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# Analysis of Motivational Conditions Behind Sustainable Consumption in China's Uniform Market

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## Abstract

*A uniform is distinctive clothing worn by members of the same firm or organisation. In China, the market for professional garments is extremely large. However, as mandatory professional clothing, uniforms are frequently used, torn, and replaced, leading to textile waste. Further, the use of non-recyclable or non-biodegradable fabrics is bound to create greater environmental pressure. This study focuses on the textile material in the uniform market to analyse the motivational conditions behind sustainable fabric consumption. A total of 294 usable online surveys were obtained in 2019. Multi-item scales were adopted to measure five variables: corporate public image, corporate ethics, employee social status, environment awareness, and sustainable premium. Structural equation modelling was applied to test the hypotheses. Results reveal that the improvement of an employee's social status can effectively facilitate the probability of utilising eco-friendly fabrics. This study can thus help increase the usage of eco-friendly fabric in China's uniform market.*

**Key words:** China's uniform market, sustainable consumption, eco-friendly fabric, environmental awareness.

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## ■ Introduction

Nowadays, environmentally friendly and sustainable fashion is a popular topic in the fashion industry. Today, there has been an increase in interest among marketing scholars in the concept of "fashion sustainability", such as a sustainable fashion supply chain [1, 2], sustainable luxury brand [3], and slow fashion consumption [4]. Within the literature, however, there are few works investigating sustainable consumption in the uniform market.

China has a population of 1.4 billion. As of 2019, the number of workers reached 774.7 million according to data from the China National Garment Asso-

ciation. The market size of professional women's clothing increased by 65.3% from 37.5 billion yuan in 2009 to 63 billion yuan in 2014. With the development of the tertiary industry, more and more enterprises are implementing standard dress codes that match and represent their corporate image and culture. As a result, the professional clothing industry has continued to grow. In China, a uniform is the distinctive clothing worn by members of the same firm or organisation, characterised by systematisms, functionality, symbolism, identification, and aesthetics. In addition, the market for professional clothing is extremely large. Businesses and organisations, such as banks, transportation companies, express logistics enterprises, food and beverage service companies, and schools, all require their members to wear uniforms. According to the China Premium Database, China's banking and financial institutions employed 3.8 million people at the end of 2015, the logistics industry – 50.12 million employees at the end of 2016; and the air transportation industry – 646,000 workers, while the food and beverage industry employed 2.342 million in 2018. In terms of students, those in primary and secondary schools reached 14.536 million in 2017 [5]. Furthermore, with the development of the tertiary sector, the number of participants in the service industry continues to grow. However, as mandatory professional clothing, uniforms are frequently used, torn, and replaced, leading to high price-sensitivity and textile waste. In addition, the use

of non-recyclable or non-biodegradable fabrics is bound to create greater environmental pressure. Despite the long-time development of sustainable fashion and realisation of a fibre-to-fibre recycling system by several Japanese uniform enterprises [6], the use of recycled fabrics remains limited in China's professional clothing market. Chinese uniforms are primarily made with blended fibres that are easier to care for than natural fibre fabrics and have good wear resistance. However, blended fabrics are difficult to recycle, and used clothes can only be dealt with by incineration or landfill [7].

In the Chinese fashion market, local designers and leading companies prefer and exert considerable effort in the utilisation and promotion of biodegradable and recyclable fabrics [8]. Kim and Yum (2013) divide the trend of eco-friendly fabric into three periods, namely, natural fabric with visual effects (2002-2004), functional conjunction with eco-friendliness and technology (2005-2008), and sustainable development for nature and the environment (2009-2011) [9]. Yet, in spite of the recent interest in sustainable fashion consumption, a gap exists between consumers' awareness of sustainable issues and actual purchase behaviour [10]. Consequently, this study aims to determine the factors that influence enterprises in choosing fabrics. By analysing the motivational conditions for eco-friendly fabric consumption in China's uniform market, this study provides a viable path for promoting the wide-

spread use of such fabrics and alleviating the environmental pressure caused by large amounts of textile and clothing waste.

