

Social Media Communication for Sufficiency in Fashion

Investigating the Case of Houdini Sportswear on Instagram

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Abstract *This chapter examines the Instagram of Houdini Sportswear, a sustainability-focused fashion retailer, to reveal certain strategies promoting sufficiency-oriented consumption. Potential rebound effects and inconsistencies exist on Instagram, while it ignores other strategies identified in the literature. We contribute to understanding how fashion companies can utilize social media to foster sufficiency.*

1. Introduction

The prevailing growth- and profit-oriented economic and business model, far from promoting sustainable lifestyles, has been driven by relentless consumerism with ever-increasing demand and consumption (Jackson 2009; Gasper et al. 2019). This approach pays little heed to the increasingly evident planetary boundaries (Worrell/Carreon 2017) and is supported by the lack of internalization of the social and environmental costs of products and services (Kallis 2017). Materialism, a driving force behind this consumerism, continues to resist under the umbrella of “sustainable growth” supported by the 2030 Agenda (Gasper et al. 2019).

The fashion industry is known for its resource-intensive and polluting practices with serious large-scale negative environmental and social impacts (Niinimäki et al. 2020) and serves as a mirror of consumerism and materialism in our society. This has been reinforced by phenomena such as fast fashion and the limitless possibilities offered by the internet and social media that have revolutionized the way companies stay connected and interact with consumers (Buzzo/Abreu 2019; Reilly/Hynan 2014) and ultimately influence consumer behavior (Strähle/Gräff 2017).

Shifting away from overconsumption is a pressing sustainability challenge (Armstrong et al. 2015), and embracing more responsible and sustainable consumption patterns not only contributes to the mitigation of negative impacts but

also promises a series of benefits for consumers and opens doors to new business opportunities (Garcia-Ortega et al. 2023). However, while many fashion companies have made substantial progress toward a circular economy and are reducing their impact per product throughout their value chain, the issue of (over)consumption of their products has remained largely unaddressed (Niinimäki et al. 2020).

In response to this problem, movements like slow fashion (Fletcher 2010) and sufficiency-driven business models (Bocken/Short 2016) advocate for a transition towards more mindful and conscious consumer behavior in purchasing, using, disposing and managing products. Companies may play an active and crucial role in this shift due to their influence on consumer motivations and behaviors (Gossen et al. 2019). However, achieving this transformation is in conflict with the prevailing economic and business model, necessitating extensive changes to overcome various economic, institutional, cultural, social and practical barriers (Veleva 2021; Niinimäki et al. 2020).

In this context, it is particularly interesting to examine how a fashion company with a pronounced focus on sustainable consumption leverages communication to promote sufficiency-oriented consumption, investigating the embracing of business strategies to reach this goal and assessing potential areas of improvement as a benchmark for other companies aiming to follow this approach. In this regard, this chapter expands upon the research conducted by Gossen and Kropfeld (2022), by adopting a recently proposed fashion-specific framework by Garcia-Ortega et al. (2023), which focuses on the promotion of sufficient consumption of fashion products. Thus, it takes the case study of Houdini Sportswear, a fashion retailer recognized for its strong orientation towards sustainability and its ambition for more sustainable consumption patterns (Holtström et al. 2019), and utilizes the mentioned framework to analyze the company's communication on the social media platform Instagram over a 12-month period from October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023. This framework includes a set of strategies organized into three pillars for fashion companies to promote sufficient consumption: design for durability, alternative product/service systems and fair promotion and information (Garcia-Ortega et al. 2023).

As a result, the following research questions are established, organized in two blocks:

- Is Houdini Sportswear promoting sufficient consumption through its official Instagram account? If so, through which strategies?
- Are there areas for improvement? What lessons can managers of this and other companies in the fashion industry draw from this?

After this introduction, the literature review addresses the issue of overconsumption in fashion, the sufficiency-driven approach and the role of fashion companies in promoting sufficient consumption, with the strategies at their disposal. Subse-

quently, the case study and method are presented, followed by the presentation and discussion of results, and finally, conclusions are provided.

