Localization Marketing Strategies for Sustainable Fashion Brands in the Global Market

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***Abstract*—This paper examines the strategic integration of globalization and localization in sustainable fashion branding, emphasizing the necessity of cultural adaptation, consumer behavior analysis, and digital engagement to achieve market resonance. As global consumers increasingly prioritize ethical production and ecological responsibility, brands must harmonize universal sustainability principles with region-specific cultural narratives. Through case studies of Dior, Estée Lauder, and Zara, the study highlights successes and challenges in balancing brand identity with localized strategies. Key findings reveal that cultural resonance—achieved via collaborations with local creatives, community-driven campaigns, and adaptive storytelling—enhances consumer trust and market penetration. Conversely, superficial localization efforts risk alienating audiences, underscoring the importance of deep cultural sensitivity. The analysis further identifies social media as a critical enabler for immersive, interactive communication, particularly among younger demographics. Challenges such as cultural conflicts, supply chain limitations, and local competition are addressed through solutions like co-creation frameworks, data-driven consumer insights, and participatory engagement mechanisms. The paper concludes that sustainable fashion brands must leverage technology, cross-sector partnerships, and transparent narratives to foster long-term growth while maintaining alignment with both global values and localized expectations.**

Keywords—Sustainable fashion strategies, Brand localization, Cross-cultural communication

1. Introduction

Under the global trend, sustainable development has gradually been accepted by the fashion industry. Consumers not only focus on designs style and product function but also require social responsibility of brands in terms of ecological and ethical manufacturing. Sustainable fashion brands are about this demand and explore new directions for future fashion industry development. The emergence of "sustainable fashion brands" has propelled "brand concepts" to become the central competitive advantage that permeates both market strategies and cultural influence. Nevertheless, significant disparities in culture backgrounds, values, and consumer psychology exist across various regions, which is presenting great challenges to the global dissemination of such concepts [1].

Therefore, the localization marketing strategy has emerged as a critical factor in the international expansion of sustainable fashion brands. It entails not only the adaptation of language and format but also the redefinition of value expression, the establishment of emotional resonance, and the evolution of communication channels [2]. In this process, brands must uphold their core value propositions while adeptly aligning with local contexts. By leveraging cultural adaptation and diverse communication channels, they can effectively convey these values to consumers, thereby facilitating the swift transformation and identification of brand concepts.

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2. Balance between Globalization and Localization: Strategic Choices for Brands

2.1 Value of Unified Brand Identity

In the increasingly mature globalized market, a unified brand identity is one of the approaches toward internationalization. Maintaining the uniformity of logos, brand image, and culture helps promote the brand, reducing the initial investment cost and expanding brand image in various regions. Nike is just a good case in point. Its classic "Swoosh" badge and "Just Do It" slogan has become a symbol globally for sportsmanship which is embraced by audience all over the world. This global uniformity not only reduces advertising cost but also can lift up promotional efficiency by global unified marketing information [3].

The second benefit of globalization strategy is creating a large brand awareness and robust reputation, because in consumers' eyes, their stable performance on the global market and stable in quality and service together constitute a stable brand image. Apple is a typical brand. No matter the taste of its products is the same in various countries or not, its product gives a feeling of enjoying the same brand charm. By following this approach, Apple enhanced its market's high-tech brand image and has also formed stable group of overseas users.

A standardized brand image also eases cross cultural communication difficulties. Cultural, language, and tradition disparity and diversity often cause multifaceted issues in transnational marketing, however a globalized brand image along with a tangible foundation of basic values make it attainable for corporations to go beyond cultural boundaries to reach more customers. Coca-Cola can serve as a typical example: regardless of market segments of Asia, Europe, Africa, its advertisements aim at the common ground of "joyful sharing". So, customers of Coca-Cola can share and feel the coziness of the brand beyond any culture.

But the global homogenization is not costless. Overemphasizing globalization can involve overlooking the

specific needs of local customers and cultures, making companies miss the chance to connect with their regional audiences. Accordingly, to achieve the combined benefit of globalization, a company also needs to be flexible with a delicate balance between consistent brand image and the adjustment to the local markets. So far, this seems to be the one important factor that affects how well the brand's globalization performance works in the long run.

2.2 Embracing Cultural Diversity to Meet the Local Value

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Cross-cultural divergences in consumer demands cannot be avoided in brands seeking to enter foreign markets. Regions' cultures, consumption behavior, and values significantly influence how to purchase and acceptance brands. Therefore, if brands ignore these differences, they often find it difficult to break into the local market and may even trigger controversies due to cultural insensitivity.