## ■ Literature review

### Characteristics of eco-friendly fabric

Eco-friendly fabrics are made from fibres that do not require the use of any pesticides or chemicals to grow [11]. The two types of eco-friendly fabrics are biodegradable and recyclable. The former can be renewed [12, 13], such as organically grown cotton and corn fibres, with biodegradable features that play an important role in solving future environmental problems [14, 15]. The latter type uses consumer goods to reproduce textile fibres or uses waste polyester products or garments to produce high quality recycled polyester fibres (typical example being a “fibre-to-fibre” closed-loop recycling system) [7, 10, 16]. The production processes of the above mentioned two types of textile fabrics need to observe environmental protection [13, 17]. Compared with other fabrics, eco-friendly ones have a relatively high market price [18]. As the main factors affecting consumer decision-making are clothing quality and aesthetics rather than environmental protection, price has become an important factor influencing eco-friendly fabric consumption in the fashion market [13]. Therefore, for apparel the use of eco-friendly fabrics is a double-edged sword due to the relatively high price while having an environmentally friendly effect. When consumers have an environmentally friendly attitude and are willing to pay the price, eco-friendly fabrics can circulate in the market. The premise of such circulation is that companies and their employees are willing to bear high uniform costs for the purpose of environmental protection.

### Sustainable fashion product consumption motivation

Existing research primarily divides motivations for the consumption of sustainable fashion products into two aspects, namely, demographic characteristics and psychological variables [19]. First, demographic characteristics are easy to collect and analyse, and statistical results often show the appearance of sustainable fashion product consumption. Despite reflecting consumers’ environmental knowledge and attitudes to a certain extent, demographic variables have limited values for analysing consumption behav-

our in relation to eco-friendly products. Second, sustainable consumption behaviour is also predicted by perceiving consumer power as a psychological variable, such as beliefs about other consumers’ environmental behaviours [20], anxiety, compassion, [21] and consumer responsibility [22]. Consumers are interested in eco-friendly products not only to be environmentally responsible, but also because of the expected personal benefits from sustainable products [23]. Although psychological variables are closely related to eco-friendly consumption, these are complicated to measure. The theory of consumption values posits that three perceptible values are attached to general consumer goods, namely functional, emotional, and social [24, 25]. Functionality is the basic function and physical performance of a product, but an emotional nature can stimulate the emotions of consumers and generate a valuable identity. Moreover, sociality means that consumers can obtain the identity of a certain social class group through a product.

This study analyses the motives for purchasing sustainable fashion products regarding emotional and social values. Following a literature review as well as a comprehensive study of demographic characteristics and psychological variables, we can conclude that the consumption of sustainable fashion products primarily includes three motivational conditions, namely, social public image, moral values, and the mainstream social status of employees. For firms, public image serves as a motivation because of the social values gained through the adoption of eco-friendly fabrics. Moral values and educational level are conditions for emotional value-oriented utilisation. In addition, economic strength has both social and emotional values to provide conditions for eco-friendly fabric consumption. At present, the motivational conditions above are the most used for the study of purchasing intentions for eco-friendly products. Research on the acceptance of sustainable premiums remains at the superficial analysis of consumers and needs further study.

### Corporate public image

The original meaning of the word “image” refers to the physique, facial features, appearance, and other characteristics of objects that are perceived by the human mind. Public image refers to the public impression of people or products,