2. Literature review

Even though many fashion items such as clothing may be considered a basic need, consumption motives at different stages of fashion consumption have been dominated by emotional and social reasons governed by materialistic values (Pepper et al. 2009) rather than by rational or practical considerations (Cao et al. 2014). In addition to fulfilling basic needs and personal preferences, consumers may seek self-realization, express values or an image, construct an identity, secure social status or recognition, align with a particular group, follow or set trends, find attractive bargains, alleviate anxiety, mask personal issues or simply derive entertainment and enjoyment from the act of shopping (Gabriel 2021; Tarnanidis et al. 2015; Blazquez 2014; Fletcher 2013).

The sufficiency movement challenges the dominant consumer culture based on materialistic values and encourages the reconsideration of existing consumption levels and patterns to realize more responsible and sustainable consumption while pursuing well-being (Niessen et al. 2023; Bocken et al. 2022). This entails a focus on essential and relevant needs while discarding artificial needs, eliminating the superfluous or dispensable. Green demarketing initiatives of companies that encourage consumers to buy less and only what is truly needed for the sake of sustainability (Hesse/Rünz 2022; Armstrong Soule/Reich 2015) align with the promotion of sufficient consumption.

Consumers are purportedly the decision-makers when it comes to consumption. However, their individual or personal choices are highly influenced by the environment (Sheth 2020), conditioned not only by the embedded values in our society but also by the way companies shape their offering, value proposition, competitive strategy and marketing (Stål/Jansson, 2017; Bocken et al. 2014; Gossen et al. 2019).

Fashion businesses may find several motivations to promote sufficient consumption. They are becoming increasingly aware of the social and environmental impacts stemming from their products and services (Zhang et al. 2018). Some companies may be driven by altruistic or ethical motives, fostering a sufficiency-based approach due to self-conviction (Gossen et al. 2019). Furthermore, these businesses face mounting pressure and scrutiny from society and institutions, urging them to adopt more responsible practices (Bocken/Short 2016; Bocken 2017). They may aim to enhance their image, reputation and trustworthiness (Hwang et al. 2016; Bocken/Short 2016; Hajli 2014), ultimately seeking to build and maintain customer loyalty (Ndubisi 2007). Companies may also glimpse the symptoms of exhaustion of the dominant consumption-led growth model and look for new business opportunities

(Bocken/Short 2016; Jung/Jin 2016; Hwang et al. 2016), reducing their dependence on high sale volumes (Garcia-Ortega et al. 2023).

However, the adoption of a sufficiency-based approach poses a significant challenge for fashion companies. They operate in a highly competitive environment, where the prevailing norm is to continuously offer and sell more to sustain their business and maximize growth and profits while trying to decouple their growth from their negative impacts (Bocken/Short 2016; Hwang et al. 2016), sometimes overly focused on delivering short-term value to shareholders (Bocken/Short, 2016). Fashion companies in different segments have been criticized for their traditional aggressive sales, the use of fashion change agents to influence fashion followers or the ‘fear of missing out’ technique to encourage novelty-seeking and impulse buying among consumers (Blazquez et al. 2020). Fast fashion is a clear example against sufficient consumption, due to its formula to promote overconsumption consisting of big rotation and constant novelty, with easy access to the latest trend inexpensive products, often inspired by designs worn by celebrities (Niinimäki et al. 2020; Ozdamar Ertekin/Atik 2015; Cline 2013).

Overall, fighting overconsumption by encouraging sufficient consumption in fashion runs against the business logic mainstream (Garcia-Ortega et al. 2023) and requires bold and innovative business strategies (Freudenreich/Schaltegger 2020). Several studies have proposed models, frameworks or comprehensive lists of general or cross-sectoral business sufficiency strategies (i.e. Niessen/Bocken 2021; Gossen et al. 2019; Bocken/Short 2016). In turn, other researchers have taken a sector-specific approach, focusing on industries like food (Bocken et al. 2020) or fashion (Garcia-Ortega et al. 2023; Gossen/Heinrich 2021; Freudenreich/Schaltegger 2020). In particular, Garcia-Ortega et al. (2023) introduced a framework for fashion companies to foster a more sufficient consumption with three pillars or dimensions: design for durability, alternative product and service systems and fair promotion and information, with subsequent business strategies as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Framework of business strategies to promote sufficient consumption (Garcia-Ortega et al., 2023)

