

Sporting Style and Educational Values: A Contribution to Fashion Pedagogy

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Abstract

Keywords:

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Sports fashion plays a growing role in the global fashion industry by merging performance-oriented apparel with everyday style. This study examines its social and educational significance, emphasizing its dual function of utility and aesthetic appeal. A key distinction is drawn between sportswear—clothing designed for athletic performance—and sports fashion, which incorporates athletic elements into modern casual attire. This differentiation reveals the versatility of sports apparel and its impact beyond sports contexts, influencing lifestyle and identity. Sports fashion is also associated with values such as health, well-being, and environmental respect, promoting sustainable and responsible living through clothing choices. These values resonate with both intrinsic and extrinsic principles of sports education, such as teamwork, respect, and social engagement. Our research investigates how university students in Italy and Romania perceive these values in sports clothing. Using a structured questionnaire, we investigated how young consumers perceive and prioritize the ethical and cultural meanings inherent in sports fashion. Preliminary findings highlight similarities and differences in attitudes toward brand loyalty, cultural identity, and social responsibility. These results suggest that sports fashion plays a significant role in shaping personal and collective identities, particularly within international student communities. The research highlights the significance of sports fashion in influencing social behaviours and promoting progressive values, providing new insights for future studies on the intersection of clothing, education, and lifestyle.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, sports fashion has transitioned from a niche market into a significant cultural and economic phenomenon, profoundly reshaping how individuals perceive and engage with clothing. Initially driven by practical demands for comfort and performance, sports-inspired apparel now dominates not only the fitness sector but also mainstream fashion and lifestyle industries. This transformation reflects more profound societal shifts toward health consciousness, individual expression, and sustainable living (Maduna *et al.*, 2025), influencing consumer behaviours and market trends globally. Notably, the rise of athleisure—casual, comfortable clothing suitable for both exercise and everyday use—exemplifies this trend, highlighting a cultural preference for versatile apparel that aligns functionality with contemporary aesthetics and social values (Barnard, 2003).

Sports fashion is not merely a stylistic trend but represents a powerful platform for articulating

personal identity, collective belonging, and ethical consumption. Major fashion houses and athletic brands have increasingly incorporated sustainable materials, ethical labour practices, and inclusive designs into their collections, responding to growing consumer demands for transparency, accountability, and social impact (Kopplin, 2023). Consequently, sports fashion has become a critical intersection where fashion, sport, science, and social responsibility converge, revealing the potential of clothing to convey significant educational and ethical values (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2022; Nasrin *et al.*, 2023).

This paper aims to investigate the interplay between sports fashion and educational and social values, exploring how sports-inspired apparel influences the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviour of young people. Specifically, the study focuses on the interpretations and prioritization of values such as health, sustainability, teamwork, and cultural identity among Italian and Romanian university students



through their clothing choices. By employing a structured questionnaire, this research provides insight into the role sports fashion plays in shaping contemporary identities and fostering a shared sense of social responsibility among the younger generation.

2. The origins and evolution of sports fashion in Western culture

Sports fashion, as a distinct and influential domain of contemporary style, has its roots in the deep, symbolic mechanisms of fashion itself (Black, 2012). Fashion tends to mirror and draw inspiration from dominant sectors of society, historically reflecting core human drives such as aggression and sexuality. In earlier centuries, the military and religious spheres had a significant influence on fashion (Descamps, 1984). Today, however, sport and the automobile have replaced them as key cultural references, forging a close and reciprocal relationship with fashion.

Sportswear began as a utilitarian distinction from sports equipment. Items like shirts, shorts, and shoes were initially designed for functionality, but they gradually evolved into expressions of identity and style. While sport can be practised without clothing—as in ancient Greece or certain modern nudist activities—garments came to play an essential role not just in performance but in social representation. Early sports clothing often reflected the ornate traditions of medieval and aristocratic uniforms. Over time, however, there was a shift toward simplification and body exposure, particularly during the 20th century, when sport became increasingly linked to public spectacle and mass media (Entwistle, 2015).