Moreover, public image is a two-dimensional concept that reflects its popularity and understanding [26], and is embodied in both collective and personal images. China is a country that advocates the concept of collectivism, and social norms under a collectivist culture deeply influence the consumption behaviour of Chinese consumers [27]. Under the constraints of this social norm, Chinese consumers pay more attention to public image, including collective and personal images, that is, to care about their “face” according to the politeness theory [28]. Wei and Jung believe that consumers who care about their “face” are more willing to consume sustainable products that help them build a positive public image [25]. Moreover, the “face” reflects the status of a person in society (the Chinese Confucian culture pays close attention to differences in social classes). Followers of Confucian culture prefer green products, the usage of which can cater to their values regarding social responsibilities [29, 30]. Given that Chinese consumers have a stronger sense of “face,” the user rate of sustainable fashion products could be higher. However, China Procurement Information News states that eco-friendly fabric consumption in China’s uniform market has not achieved popularity. Therefore, public image is not a decisive factor in the consumption of sustainable fashion products, and this consumption decision involves comprehensive reasons from various aspects. Literature has widely analysed motivations for the use of sustainable fashion products with product value as a guide, but there is limited research analysis of the Chinese sustainable fashion market or the use of professional clothing fabrics.

The high-quality value proposition of sustainable development is similar to that of luxury goods, which have higher prices due to their environmental features [31]. Luxury goods are characterised by high price, superior quality, and social popularity. The consumption of luxury goods can enhance the social image of consumers [32], who are also willing to pay such a premium to retain a prominent social status [33]. This behaviour of paying for premiums is similar to the consumption behaviour of sustainable fashion products; both consumption types extrude the social image of consumers and gain recognition from surrounding groups [34]. Hence, driven by the goal to maintain a public image, consumers may pay for the premium of sustainable

fashion products. However, sustainable fashion products are not the same as luxury goods. Cissullo et al.'s research [35] indicates that consumers cannot accept a premium of more than 20%; but their sample had a high educational level, which is a common feature of sustainable fashion consumers. Therefore, the consumption decision related to sustainable fashion products in the Chinese market needs further discussions while considering such premiums.

### Corporate ethics

Research on purchasing behaviour shows that in the context of sustainable fashion consumption, consumers pay increasing attention to ethical issues in all parts of production [10] and consider social consequences when purchasing a product [36]. Ethical marketing has gradually gained considerable attention in the market [37]. The utilisation and dissemination of recyclable products are also influenced by both social and environmental ethics [38]. Wearing "green" should not only be a style but also a basis for a life philosophy centered entirely on one's conscience and ecosystem [39]. Ethics constrain consumers' purchases of non-sustainable products, and responsible ethical attitudes toward ecosystems have a direct impact on sustainable product consumption [40]. However, existing literature cannot prove that consumers regard ethical standards as an exclusive consumer standard, and the motivation for sustainable consumption is a combination of many aspects [41]. In addition to requirements for raw materials and the study of manual labour, ethical issues in the production process focus on the motivation for sustainable product consumption in a broad sense. Hence, the ethical factors in sustainable consumption related to product materials need more thorough consideration. Moreover, existing literature lacks a discussion on ethics and product premiums. Jeon proves that a high degree of ethical awareness benefits sustainable fashion products, but the high pricing factors that hinder their consumption are not analysed [42]. According to the survey "Domestic Business Opportunities: New Trends in Green Consumption" by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council in August 2017, the price of green products is another important reason that prevents consumption [43]. Consumers are willing to pay an average premium of 12.75-19% for green products, with the highest price premium for green baby products. Based on this phe-

nomenon, the moral responsibility and caring emotions of consumers tend to promote their premium green consumption; but the inference requires further argumentation.

### Mainstream social status of employees

According to Sudolska et al., the employee's working conditions and welfare are the main determinants [44]. Then, in this study, the mainstream social status of employees can be divided into two aspects, namely, employees' education and salary levels. Markkula and Moisander found that well-educated adults with full-time jobs were most likely to be "ecologically orientated consumers" [45].

#### (1) Educational level

Various studies find that the consumption of sustainable products requires consumers to attain good education [1, 46]. Consumers with high educational levels and full-time jobs are highly environmentally conscious and have positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion [42]. In the study "Sustainable Consumption Fashion" by [47], 10 pioneers of sustainable fashion consumption are interviewed and all appear knowledgeable and interested in the future direction of the market. A higher level of knowledge is often considered as a prerequisite for sustainable behaviours [48] because highly educated people are more aware of the sustainability concept and its underlying meaning [49]. Nevertheless, educational level is not an absolute factor in the consumption of sustainable products; as not all highly educated people are environmentalists. Literature studies only show that educational level has an impact on consumption, while there are various aspects that affect a purchase decision. Meanwhile, very few analyses focus on the decisive factors related to the educational level and other motivational conditions; that is, how such factors constitute the determinants of sustainable product consumption needs to be clarified.