Business strategies to promote sufficient consumption in fashion		
1. Design for durability <i>Design eco-efficient products to strengthen their lifespan and usability by fighting all kinds of obsolescence (physical, emotional or social)</i>	2. Alternative product/service systems <i>Adopt alternative product/service systems to keep products in use instead of product disposal; moderate acquisition of new items</i>	3. Fair promotion & information <i>Contribute to better-informed consumer decisions and practices. Influence and facilitate consumer attitudes, education and behaviour against physical, social and emotional obsolescence</i>
1.1 Design durable, reliable products that keep their physical and functional attributes over time	2.1 Offer repair, refurbishment or customization services	3.1 Moderate sales and promotion of new items – Avoid aggressive marketing campaigns based on successive collections and trends and/or low prices. – Avoid fostering the pleasure of shopping just for fun or to show status
1.2 Design easy-to-maintain, repair or refurbish products to keep their physical and functional attributes over time	2.2 Offer consultancy services on how to continue wearing or using products	3.2 Promote convenience and enjoyment of consuming and using responsibly through more sufficient lifestyle; promote needs against desire through logic of eco-efficient use to maximize resources involved in the product; nurture perception of products as durables and not as consumables
1.3 Design seasonless products, with durable emotional bond or emotionally upgradable to changing tastes, to keep their appeal or attractiveness over time	2.3 Facilitate collection of discarded products to give them second life (second-hand sale and/or donation)	3.3 Promote product's value (value proposition), convenience of extending its use by logic of maximizing return on investment and savings by avoiding new purchases. Possibility of higher selling price
1.4 Involve users in design to facilitate 1.3	2.4 Adopt access-based service models, via collaborative consumption, as part of sharing economy, with formulas such as rental, leasing, pay-per-use, wardrobe-sharing or swapping	3.4 Provide information on product impact (e.g., Higg Index tool), durability, use and care and reparability through labeling, information campaigns, etc.

3. Case study

The methodology employed is a qualitative single-case study, which facilitates a comprehensive examination of a specific case within a defined context (Eisenhardt/Graebner 2007). The approach followed is exploratory and illustrative (Gustafsson 2017) and serves to carry out a critical evaluation and provide recommendations.

The selected company is Houdini Sportswear, a Swedish privately owned fashion company, established in 1993, that designs and manufactures outdoor clothing and gear. It operates primarily in the business-to-consumer model, selling its products through its online store and its own physical retail locations, as well as through other partner retailers. Houdini Sportswear can be classified as an SME. As per its LinkedIn profile (Houdini Sportswear 2023a), as of October 2023, Houdini Sportswear employed more than 70 individuals, the majority of whom were located in Sweden. The company experienced a consistent double-digit turnover growth in recent years, with the exception of a temporary interruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, its annual turnover amounted to approximately 20 million Euros (PFR 2023). Its main markets are Sweden and Norway, but it is also present in other countries such as Germany, Austria, Japan, China, the USA and Canada (Holtsröm et al. 2019).

As per the information provided on its website (Houdini Sportswear 2023b), its Swedish origins significantly influence the way the company perceives nature, society and human interaction. The company stands out for its strong sustainability orientation and its specific focus on pursuing a more sustainable consumption of its products. Some extracts of the ‘Houdini Manifesto’ issued by the company in November 2017 clearly illustrate the above as follows (Houdini Sportswear 2023b):

“The current system, where products are produced, used and discarded at an ever increasing pace, is not working. Our mission is to transform into a circular system in harmony with our world.”

“We will fight overconsumption.”

“We will keep working to maximize our negative footprint, move beyond zero, and leave an entirely positive impact on the world.”

Although the concepts of sufficiency or sufficient consumption are not explicitly mentioned, they underlie its value proposition. As an example, the company refers to “fight overconsumption” or “do more with less” on its website, aligned with the principles of the sufficiency-driven approach (Bocken/Short 2016). On its website (Houdini Sportswear 2023b), it promotes physically and emotionally durable products and addresses different ways to extend the lifespan of its products. It has an initiative called “Houdini Reuse” since 2011 and provides a repair service in its stores (Houdini Sportswear 2023b). Additionally, the company has a dedicated section on

its website for product care and reducing its negative impact. Furthermore, as an explorative alternative business initiative, in September 2023 the company opened its first “Houdini Circle”, an experimental store that offers new products but also addresses circular business models such as renting, reusing and repairing (Houdini Sportswear 2023b). Thus, Houdini Sportswear can be considered as a referent in the fashion sustainability arena in order to analyze its communication through the social network Instagram from the lens of sufficient consumption.