Clothing in sport serves multiple symbolic purposes. Beyond utility, it supports a collective taste for ritual and ceremony. Uniforms foster team cohesion and express identity, pride, and solidarity. Phrases like "defending the colours" or "sweating under the same jersey" convey the shared emotional and cultural significance attached to sports attire. Rituals like jersey exchanges during international competitions elevate these garments to symbols of mutual respect and global sportsmanship.

Fashion trends strongly influence sportswear. Styles vary by age, gender, type of sport, and the intensity of practice. A sociological study of teenagers participating in team sports in Paris revealed distinct dress codes for football, basketball, volleyball, and handball, illustrating how sports clothing conveys social codes beyond the field. Colour preferences, cuts, and accessories are often determined not by

performance needs but by fashion trends, peer pressure, and media portrayal (Barnard, 2014).

Conversely, sport has profoundly shaped modern fashion. Athletic clothing styles have been incorporated into everyday wardrobes for over a century. Riding coats inspired the redingote; cycling and motor racing apparel influenced casual wear. The tracksuit—once deemed sloppy—has evolved into a chic staple for leisure and urban life. Golf knickers, sailor suits, après-ski boots, windbreakers, and even martial arts uniforms (like the judogi) have become fashion items, recontextualised beyond their original use. This influence extends to accessories and lifestyle products. Sunglasses, gloves, bags, and watches often emulate the aesthetics of sports. Car design itself borrows from the streamlined efficiency of racing vehicles. The sport-inspired lifestyle has become so pervasive that terms like "Sprint" or "Stadium" are used to market everything from cafés to wellness centres. Major sports brands now offer diversified product lines, blurring the lines between performance and everyday life.

At a deeper cultural level, the rise of sport as a central value system in modern society explains its influence on fashion. The state's investment in sport, including the creation of ministries and large sports infrastructures, reveals a collective shift: sport is no longer just entertainment—it embodies modern ideals of excellence, community, merit, and aspiration (Chew & Leng, 2016). There is no doubt that sports fashion is not merely a functional response to athletic needs; it is a dynamic cultural phenomenon. Rooted in historical symbolism, social identity, and mass communication, it bridges the gap between body and style, ritual and performance. Its evolution in the West reflects broader transformations in societal values and the desire to embody them visibly through clothing (Nemeth *et al.*, 2020).

For example, modern sportswear's most iconic garment—the tracksuit—appears to be a creature of late-twentieth-century pop culture. However, its structure (a matched, soft top-and-trouser set worn only for physical activity) was already standard issue in European armies, decades before commercial sports brands were born. The historical thread can be traced in three moves.

After the Napoleonic Wars, armies adopted systematic physical training and developed clothing tailored to it. Gymnastics pioneer Friedrich Ludwig Jahn ordered his followers from the Turnverein (sports association) to drill in a grey jersey shirt with a white

collar and matching trousers—a proto-tracksuit designed to instill patriotic discipline. Around 1860, the War Office of Britain's Army Gymnastic Staff set up a permanent corps to teach exercise; its members wore a distinct "physical-training kit" instead of parade dress, making the two-piece gym suit a fixture of military life. Both cases established three elements that remain in today's tracksuits: soft, washable fabric, coordinated top and bottom, and exclusive use during (not after) exercise.

Veteran officers carried their gym-suit habit into schools and clubs. In Paris, Racing Club secretary Georges de Saint-Clair scrapped jockey silks in 1884 and imposed a tight wool shirt plus knee-length trousers; athletes lined up for uniform inspection, much like in the military. The club scene thus naturalized the idea that proper sport demanded a matched set inspected for conformity—a direct echo of barracks ritual.

French brand Le Coq Sportif knit the first commercial sweatpants in 1920, then paired them with a matching top—the "Sunday suit"—explicitly marketed for training and relaxation. The company was not inventing a new silhouette; it was translating the military drill suit into soft jersey and selling it to civilians. By mid-century, televised sport and pop culture propelled the garment worldwide, but its martial DNA—uniform colours, badge culture, pre-event warm-up protocol—remained visible.

Every time an athlete (or commuter) zips up a tracksuit, they reprise a pattern forged in nineteenth-century drill yards: a coordinated, utilitarian uniform designed to foster discipline, cohesion and physical readiness. Jahn's Turnverein's grey kit and the British Army's physical-training dress provided the template; club sport and brands like Le Coq Sportif merely added colour to it. The tracksuit is thus best understood not as a purely sporting invention but as the civilian heir of Europe's military exercise uniform tradition.