The core of localization strategy is to promote the integration of consumer identification and brand's culture. When a brand can culturally fit into the local market, consumers will be more willing to accept and trust the brand, and this sense of trust can significantly enhance market penetration of the brand. McDonald's success in the global market is largely attributed to its menu design which is adapted to various local conditions. The company added vegetarian burgers and beef alternatives in India to match religious diet, while in China, it incorporated local elements such as rice and soy milk [4]. This customization of McDonald's to different local cultures not only renders it fit to these countries but also increases its relatability with consumers.

Brand localization should not necessarily be interpreted as a compromise with localized cultural sensitivity (or pandering), it refers to acknowledging and adapting to a local culture and context while still sustaining the brand's original, embedded brand values. This ultimately has significant positive benefits in terms of brand market competitiveness as well as providing sustainability for a brand operating in a multicultural market context.

2.3 Integrate Local Wisdom within Global Perspective

An Integrated strategic model of global and local is essential, the core of which lies in maintaining the globalization of the brand's core while adopting flexible localized marketing approaches. Such integration requires brands to fully consider preserving the difference of the local cultures in marketing campaign construction. Coca-Cola severs as a good example that it has remained its brand core of "Sharing happiness" worldwide but adapts localized meanings to respective parts [5].

Second, consumer psychology is also a key. In localization marketing, brands have to decipher consumption preferences and behaviors of consumers in different markets to pinpoint entry points. For instance, many global fashion brands launch limited edition products for Chinese market which usually cooperated with local artists of traditional cultural heritage. The products maintain international style while at the same time they are filled with local culture symbols. These innovative methods could evoke consumers' respect towards the brands and the traditions.

The integration of globalization and Localization is an art of finding a balance between the core values of a brand and the diverse market demands. Sustainable fashion brands need to penetrate the market through dynamic localization strategies such as cultural narratives and design aesthetics, while adhering to their global core values (sustainability, ethics, and brand identity). (Fig.1)

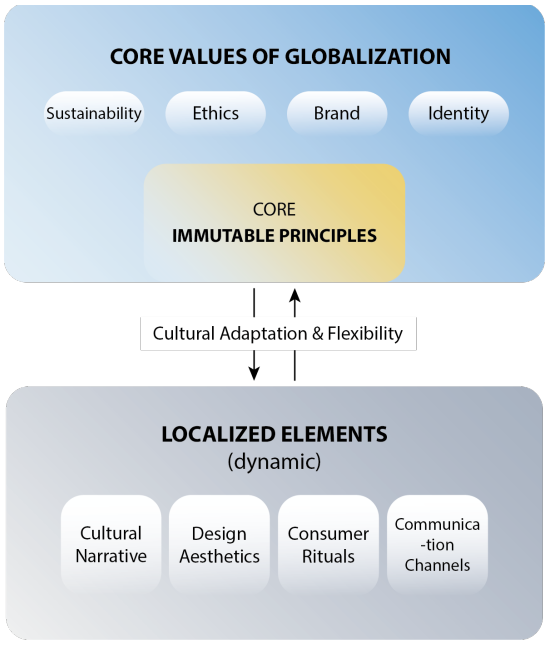

Fig.1. Diagram of the Globalization-Localization Balance Strategy Model.

3. Key Elements of Localized Marketing for Sustainable Fashion Brand

3.1 Cultural resonance promotes deep market integration

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In the context of globalization, culture difference significantly influences the localization process of sustainable fashion brands. Especially for sustainable fashion brands, the concepts like eco-friendly and social responsibility need to be adapted to the cultural perceptions of the target market. The key to entry the local market successfully lies in establishing deep connections between global values and local cultural symbols. For example, stories that provide a taste of its traditional history or lifestyle would be accepted more easily for consumers from more tradition-dominant cultures. While

in a modernized region, more emphasis ought to be attached to technology empowerment and innovation.

Patagonia's strategy in the Asian market is a successful case. While Patagonia defines its brand around sustainable pioneer, environment protector, anti-waste and so on, the awareness of these ideals is not consistent across Asia [6]. Patagonia was not to directly import its North American campaigns but instead modified them to fit the local culture. Elsewhere, such as Japan where the marketing campaign collaborated with the country's regional eco-conservationists to play up harmony with nature—it was aligned with the Japanese value of mono-no-aware ("物哀", the pathos of impermanence and restrained consumption)—a cultural link that quickly attracted local attention and praise. In China, Patagonia oriented its campaign around community relations, facilitating nature conservation events and nature education classes which had as an objective integrate its sustainable message with people daily life and in such way promote cultural affinity.