Among the most popular social networks with written content utilized by Houdini, Instagram was chosen as the primary platform for analysis. The Instagram account was accessible through the following link: <https://www.instagram.com/houdinisportswear/?hl=en>. During the analysis period, spanning from October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023, a total of 174 posts were published over regular intervals. These posts were individually examined by the first two authors to identify their purpose and associated codes related to sufficient consumption and other promotion strategies. In a subsequent step, the two authors collaborated to contrast and resolve any discrepancy in the assigned codes, thus reducing possible bias. The coding process combined a deductive approach, based on the established strategies in the adopted framework (Table 1, strategies 1.1 to 3.4 or opposite to them) and an inductive approach where the authors identified and grouped other emergent categories or themes throughout the posts. This additional inductive coding process for the remaining categories served to contextualize the promotion of strategies aimed at sufficient consumption and its relative weight and significance within the company’s communication through this channel.

The next section presents and discusses the results and their implications in relation to the established research questions.

4. Results and discussion

As a result of the analysis carried out, Table 2 presents the classification of posts with illustrative examples of each code or theme identified.

Table 2: Classification of Houdini Sportswear Instagram posts between October 1, 2022, and September 30, 2023

Code	Quantity of posts	Example
Suffic. Strategy 1.1	4	Durable performance at its finest: Mono Air marks a new generation of mid layers... December 14, 2022.
Suffic. Strategies 1.1 & 3.2 combined	1	Worn 100 times more than the average garment in the Western world, our Power Houdi has proven its worth to our users since 2003. Versatile, durable and oh so comfortable, this fleece is a gift that'll keep on giving. December 8, 2022.
Suffic. Strategy 1.3	1	... The idea was to make a pair of pants with a robust, timeless model and all the benefits of modern performance fabrics. July 31, 2023
Suffic. Strategy 2.1	1	...Drawing inspiration from their past, HODAKOVA converts old garments and materials into luxury goods. For her FW23 show, she converted reclaimed Houdini garments into ready-to-wear pieces, giving them another life after they've been well-used on their adventures. March 3, 2023.
Suffic. Strategy 2.4 (rental)	1	Have you ever wondered which products are perfect for ski clothing rental? @cirkelsupply spoke to @houdinisportswear to understand their design principles, and the qualities that make for an awesome rental product! April 12, 2023.
Suffic. Strategies 2.1 & 2.4 combined	1	Have you tried Houdini Rental? Pick and choose your gear for each adventure and leave the hassle of washing, fixing or storing to us. Pop by our stores in Stockholm, Åre och Göteborg or click the link in bio to rent online! (Sweden only). Don't live in Sweden? Our partner @CirkelSupply delivers directly to your destination in the Swiss Alps. February 2, 2023
Suffic. Strategies 2.1, 2.3 & 2.4 + Shop visiting/subscription promotion	7	Houdini Circle is now open! Welcome to the world's first circular hub for outdoor apparel, where any garment you see can be bought new, rented or subscribed to. Rent, reuse, repair, buy, try or subscribe: The choice is yours. Welcome to the Circle Find Houdini Circle on Norrlandsgatan 12 in Stockholm. September 28, 2023

Suffic. Strategy 3.2	23	... Gustav has been serious about reducing his environmental impact for a few years – and that includes reducing his wardrobe. Taking on the #LiveLargeWithLess challenge last summer, Gustav stayed with it, landing in an overall wardrobe size of 15 garments which he's been using since summer last year. August 8, 2023
Green marketing & Suffic. Strategy 1.1	1	...The lanolin provides an all-natural DWR (durable water repellency), without adding any chemicals. The best part? Because the DWR is integrated in the yarn, rather than in a layer added on top of the fabric, it won't wash out. While it doesn't make for a fully waterproof fabric, Lana will protect you from showers and winter winds for a long period of time... December 22, 2022
Total qty. of posts related to promoting sufficient consumption	40	
Green marketing	27	Did you know that most waterproof clothing available today is a hazard to ourselves and the world around us? They're often treated with PFAS, a group of chemicals that don't break down naturally, are cancerous and have shown negative effects on both reproductive and immune systems for humans and animals. All Houdini outdoorwear is made from circular performance fabrics and never treated with toxic PFAS. That's what we call the clean alternative. November 18, 2022