3. Sportswear and high fashion: an analysis through the lens of society's sportivisation

Contemporary fashion is undergoing a radical transformation, driven by the growing integration between sportswear and high fashion. This phenomenon can be understood through the sociological lens of the sportivization of society (García Ferrando *et al.*, 2017), which refers to the process by which the values, symbols, and behaviours

typical of sport infiltrate various spheres of daily life—from culture to work, and even clothing.

This concept emphasises that sport is no longer confined to stadiums or gyms; it has progressively become a universal language. The athletic, efficient, high-performing body has become a cultural and aesthetic model of reference, influencing beauty standards, consumer goods production, and, above all, the way people dress (Perera *et al.*, 2024). Sportswear is no longer merely functional—it now represents a symbol of status, identity, and belonging. The fusion of sportswear and high fashion reflects this broader societal shift. High fashion designers have embraced technical fabrics, minimalist cuts, and practical features from athletic apparel to redefine the boundaries of luxury. This synthesis is not limited to the aestheticisation of sport but instead elevates it to a new level of cultural expression.

This process has given rise to a new aesthetic category: athleisure—a hybrid of sportswear and casual fashion, characterised by comfortable garments with carefully curated details. This style not only meets the needs of a public increasingly oriented toward practicality, but also embodies the values of modernity: dynamism, flexibility, and multitasking.

Through sportivization, fashion does not merely fulfil functional needs—it becomes a vehicle for interpreting social change. Athletic clothing becomes a form of cultural storytelling, conveying values such as health, efficiency, and competitiveness. Wearing luxury sneakers or oversized branded hoodies is no longer just a matter of style, but a statement of belonging to a society that celebrates the body in motion.

The fusion between high fashion and sportswear—interpreted through the theory of sportivization—highlights how sport is not merely a physical activity, but a cultural phenomenon capable of redefining how we live and represent ourselves. This convergence of seemingly distant worlds celebrates the contemporary body, elevating it to a symbol of a society in constant evolution, where luxury and functionality merge to meet the demands of an increasingly fast-paced and interconnected age.

3.1. Distinction between sportswear and sports fashion

At first glance, the terms "sportswear" and "sports fashion" might appear interchangeable; however, a deeper analysis reveals crucial distinctions in purpose, design, and social significance. Sportswear primarily

refers to apparel explicitly engineered for athletic performance. It prioritises functionality, incorporating features like moisture-wicking fabrics, breathable materials, and ergonomic designs to enhance physical performance and comfort during rigorous activities. Common examples include compression garments, technical running gear, and footwear optimised for specific sports.

In contrast, sports fashion extends beyond mere athletic functionality, embodying an aesthetic and symbolic dimension that integrates sports-inspired elements into daily wear (Francombe, 2024). This category includes clothing and accessories that, while influenced by sportswear, prioritise fashionability, comfort, and social expression over purely performance-based criteria. Iconic brands such as Adidas, Nike, and Puma, as well as newer lifestyle-focused brands, have capitalised on this distinction by creating collections explicitly designed for casual and urban contexts, rather than athletic competition (Crawford, 2004).

The versatility of sports fashion lies in its ability to seamlessly transition from athletic environments into diverse daily contexts, epitomizing the contemporary phenomenon of above-mentioned athleisure, which reflects broader societal shifts toward prioritizing comfort, wellness, and practicality. Sports fashion's versatility also manifests in its inclusivity and cross-generational appeal, encompassing demographics ranging from young adults to older generations, who seek comfortable yet stylish apparel. This trend's adaptability is evident in how major fashion houses and luxury brands, such as Gucci, Balenciaga, and Louis Vuitton, increasingly incorporate sports-inspired collections, recognising the hybridization of high fashion and athletic aesthetics.

3.2. Sports fashion and lifestyle: beyond the training grounds

Sports fashion has a significant influence on contemporary lifestyle choices. Clothing choices today serve as powerful indicators of identity, values, and cultural alignment, allowing individuals to communicate their affiliation with health-conscious, active, and socially responsible communities (Crane, 2000).