The essence of cultural integration is the symbolic translation of value propositions, rather than the concession of brand's core concepts. This necessitates that brands need both the capacity to decode cultures and the acumen to perceive market demands. Successful cultural adaptation can not only enhance credibility of the brand but also elevate the efficiency of the social penetration of sustainable value. Ultimately, it can bring about a virtuous cycle of market expansion and value dissemination.

3.2 Consumer Behavior Analysis Drives Fine-Grained Localization

The deep understanding of consumer's behavioral habits is one of keys to the success of localized marketing. Different regional cultural background could influence customers' purchasing behaviors and the brand preference. Hence sustainable fashion brands need to embed behavior insights into marketing strategies and establish brand identity through meeting actual needs.

Beyond the purchase behaviors, consumers' potential psychological needs can be revealed too. For instance, the western consumers focus on product innovation and green performance, while the Asian consumers place importance on usability and affordability. Marketing approaches need to be adjusted according to the concerns of different markets.

Deep user insights could support product development, marketing campaign, and customer experience planning. To meet the diverse needs of consumers through flexible strategy adjustments, which helps increase sustainable fashion brand's competitiveness and foster the long-term customer relationship with the brand.

3.3 Social Media Accelerates Localized Communication

As in the era of digital communication, the new social media has become more important for sustainable fashion brand to reach local markets. Social media can quickly promote the brand's concept, and deliver an empathic, interactive experience in exchange to stimulate consumers to better comprehend and accept the brand. Specifically, regarding the younger population who stresses self-expression and culture of communities, social network become the main purchase channel and source of information.

It is important for sustainable fashion brands to merge creative elements with cultural applicability in their social media marketing content (such as micro-videos, livestreams and images). They can transform eco-friendly philosophy into scenarios close to consumers' daily life, which help enhance consumers' sense of immersion. Besides, social media also offer the opportunity of immediate interactions like comments, private messages, and activities within online community. These are efficient ways of enhancing users' sense of participation and loyalty.

Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book) and Douyin (TikTok) are typical platforms which assist the international brands to reach the Chinese market much more easily. Both platforms rely on genuine UGCs (User-Generated Content) and online community, in which brands often post the contents related to sustainability. For example, brands usually invite KOLs (Key Opinion Leader) stylishly wear eco-friendly costumes in sustainable lifestyle to indirectly guide consumers to choose the corresponding clothes with soft advertisement through posting images and videos, or live streaming on these platforms. They also quite often share and display the sustainable design and production processes so that users can have more visual perspective of brands' environmental practice. Such platforms offer analytics that allow brands to better communicate by adjusting to the audience's activities, which to a great extend helps brands correct plans or content formats to enhance the communication effect. [7-8]

4. CASE STUDIES

4.1 Dior: Realize the Translation of Brand Value Through Cultural Resonance

As an internationally acclaimed high-end fashion brand, Dior has manifested an extremely meticulous cultural strategy within the Chinese market. The "L'Or de Dior" exhibition held in Beijing 2023 is the recognized as a successful exemplar of localization. This art exhibition, which focus on the theme of "gold," not only showcases the brand's enduring luxurious essence but also strongly evokes the auspiciousness, nobility, and spiritual connotations represented by "gold" in Chinese culture. [9]

In the aspect of visual narrative, the exhibition skillfully integrates traditional Chinese elements with western haute couture aesthetics. The exhibits cover a wide range of items, including apparels, perfumes, art installations and so on. The space of the exhibition is constructed as scenes of immersive experience. More crucially, Dior invited local artist (such as Liu Jianhua, Lin Tianmiao, Zheng Guogu, etc.) to engage in the co-creation of the artistic content. This approach has transformed high-end fashion from a distant concept into a multifaceted crystallization of a co-constructed cultural space, rather than a cold representation of an imported product. (Fig. 2)

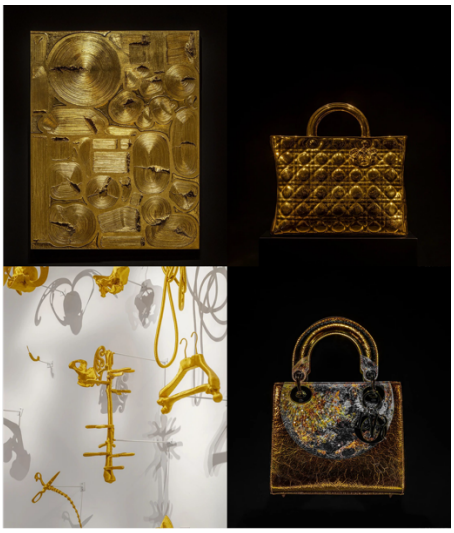

Fig.2. Collaboration art works with Chinese artists during “L’Or de Dior” exhibition in Beijing.