Optimized design and production adjusted to demand (sufficiency on offering side)	3	<i>Back by popular demand: Less – made to order.</i> <i>With the launch of the Less project earlier this spring we took our very first steps in a long-term ambition to scale a made to order, micro factory program on a global level. That first batch was limited, and many of you have reached out asking for a second chance to get your hands on a Less Jacket or a pair of Less Pants.</i> <i>We are humbled and overwhelmed by the fantastic response and the fact that so many of you love Less as much as we do. Said and done, we have set it up with our friends at @a_industri_ who are now ready for another round of orders.</i> <i>This second batch of Less is open for orders from today until Friday 29 of June. June 21, 2023</i>
Total qty. of posts related to green product	30	
Environmental awareness/activism	6	<i>For the second year in a row, we're supporting our partners @naturskyddsforeningen for their special project to promote biodiversity: Operation Save the Bees... June 9, 2023</i>
Environmental activism & engaging promotion	3	<i>Our Ride Clean contest ends this month! Help stop PFAS and win a gift card worth 10 000 SEK. Join us in our mission towards a better outdoor industry. Help raise awareness on PFAS and win a gift card worth 10 000 SEK to spend on 100% PFAS-free Houdini gear.</i> February, 7, 2023
'Femvertising'	2	<i>Hailing from the USA and Norway, both Kjersti and Chanelle have a passion for combining their love for outdoor sports with a drive to support, encourage and empower women in the outdoor industry.</i> March 7, 2023
'Ethvertising'	1	<i>February 6th is Sámi National Day, commemorating the day Indigenous People of Sápmi in Northern Europe gathered for the first time in 1917 to unite behind their common cause: The fight for their rights...</i> February 6, 2023
'Disabvertising'	1	<i>Meet Houdini Friends Albert and Beatrice, ski instructors at @viut_outdoor: A platform for deaf people and people with hearing loss to explore the outdoors.</i> December 5, 2022
Total qty. of posts related to social and environmental causes	13	

Conventional product promotion	51	Our garments are designed to work together in a layering system. A smart combination of garments, fabrics and textures will enhance any outdoor experience, whether you're commuting in unpredictable weather or climbing big walls in the cold. February 2, 2023
Product promotion opposite to Suffic Strategy 3.1	2	Last chance to order our first ever made on demand garments: Less Jackets & Pants... June 29, 2023
Suffic. Strategy 2.3 & product promotion opposite to Suffic Strategy 3.1 combined	1	Psst: We've restocked our Reuse section on our website! Find your second-hand Houdini favorites online now before they're gone. February 23, 2023
Total qty. of posts related to product promotion	54	
Company contribution	1	...We might have come further than most, but I can humbly say that we don't have all the solutions. However, I can promise you this: Houdini will continue to play its part, without compromise, always with honesty and open source. I hope you will continue being our co-creators on this extraordinary ride... December 29, 2022
Inspiring nature/ad-venture	13	Meet our new friend Emma, bad ass skier and climber with an adventurous spirit! Originally from Skellefteå, Emma currently lives in Tromsø, Norway where she has access to world-class skiing and climbing. When she's not in the mountains, Emma works as a nurse in emergency care... March 27, 2023
Customer engagement activity/event	19	Giveaway Alert: Win two tickets to Banff Film Festival in Sweden! Adventure awaits! Tag a friend and win tickets for you and your pal to a cinematic adventure. September 20, 2023
General customer engaging communication	4	Friendly reminder to get outside! June 19, 2023
Total qty. of posts	174	

The results show that the most recurrent posts are the ones related to conventional “product promotion” (n=54) focused on its features or functionality. Among these posts, three of them show a certain intention to stimulate demand. These posts, not to be considered as part of aggressive marketing campaigns, generate the “fear of missing out” (Blazquez et al. 2020), creating a sense of urgency that encourages consumers to take prompt action, which can be considered to go against the spirit of promoting sufficient consumption. While it is reasonable for any company to highlight the qualities of its products, regardless of its business approach, as explained later, these types of posts, although sporadic, do not align well with a sufficiency approach and raise doubts on the authenticity of the company’s sustainable fashion marketing (Ritch 2023). Similar types of inconsistencies or contradictory promotion strategies were also found in the study of Niessen et al. (2023) when examining the historical print advertisements of fashion brand Levi’s.