The adoption of sports fashion into everyday wear symbolises deeper societal aspirations and commitments, such as promoting sustainability, ethical consumption, and overall well-being. Brands are increasingly adopting environmentally friendly

materials and ethical manufacturing processes to align with the expectations of socially conscious consumers, who associate sports-inspired apparel with progressive and responsible lifestyle choices.

Furthermore, sports fashion has become an integral part of expressing cultural identity and fostering a sense of belonging within specific social groups. Young adults, particularly university students, often opt for sports-inspired clothing as a means to express brand loyalty, group identity, and personal values, highlighting the significant role fashion plays in contemporary self-expression.

Sports fashion's influence extends beyond mere apparel, becoming an essential component of modern cultural dynamics, shaping identities, and promoting shared educational and social values within broader lifestyle narratives.

4. Educational and social values in sports fashion

Sports fashion uniquely merges the traditionally distinct spheres of functionality and aesthetics, creating apparel that is both practical and visually compelling. At the core of sports fashion lies a commitment to comfort, mobility, and performance—qualities that are inherent in athletic apparel designed to support physical activity. Nevertheless, sports fashion also transcends pure functionality by incorporating elements of contemporary design and visual appeal, creating garments that are equally suited to urban settings, professional environments, and leisure activities. Innovative textile technologies, ergonomic designs, and sophisticated material blends characterize this apparel, making sports fashion not only a reflection of athletic utility but also an artistic expression of contemporary trends and personal identity. This fusion enhances consumer satisfaction by simultaneously catering to both physical comfort and emotional expression. Consequently, consumers increasingly perceive sports fashion as a form of self-care, a means of personal empowerment, and a powerful statement of individuality within societal norms. Among the main social and educational values sports fashion embodies in contemporary society, we can highlight the following ones.

1) Sports fashion embodies social values associated with health, well-being, and environmental stewardship, significantly influencing contemporary attitudes towards consumption. By prioritizing breathable, ergonomic, and performance-enhancing materials, sports fashion inherently promotes physical wellness, encouraging active lifestyles and healthier

daily practices. Simultaneously, the adoption of sustainable fabrics, ethical manufacturing processes, and transparent supply chains has positioned sports fashion at the forefront of responsible consumerism. Brands such as Patagonia, Adidas, and Nike exemplify this approach, actively incorporating recycled materials, biodegradable fibres, and ethical labour practices into their production processes. This alignment with sustainability and ethical responsibility not only mitigates environmental impact but also educates consumers about conscious consumption, promoting broader societal changes toward ecological awareness and sustainability. Moreover, the visibility and appeal of sports fashion among younger demographics amplify its potential as an influential medium for shaping long-term behavioral patterns towards health-conscious and environmentally responsible lifestyles.

2) Beyond mere physical attributes, sports fashion serves as a dynamic platform for transmitting essential educational values traditionally rooted in athletic culture. Concepts such as excellence, teamwork, respect, and community are intricately woven into the narratives of sports-inspired apparel, symbolically reflecting the foundational ethics of sportsmanship. Apparel designed around specific team identities, collaborative events, and communal initiatives reinforces the significance of teamwork and collective effort. Wearing team-inspired apparel or products linked to renowned athletic figures often evokes a sense of pride, solidarity, and shared purpose among individuals, effectively embedding these communal values into everyday social interactions.

3) Respect and inclusivity are also emphasized through the deliberate creation of gender-neutral, body-positive, and culturally sensitive designs, highlighting the industry's role in promoting broader social equality. Initiatives by leading sports fashion brands frequently advocate for diversity, inclusivity, and equitable representation, thereby fostering an educational dialogue around social justice and community cohesion.

4) Ultimately, sports fashion becomes more than clothing—it evolves into a compelling pedagogical tool, reflecting and reinforcing values crucial for developing responsible, socially conscious citizens who actively engage with their communities.

5. Research methodology

5.1. Description of the questionnaire administered

To explore the perceptions and values associated with sports fashion in university students, we have designed, built and administered online a questionnaire consisting of questions designed to capture detailed insights into participants' attitudes, preferences, and perceived importance of sports fashion. The survey included demographic data (age, gender, nationality), questions on brand preferences, frequency and context of sports fashion usage, and Likert-scale questions evaluating attitudes towards sustainability, cultural identity, social responsibility, and educational values such as excellence, teamwork, respect, and community engagement (Table 1).