From the perspective of communication, Dior effectively integrates online and offline resources through social media platforms. By means of KOL-led tours, live streaming, and interactive topics on Xiaohongshu, the exhibition has been transformed into a communicative event that users can participate in, share, and re-create. The emergence of a vast amount of UGCs have enabled the brand's communication to transcend the limitations of traditional physical means of displays. It has widely penetrated into diverse social strata of users, thus achieving a more extensive resonance among the public regarding “luxury culture” [10].

This case vividly illustrates that the combination of in-depth cultural embedding and the activation of high-quality social content is a crucial pathway for luxury brands to achieve the localization of their concepts. Through respecting and integrating with local culture via multiple cooperation, Dior has achieved a strategic breakthrough of seeking common ground within constancy of its high-end positioning.

4.2 Estée Lauder: Link Young Consumers Through Building Real-life Scenarios

In the recent years, Estée Lauder’s marketing strategies in China show its precise positioning and profound insight into the young consumer group. Estée Lauder has achieved remarkable success with its localization strategy in the Chinese market, which relies not on grand cultural narratives but on perceiving nuanced daily lives of urban youth. The brand recognized that Generation Z consumers prioritize more about "lifestyle" and "emotional value," consequently incorporating interactive formats aligned with real-life scenarios into product promotions.

As a representative city of China’s thriving coffee culture, Estée Lauder chose Shanghai to launch a “spring cafe check-in” marketing campaign with 100+ independent local cafes. This campaign combined sunscreen trial experiences into coffee consumption rituals, not only increasing brand exposure but also establishing emotional connections between its products and concepts like "leisurely spring days" and "refined daily routines." (Fig. 3) Additionally, festivals are also key points the brand pays attention to. For The Valentine’s Day in 2023 and 2025, the brand co-created with Chinese fashion house SHUSHUTONG to launch a limited-edition collection which strengthened psychological resonance around concepts of "ritualistic consumption" and "festive sentiments”. (Fig. 4)

Fig.3. Estée Lauder coffee campaign in Shanghai.

Fig.4. Estée Lauder × SHUSHUTONG limited-edition campaign.

Regarding social media dissemination, Estée Lauder adopted a differentiated approach by leveraging real lifestyle sharing content from mid-tier KOLs rather than relying solely on top influencers. By strategically amplifying UGCs such as "unboxing reviews," "check-in experiences," and "gifting guides," the brand has fostered a vibrant and resonant brand ecosystem within a rapidly changing marketing environment.

4.3 Zara: Practices and Reflections in Localization Transformation Attempts

As a representative fast fashion firm in the world, Zara is famous for its swift response to fashions and effective supply chain management. But it also encounters localization problems in China. In 2023, the company set up a 2-month pop-up store in Anfu Road, Shanghai, with the attempt to convey a new brand image and positioning in Chinese market. Though the brand demonstrated its emphasis on Chinese market, but the design narrative to a certain extend disconnected from the cultural expectations and aesthetic demands of local consumers. The incompatibility problem

exposed by Zara provides us an important reflection for future localization strategy [11].

This “curatorial” display concept pop-up store Zara had built was to sell brand’s top collections and collaborations. Although it had a fresh idea of marketing narration, the language and style of the store lacked market adaptation to Chinese consumers. The product silhouette, colorways of use, Premium-priced products, etc. went against Chinese consumers’ understanding and expectations of the original brand image of Zara, which quite influenced the effectiveness of this promotion.

Similarly, Zara’s unadapted to local environment can be seen from its understanding and application of Chinese cultural symbols. The lack of in-depth research of cultural meanings like superficial use of traditional patterns in the product designs, can easily give a sense of stereotypical understanding towards diverse and rich culture of China.

The case of Zara highlights a critical issue for branding localization. When superficial innovation lacks roots in consumer understanding and cultural context, it would risk falling into the trap of disconnected narratives. Localization is not merely about visual translation, but rather a deep synergy of values, semantics, and logic of behaviour.