Another significant part of Houdini Sportswear’s communication focuses on brand image associated with nature and adventure, with 13 posts, and customer engagement, primarily through various activities or events that promote interaction and brand connection, accounting for 19 posts. As a sign of its sustainability orientation, Houdini Sportswear dedicates a substantial part of its communication on Instagram to the environmentally sustainable nature of its products, with a total of 31 related posts, including 27 posts directly related to green marketing (Peattie/Charter 2012). The company positions itself as environmentally and socially responsible through 13 posts that advocate environmental awareness, gender equality causes (‘femvertising’), ethnic diversity causes (‘ethvertizing’), and support for disabled individuals (‘disabltizing’).

In response to the first block of our research questions: *Is Houdini Sportswear promoting sufficient consumption through its Instagram official account? If so, through which strategies?*, the company’s strong emphasis on sufficiency within its sustainability-oriented business approach is clearly reflected in the relatively high number of posts dedicated to it, specifically on the promotion of sufficient consumption, totaling 40 posts, 23 per cent of all posts. This is significant both in terms of quantity and as a percentage of the total, especially when compared to the research of Gossen and Kropfeld (2022), a study that focused on six outdoor industry companies engaging in sufficiency-oriented promotion initiatives. Nonetheless, this approach does not seem to be hindering its growth, as indicated by its business development and evolving figures.

Among the strategies adopted, strategy 3.2 from the reference framework stands out, consisting of promoting convenience and enjoyment of consuming and using responsibly through a more sufficient lifestyle. The company communicates in a recurrent, explicit and straightforward manner the need to rationalize the consumption of new products and provides examples of how to do this.

On the supply side, the company dedicates three posts to moderating and adjusting the quantity of production to meet demand and avoid surpluses. However, there is a potential rebound effect (Bocken et al. 2022) due to scarcity and collections running out, which could incentivize consumption.

Other identified strategies to encourage sufficient consumption through its posts with a relevant share include the product's physical and functional durability (strategy 1.1) and the promotion of alternative product or service systems that contribute to keeping products in use and moderating the acquisition of new products, such as repair or refurbishment (strategy 2.1), the sale of second-hand products (strategy 2.3) and the option to rent or share products (strategy 2.4), all offered in a store where the purchase of new products is just one of the alternatives. Even though these strategies primarily aim to promote more sufficient consumption, when considering all these offerings in the same store, it is reasonable to think about the company attracting customers to their shops and exposing them to new items, potentially generating a call-to-action effect that could lead to an increase in the purchase of new products (Garcia-Ortega et al. 2023).

Moreover, the company avoids aggressive marketing campaigns or fostering the pleasure of shopping solely for fun or to display status, in line with strategy 3.1. Nevertheless, the presence of posts that contradict this strategy, albeit few in number, might lead to thinking about anti-consumerist washing (Garcia-Ortega et al. 2023) and undermine the company's credibility in its sufficiency-focused approach.

The remaining strategies from the reference framework to promote sufficient consumption are barely addressed, even though some of them are specifically mentioned or have dedicated sections on the company's website. These include timeless product design for emotional durability (2.3) or product care tips to extend their lifespan (3.4). Additionally, there are no posts referring to designs that facilitate product repair or maintenance (1.2), the offering of consultancy services to help customers continue using products (2.2) or the promotion of a product's value and the convenience of extending its use by maximizing the return on investment (3.3). When recalling our second block of research questions: *Are there areas for improvement? What lessons can managers of this and other companies in the fashion industry draw from this?*, these are strategies that the company could naturally apply with minimal additional effort and that are currently underutilized or ignored. Implementing these strategies could reinforce the ones already in place, generating synergies with a multiplier effect on their effectiveness (Garcia-Ortega et al. 2023).