#### (2) Employee salary level

The above literature analysis shows that the price of eco-friendly fabrics is relatively high. To meet the environmental protection requirements of enterprises, suppliers have to invest in and transform technological innovations, equipment, and production processes, which results in higher costs [50]. In line with the China Procurement Development Report, several company executives believe that cost is the main problem of green

procurement and is reflected in pricing. Therefore, consumers of eco-friendly fabrics need to have a certain economic power. Sustainable products receive patronage from medium- and high-income consumers in China [8]. However, fashion consumers generally do not choose overpriced eco-fashion products [51], and the associated environmental protection is not the first condition for consumer choices [52]. As a result, a single economic factor cannot constitute a motivation for sustainable fashion consumption; but price is a crucial criterion for its determinacy [1,42]. Nonetheless, several consumers purchase premium products, such as luxury goods, to demonstrate their social status despite their limited income [53]. Lee and Kim state that high-paid and high-educated groups spend more on clothing, middle-income consumers buy less clothing, and people with low income display both purchasing behaviours [54]. Therefore, whether consumers accept the measurement of premium products is not dependent on their income; the income level and acceptance of premium fashion products do not have a direct relationship. The condition of how income level influences the acceptance of sustainable product premiums remains open for further discussion.

### ■ Hypotheses development

The narrow perspective of sustainable fashion has three elements, namely, eco-friendliness, recycling, and safe utilisation [55]. In the broad sense, sustainable fashion not only involves environmental issues but also includes ethical issues in the production chain [20, 56]. Hence, the environmental characteristics of sustainable fashion products are mainly reflected in the use of raw materials and their sources, which are pivotal factors to consider in the sustainability of a garment [57]. Eco-friendly fabrics comprise a significant part of sustainable fashion products, whose consumers also become consumers of sustainable fashion. This article makes assumptions about the motivation conditions of eco-friendly fabrics in the professional clothing market by searching for sustainable fashion consumption motives. The above analysis of the characteristics of eco-friendly fabrics shows their higher price and relation to environmental protection. Therefore, the motivational conditions of eco-friendly fabrics in the uniform market need to meet both requirements.

### **Corporate public image and the adoption of eco-friendly professional clothing fabrics**

Enterprises need to exhibit a favorable public image to attract consumers [58]. In the uniform market, companies are consumers of professional clothing; therefore, based on the analysis of corporate public image, the use of sustainable uniform fabrics can help companies establish a good social image. Companies believe that sustainability is a crucial way of demonstrating their social status [31]. Nevertheless, due to the high price of eco-friendly fabrics, during the decision-making process of green procurement implementation, enterprises face similar choices as individual consumers. Implementing green procurement entails purchasing green products from other companies, which results in higher costs of raw materials [59] and more expensive uniforms. Similar to consumer motivation for purchasing luxury goods and willingness to pay premiums to maintain their social image despite their limited income, this study proposes the following assumptions related to the motivation to maintain a public image:

- H1a: The degree to which a company recognises its own public image is positively related to its environmental awareness of sustainable clothing.
- H1b: The degree to which a company attaches importance to its public image is positively related to its acceptance of premium eco-friendly products.