5. Challenges and Solutions in Localized Marketing

5.1 Challenges in Localized Marketing

5.1.1 Cultural Conflict Between Global Brand DNA & Local Discrepancies

When entering a new market, companies would easily encounter contradictions between brand’s core values and those of the local region, which will influence and determine how the local customers view the company and even alter brand’s communication. For instance, most international companies tend to prioritize western culture when providing content through advertisements and campaigns, which can easily fail to impress the target audience or are even perceived as disdainful toward local customs. Particularly in markets that are highly sensitive to cultural symbols, e.g., China and India.

Cultural clashes might also take place in the context of brand communication as well. The homogenized brand image and communication style of a globalized brand might look too amorphous or distant from lived experience in local markets, e.g., the communication that claims to cherish free individuality might sound out of reach when the market values the community principle. Such cultural clashes would not only compromise brand communication’s ability, but also leads to the brand’s distant feelings, making it harder for the brand to connect with customers.

5.1.2 Insufficient Supply Chain and Operational Capabilities

When comes to localization, resource limitations is a common practical problem for sustainable fashion brands, especially in supply chain and operational capabilities. The higher processing standard or more complex material used would take much more energy to build and manage a stable supply chain when entering a new market. Usually in developing countries, brands could face obstacles of product delivery and storage due to the lack of logistics infrastructure, or due to alternative labor structure.

Besides, Inadequate local business operations also result in poor market performance. International brands often use unified standards and procedures, which might not perfectly fit reginal market demands. Close cooperative relationships with local suppliers and partners are needed to strengthen the local resource management.

5.1.3 Facing Local Competition

With sophisticated understanding of domestic markets and policies, local enterprise could gain customers’ favor more easily than the foreign brands. In Chinese market for example, the huge scale of the domestic market itself has given rise to a great number of competitive players. These competitors generally equipped with competitive price and approachable design styles. Meanwhile, the international brand is usually late in response to the market demand in pricing, design, communication, etc.

As for the local brands, they also enhance their competitiveness through their self-confidence and local patriotic feelings. The market where local brands are playing dominant role, the consumers also have priority to pick things in agreement with the culture. They are prone to have such emotional connection with brands due to the localized way of storytelling.

Thus, compared with local competitors, multinational companies need to invest more on locally created design, locally centered marketing and product innovation in order to create empathy through strong connections among consumers and fine-tuning of local strategies so to create space in crowdy markets.

5.2 Solutions for Localized Marketing

5.2.1 Achieve Dual Alignment of Product & Consumer Identification Through the Concept of Sustainable Fashion

To uncover the essential characteristics of sustainable fashion and align products with consumer identification through sustainable principles, it is critical to establish a dual resonance system that integrates material carriers with spiritual values. First, sustainable technologies can be transformed into visualized fashion language through cultural symbol reinvention. For instance, Stella McCartney has pioneered the development of mycelium leather while launching initiatives like the "Future of Fashion" exhibition, elevating bio-based materials beyond technical specifications into cultural icons of "tomorrow's aesthetics." Moreover, as sustainable fashion represents a paradigm of future lifestyles, brands can optimize strategies by redefining consumption rituals. Swedish brand Asket exemplifies this through its "Garment Lifecycle Passport"—featuring QR codes that disclose a product’s origin, carbon footprint, and recycling guidelines—which has extended the average lifespan of garments by 2.3 times, as verified by empirical data [12]. Lastly, brands must prioritize localized value integration. Chinese designer fashion brand ICICLE has embedded the

philosophy of "harmony between humanity and nature" into fabric innovation, leveraging multimedia narratives to reinterpret traditional Chinese textile wisdom, thereby bridging historical sustainability practices with modern relevance. The ongoing transformation of the fashion industry now extends beyond technological competition to encompass meaning production. Only by translating ecological ethics into tangible, participatory, and culturally transmittable practices can brands achieve true synergy between commercial viability and consumer resonance.（Fig. 5）

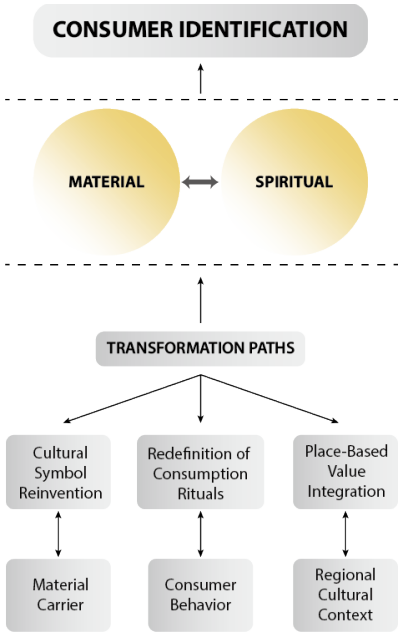

Fig.5. Dual Resonance System for Sustainable Fashion Value.