Comparing these results with those of Gossen and Kropfeld (2022), the most recurrent strategies to promote sufficient consumption present in this case study are consistent with those in the sample studied by those authors. In line with the adopted framework, the two studies also share the findings that these companies not only promote sufficiency in their communication but also integrate new business models as a part of their sufficiency approach, treating them as complementary

concepts. Concerning the distinctions between the two studies, the absence of any mention of product design for repairability (strategy 1.2) is quite significant in the present case study, particularly given the availability and promotion of repair services (strategy 2.1). Similarly, the lack of product use and care advice (3.4) throughout the posts is remarkable. Additionally, in contrast to the findings of Gossen and Kropfeld (2022), Houdini Sportswear only features one post related to the timeless design of its products (strategy 1.3), which would help combat emotional obsolescence.

Thus, Houdini Sportswear can serve on the positive side as an illustrative example for managers in the industry for its clear commitment to sufficiency through the analysed social media platform and the recurrent embracement of certain strategies. Simultaneously, the study draws attention to the lack of consideration for various strategies in the adopted framework that could complement the existing ones, as well as the existence of questionable promotion techniques from the perspective of sufficient consumption, potentially casting doubt regarding the company's credibility and authenticity in its sustainability approach (Ritch 2023). Even firms with a remarkable sustainability orientation or clearly positioned in the sustainability arena may adopt a green (Peattie/Charter 2012) or a sufficiency-oriented marketing approach (Gossen et al. 2019) with the ultimate intention of fostering the consumption of their products by self-interest, not to mention falling into greenwashing (Ritch 2023; Gossen et al. 2019) or anti-consumerist washing practices (Garcia-Ortega et al., 2023).

5. Conclusions and implications

Following an extensive examination, categorization and analysis of the posts published by the fashion retailer Houdini Sportswear on the Instagram social network over the course of an entire year, and in response to the research questions, it can be concluded that Houdini Sportswear maintains a distinct sustainability focus marked by a pronounced sufficiency-driven approach in its posts. This approach is primarily underpinned by the promotion of the convenience and enjoyment of consuming and using the garments through a more sufficient lifestyle. This strategy falls within the ambit of the third pillar of strategies and is notably complemented by the overall avoidance of aggressive marketing campaigns that fuel consumerism, although with some occasional discrepancies.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the emerging literature that addresses the promotion of sufficient consumption through social media. It achieves this by applying Garcia-Ortega et al.'s (2023) framework of strategies in the context of social media communication and showing its relevance in exploring and assessing how fashion companies can utilize these platforms to promote sufficient

consumption of their products, thereby influencing consumer motivations and behaviors. In this sense, this research extends the study by Gossen and Kropfeld (2022) by providing fresh empirical evidence based on a comprehensive and sector-focused framework on how sufficiency-oriented fashion companies can leverage social media and improve their communication in such endeavors.

In terms of managerial and practical implications, this study aims to raise awareness among management of the concept of sufficient consumption and serves as a benchmark for how a fashion company can promote sufficient consumption of their products through social media platforms by combining strategies from the three pillars or dimensions of the adopted framework. It also identifies aspects that may be addressed to enhance the effectiveness of these efforts, including a broader and more prolific adoption of strategies in their communication. Additionally, the study highlights the potential rebound effects of certain strategies and emphasizes the importance for companies to avoid contradictory messages in their communication and promotion which may bring doubts about potential anti-consumerist washing practices and affect their credibility. Furthermore, Houdini Sportswear serves as a prime example of how a commitment to sufficient consumption and the application of demarketing strategies do not hinder business growth.

Moreover, this study also holds implications for consumers and governmental bodies, both of which are key stakeholders alongside businesses on the path to a more sustainable economic and societal model. It contributes to raising consumer and societal awareness and provides criteria for assessing companies' sufficiency approaches and communication strategies. Additionally, it offers insights to institutions in shaping criteria and setting boundaries for corporate marketing policies.

Finally, this research has inherent limitations due to its single-case design and reliance solely on Instagram posts as the primary data source. Future investigations can build upon this work by incorporating other companies with similar or distinct sustainability orientations, thus allowing for comparative analysis. Furthermore, findings suggest a need for exploration into the true motives and authenticity of sustainable fashion marketing (Ritch 2023). This could be realized by conducting interviews with social media management teams or by assessing other marketing channels (Gossen/Kropfeld 2022). Additionally, extending the temporal scope of research (Niessen et al. 2023) can enable the analysis of how these strategies evolve over time, providing insights into historical and potential trends and the future trajectory of this field.

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