### **Corporate ethics and the adoption of eco-friendly professional clothing fabrics**

Consumers believe that the natural or recyclable materials in sustainable clothing contain less harmful components and that the entire production process is healthy and safe. The use of sustainable and eco-friendly fabrics is not only beneficial to the protection of the ecological environment but also to the welfare of employees [18]. Moral awareness can be positive for sustainable fashion products; therefore, companies with social ethics are more likely to adopt eco-friendly professional clothing fabrics. This study infers that such acceptance is related to the importance attached by enterprises to corporate ethics and moral values. For example, consumers who are more willing to purchase eco-friendly baby products and companies with a culture of car-

ing and responsibility are more willing to pay a premium for sustainable products. Therefore, the following assumptions related to the ethical awareness of enterprises and procurement possibilities of eco-friendly professional clothing fabrics are proposed:

- H2a: The degree to which a company attaches importance to its corporate ethics is positively related to its environmental awareness of sustainable clothing.
- H2b: The degree to which a company attaches importance to ethics is positively related to its acceptance of premium environmentally friendly products.

### **Mainstream social status of employees and adoption of eco-friendly professional clothing fabrics**

The literature review and analysis of demographic characteristics above show that high education and high income are the common features of most sustainable product consumers [60, 61]. These consumers are consistent in possessing traits of the “middle class”, who, in the process of consumption, also clearly pursue quality [62] as an important indicator to be differentiated from other classes [63]. For consumers who value their social status and class, consuming sustainable products is a new method for them to show their attributes [64]. The higher the level of education, income, and social class, the more concerned these consumers are about environmental issues and the greater the likelihood of their participation in green consumption activities, such as recycling and energy conservation. On the one hand, highly educated people may have purchase intentions towards sustainable fashion products, but the sustainable product premium may hinder its transformation into purchase behaviour. However, with the support of economic strength, the intention could turn into buying behavior. On the other hand, consumer groups with favourable economic power are also sometimes not willing to pay for premiums [8]. Therefore, consumers with high income are likely to purchase sustainable products only if they have a positive environmental attitude. Based on the analysis above, neither the educational nor income factor alone can constitute a motivation for consumers to purchase sustainable fashion products. Thus, this study presents the following assumptions about the mainstream social status of employees and

procurement possibilities of eco-friendly professional clothing fabrics:

- H3a: The overall educational level of employees is positively related to their environmental awareness of sustainable clothing.
- H3b: The overall salary level of employees is positively correlated with the acceptance of the premium for eco-friendly products.

## **Quantitative investigation**

Following the exploratory research, due to the fact that qualitative research is beneficial for the investigation of complexities and processes, we proposed hypotheses and built a research model. In this section, we used an online survey to collect data and quantitatively examined the model. SPSS and AMOS were used to conduct data analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with maximum likelihood estimation was used to test the validity of measurement models with the data, and then structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted to test the hypotheses' relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables.

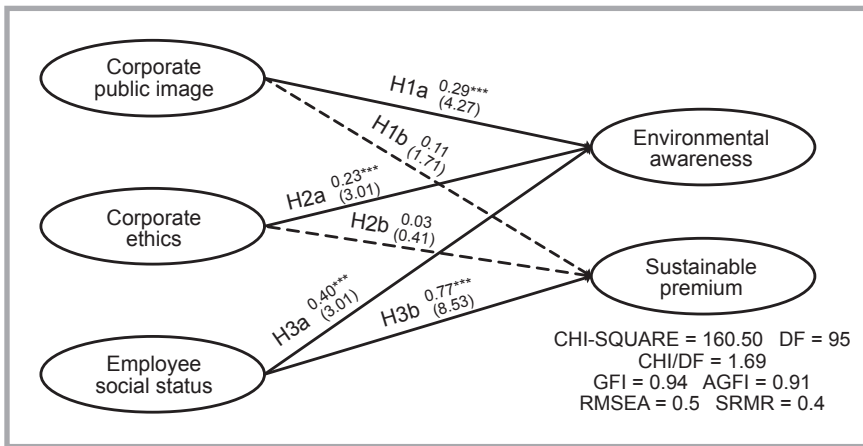
### **Data collection**

Overall, the survey collected a total of 340 responses, disseminated through Wenjuanxing (an online survey sampling agency) during a one-month period from October 3, 2019 to November 2, 2019, resulting in 294 valid surveys. The surveys were randomly sent to males and females from all walks of life. All the respondents joined voluntarily and anonymously and completed a questionnaire survey in exchange for a 30-yuan shopping coupon for Tmall, an online retail outlet.