5.2.2 Increased Cultural Sensitivity and Cooperation

In the process of localization, cultural sensitivity is the key for a brand to successfully integrate into the local market. It is not merely the patchwork of local cultural symbols, which could easily lead to issues of cultural alienation or even be labeled as "cultural appropriation". Sustainable fashion strategy needs to be formulated based on the thorough respecting and understanding of the culture, habits and psychological characteristics of the customers in the host market. Moreover， establishing long-term collaborative partnerships with local creatives enables brands to authentically grasp the root of cultural semantics, thereby allowing their core values to converge with place-based narratives and ultimately develop indigenous expressive patterns with endogenous logic.

At the same time, the cooperation strength of local teams is also very important. For the brands with multiple targeting markets, they often miss market opportunities due to efficient communication within the various cross-regional departments. Or because the insufficient authorization for the local operation. Brands should leverage more flexible decision-making capabilities with local resources and enhancing coordination and communication mechanisms through the integration of new intelligent digital technologies, thus could respond to market dynamics more efficiently and effectively.

5.2.3 Building Localized Social Participation Mechanisms to Boost Brand Influence

In the digital era, brand communication has shifted from one-way messaging to dynamic co-creation processes driven by user participation and community interaction. If emerging sustainable fashion brands relying solely on traditional "brand-to-audience" content distribution, it would be struggled to maintain visibility in saturated social media feeds. Even with quality visual content, the lack of user engagement mechanisms often results in diminished content vitality and weak community cohesion, ultimately undermining long-term market sustainability.

Mature commercial brands like Dior and Estée Lauder demonstrate effective strategies through campaign-driven initiatives and topic leadership that foster user co-creation. This form of communication requires brands to move beyond sustainability-focused content creation and implement systematic engagement frameworks. Practical approaches include launching challenge campaigns, encouraging UGCs, and developing interactive hashtags/check-in systems. These mechanisms transform passive content consumers into active contributors, enabling brands to cultivate meaningful social media ecosystems aligned with contemporary communication patterns.

6. Future Trends and Conclusions

6.1 Future Trends

Future strategies of sustainable fashion enterprises will prioritize brand transparency by engaging Generation Z through shared sustainability narratives and interactive platforms that allow users to contribute eco-friendly ideas and feedback. In other words, consumers would become part of the brand itself through such approaches. Secondly, Localized marketing will increasingly rely on big data and AI to analyze regional consumer behavior, enabling precise cultural adaptation and demand forecasting. Technology in the future could help brand swiftly pinpoint insights of commonalities and distinctions in cross-cultural markets, thereby achieving the optimal resources allocation. Besides, sustainability principles are quickly expanding beyond the fashion industry, with cross-sector collaboration emerging as a strategic priority for brands seeking innovation and social responsibility. Partnerships between fashion brands and eco-tech firms or agricultural enterprises—such as developing sustainable materials or promoting ethical farming practices—strengthen product offerings while elevating brand visibility through mission-driven initiatives aligned sustainable development goals.

6.2 Conclusions

As the expand of sustainable fashion brand, international brands expand, effective localization—rooted in a deep understanding of regional cultures and consumer behaviors—becomes critical to building emotional resonance, strengthening local competitiveness, and fostering brand loyalty. Sustainable brands must balance globalization with localization. On one hand, Companies should preserve their core values and sustainability visions across markets. While on the other hand, these principals should be adapted to the specific cultural contexts. To ensure relevance while advance business and social goals. By integrating the consumer

identification towards enterprises, the cooperation based on cultural sensitivity, new interactive relationship between brand and consumer, brands can achieve a dynamic equilibrium between consistency and local adaptability, driving long-term growth and amplifying their societal impact in diverse markets.

Acknowledgement

R&D Program of Beijing Municipal Education Commission (SM202310012006), Beijing Association of Higher Education Program (MS2024366), Education Research Program of Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology (JG-2515).

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