chain organization [1]. The sustainability challenges of the fashion industry can also be examined through the Triple Bottom Line framework, which integrates environmental, social, and economic dimensions. Environmentally, the sector faces significant challenges related to resource consumption and waste generation [9]. Socially, labor conditions

in global supply chains remain a major concern [6]. Economically, sustainable fashion brands must balance responsible practices with financial viability and competitiveness [10].

Furthermore, the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives often depends on consumer perceptions and brand communication strategies. Transparent communication, supply chain traceability, and authentic storytelling can help build consumer trust and strengthen the credibility of sustainable fashion brands [12]. However, misleading sustainability claims, often referred to as greenwashing, pose a significant risk to brand reputation. Consumers are increasingly skeptical of sustainability messaging, making authenticity and transparency essential elements of effective sustainability communication [16]. The fashion industry is currently facing a critical sustainability challenge driven by the environmental and social consequences of fast fashion production models [13]. While fast fashion continues to dominate global markets, alternative approaches such as slow fashion offer more sustainable pathways for the future of the industry [2].

However, the transition toward sustainable fashion systems requires coordinated efforts from multiple stakeholders, including brands, policymakers, and consumers. Sustainable innovation, transparent communication strategies, and increased consumer awareness will be essential in promoting more responsible consumption patterns [11]. Ultimately, achieving sustainability in fashion will depend on the ability of brands to integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations into their business models while simultaneously fostering stronger relationships with increasingly conscious consumers.

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## **ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN SHAPING A NEW MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT**

The rapid development and widespread adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies determine the high relevance of studying their role in shaping a new model of organizational management. In the context of digital transformation, globalization, and increasing environmental uncertainty, traditional management approaches are becoming less effective, necessitating the transition to more flexible, adaptive, and data-driven systems. AI is no longer perceived merely as a technological tool but rather as a strategic factor that fundamentally transforms organizational processes, decision-making mechanisms, and leadership models [1, 9].