A total of 60.2% of the respondents were female, and 39.8% were male. Most of the respondents (81.63%) were between the ages of 26 and 40 years old. Most of them were well-educated (79.3%) (college students or holding at least one college degree), and the majority of the participants worked in private enterprises (175), followed by state-owned enterprises (74), foreign-funded enterprises (30), joint ventures (12), and others (3).

### **Reliability and validity**

Initially, all latent constructs with multiple items in this study were subjected to CFA. Items were retained if they loaded above 0.50 on one factor [65] and below 0.30 on other factors [66]. Thereafter, the



**Figure 1.** Results of structural model testing in structural equation modelling. **Note:** Dotted lines indicate non-significant relationships between variables. \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Cronbach's alpha of the current study ranged from 0.83 to 0.85, thereby exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70 for sufficient internal consistency [67]. Apart from Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR) estimates exceeded the recommended 0.70 threshold for all constructs, and the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded the recommended 0.50 threshold [67, 68], indicating adequate internal consistency. **Table 1** presents the results.

**Structural model assessment and hypothesis testing**

The six hypotheses based on the conceptual model were tested concurrently using analysis of moment structures (AMOS) based on the correlations among the construct measures. The structural model revealed a good level of fit (chi-square = 160.50, df = 95, Goodness-of-fit Index ((GFI)) = 0.94, Adjusted Goodness-of-fit Index ((AGFI)) = 0.91, Comparative Fit Index ((CFI)) = 0.98,

Root Mean Square Error of Approximation ((RMSEA)) = 0.5, Root Mean Square Error ((SRMR)) = 0.4) according to recommended cut-off values (i.e., GFI > 0.90, AGFI > 0.90, CFI > 0.90, RMSEA < 0.06, SRMR < 0.08), as suggested by [68] and [69]. **Figure 1** presents the results.

The results of the hypothesis testing are illustrated in **Table 2**. As indicated, all the relationships between the motivational variables and environment awareness were significant, thus H1a ( $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $t = 4.27$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), H2a ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $t = 3.01$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and H3a ( $\beta = 0.40$ ,  $t = 4.88$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) were accepted. However, two variables (H1b and H2b) were rejected in terms of sustainable premium; only the employee's salary and educational level could positively affect the sustainable premium (H3b). As expected, the employee's mainstream social status is the most influential motivational condition behind sustainable consumption in the choice of uniform.

**Results and conclusions**

**Results**

The purpose of this article is to increase the usage of eco-friendly fabrics in uniform manufacturing to alleviate the burden of textile waste on the environment. The motivation for using eco-friendly fabrics can be analysed from three aspects: corporate public image, corporate ethics, and employee social status. This study shows that corporate public image (H1a,  $p < 0.001$ ), corporate ethics (H2a,  $p < 0.005$ ), and employee social status (H3a,  $p < 0.001$ ) can all augment a company's environmental awareness in sustainable procurement. However, only by increasing the employee social status (H3b,  $p < 0.001$ ) can a company increase its ability to accept the premium for sustainable procurement. On the one hand, corporate public image (H1b,  $p > 0.05$ ) and corporate ethics (H2b,  $p > 0.05$ ) are not correlated to such a sustainable premium, while on the other, employee social status, including the level of education attainment and salary, manifests a significant influence on a company's decision to purchase eco-friendly products. Compared with low levels, high levels of employee education and salary lead to greater concerns about environmental issues, and thus the greater possibility for participation in green consumption. Therefore, promoting eco-friendly fabrics in uniform manufacturing can start from

**Table 1.** Results of CFA for all scale items used in hypothesis testing.

| Latent variables                | Indicators | Loadings | Alpha | CR   | AVE  |
|---------------------------------|------------|----------|-------|------|------|
| Corporate public image          | PI1        | 0.85     | 0.84  | 0.84 | 0.64 |
|                                 | PI2        | 0.82     |       |      |      |
|                                 | PI3        | 0.74     |       |      |      |
| Corporate ethics                | CE1        | 0.80     | 0.83  | 0.83 | 0.62 |
|                                 | CE2        | 0.77     |       |      |      |
|                                 | CE3        | 0.79     |       |      |      |
| Employee social status          | ES1        | 0.77     | 0.85  | 0.85 | 0.59 |
|                                 | ES2        | 0.80     |       |      |      |
|                                 | ES3        | 0.74     |       |      |      |
|                                 | ES4        | 0.76     |       |      |      |
| Apparel environmental awareness | AE1        | 0.76     | 0.83  | 0.83 | 0.62 |
|                                 | AE2        | 0.77     |       |      |      |
|                                 | AE3        | 0.83     |       |      |      |
| Sustainable premium             | SP1        | 0.82     | 0.84  | 0.85 | 0.65 |
|                                 | SP2        | 0.75     |       |      |      |
|                                 | SP3        | 0.84     |       |      |      |

**Table 2.** Hypothesis testing for the conceptual model. **Note:** \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

|     | Variable relationship                            | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | P    | Result |
|-----|--|----------|------|------|------|--------|
| H1a | Corporate public image → Environmental awareness | 0.29     | 0.07 | 4.27 | ***  | Accept |
| H1b | Corporate public image → Sustainable premium     | 0.11     | 0.06 | 1.71 | 0.09 | Reject |
| H2a | Corporate ethics → Environmental awareness       | 0.23     | 0.08 | 3.01 | **   | Accept |
| H2b | Corporate ethics → Sustainable premium           | 0.03     | 0.08 | 0.41 | 0.69 | Reject |
| H3a | Employee social status → Environmental awareness | 0.40     | 0.08 | 4.88 | ***  | Accept |
| H3b | Employee social status → Sustainable premium     | 0.77     | 0.09 | 8.54 | ***  | Accept |

the company management of certain industries, such as finance, aerospace, and hospitality. In line with Markkula and Moisander's (2012) research [45], our study found that such industries tend to have relatively higher educational and salary levels than in other fields, and may thus more easily promote uniforms made from sustainable fabrics.

### Contribution

This study presents a significant theoretical and practical contribution to sustainable consumption research. From the theoretical standpoint, previous research proved the three important factors (social, economic, and environmental) in building firms' social responsibility, but they failed to explore the relationship among them [44, 70]. Our study takes the corporate public image and ethics as the "social" aspect and employee welfare as the "economic" aspect, to test the impact on environmental consumption in China's Uniform Market. In addition, this study extends the literature on sustainable consumption in the uniform market. China's uniform market is large in scale and involves a broad population, but it has received less research attention. Therefore, this study fills this gap by focusing on the material of professional garments and aiming to increase the proportion of eco-friendly fabrics in uniform production. As such, waste and pollution resulting from the textile industry can be reduced, which ultimately contributes to the holistic sustainable development in China. From the practical view, this study assesses the feasibility of popularising eco-friendly fabrics in China's uniform market. Three motivations are defined, namely, corporate public image, corporate ethics, and employee social status, where the latter includes educational background and salary level. The results reveal that the improvement of employees' social status can effectively increase the probability of utilising eco-friendly fabrics, which indicates that employees' education and salary levels are pivotal factors of eco-friendly fabric consumption. Hence, in the short term, enterprises can provide their employees with greater subsidies for vocational purchases and encourage sustainable consumption. In the long term, environmental awareness may be cultivated in employees to enhance their sense of social responsibility. In general, consumers with high levels of sustainable concern are more aware of environment issues, supportive of problem-solving efforts, and willing to pay

for eco-friendly products. In summary, this study recommends that firms not only introduce strong strategies to build a reputable corporate public image and corporate ethics, but also make efforts to educate companies and employees on sustainable awareness and encourage sustainable fabrics consumption in the choice of uniform products.



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