Table 1

Overview of the two surveys on sportswear among Romanian and Italian students

Indicator	Romania (n=175)	Italy (n=153)
Gender	68 % male 32 % female	48 % male 51 % female 1 % non-binary
Age	Mean = 23.9 y Median = 21 Range 18–54	Mean = 26.2 y Median = 21 Range 19–78
Practises sport	91 % yes – 9 % no	86 % yes – 14 % no
Has taught/coached sport	59 % yes – 41 % no	50 % yes – 50 % no
Overall Likert mean† (1–5)	3.61	3.32

5.2. Sample and context: Italian and Romanian university students

The questionnaire targeted university students from Italy and Romania to capture comparative insights across different cultural contexts. The sample comprised 175 Romanian and 153 Italian students, evenly distributed between the two countries. Students from sports and educational sciences at the University of Babeş-Bolyai in Cluj, the University of Bari, Foro Italico, and the University of Gabriele d'Annunzio in Chieti-Pescara were recruited through university social media channels, mailing lists, and student associations to ensure diverse participation. The choice of Italian and Romanian contexts was intentional, aiming to identify potential cultural similarities and differences in how sports fashion influences social norms, educational values, and individual behaviors among young adults within distinct European settings.

5.3. Data Analysis

Data collected from the questionnaires were subjected to a mixed-method analysis to provide comprehensive insights into the research questions. Quantitative data were analysed using statistical

methods, including descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and inferential analyses (t-tests and ANOVA), to identify significant differences and similarities between groups and subgroups based on nationality, gender, and other demographic variables. This analytical approach ensured a robust understanding of both the statistical significance and the underlying opinions driving students' fashion choices.

6. Preliminary results

6.1 Perception of values related to sports clothing among students

Quantitative analysis reveals that both cohorts attach the most significant importance to sustainability-related values, followed at some distance by health, teamwork, and cultural identity.

1) *Health*. Romanian respondents report a higher aggregate score than Italians ($M = 3.71, SD = 0.82$ vs. $M = 3.46, SD = 0.84; t_{(271)} = 2.74, p = .007, d = 0.30$). The difference, though statistically significant, corresponds to a small effect size, suggesting a broadly shared appreciation of the health benefits of sportswear.

2) *Sustainability*. Mean scores are almost identical (RO $M = 3.77, IT M = 3.67$), and the Welch t-test is non-significant ($p = .13; d = 0.17$). Students across nations thus converge in valuing ethical production, environmental protection, and supply-chain transparency.

3) *Teamwork*. Perceptions of teamwork values reveal the most substantial cross-national gap. Romanians rate this dimension notably higher than Italians ($M = 3.87$ vs. $3.28; p < .001; d = 0.71$, a medium-significant effect), indicating that communal and discipline-related meanings of sportswear resonate more in the Romanian sample.

4) *Cultural identity*. Scores are moderate for both groups, yet Romanians again exceed Italians ($M = 3.53$ vs. $3.30; p = .034; d = 0.23$). Qualitative comments, although scarce, reinforce this pattern: Romanian respondents occasionally mention sports clothing as “a way to show who I am,” whereas Italian remarks focus more on product functionality.

Taken together, these findings suggest that sustainability constitutes a shared baseline value, while Romanians attribute relatively greater symbolic importance to teamwork and self-expression through sports apparel.

6.2 Attitudes towards brand loyalty and cultural identity

Brand-related attitudes differ markedly between the two contexts. Romanian students display stronger brand loyalty ($M = 3.20, SD = 0.82$) than their Italian counterparts ($M = 2.57, SD = 0.82; p < .001; d = 0.77$). Items related to status enhancement, fashion trend following, and confidence when wearing branded sportswear all load positively on this factor in Romania, whereas Italians remain largely indifferent or skeptical.

The influence of cultural identity on fashion choices is modest yet significant, as noted above. Notably, the correlation between the cultural-identity index and brand loyalty is stronger in Romania ($r = 0.42, p < 0.001$) than in Italy ($r = 0.17, p = 0.048$), implying that for Romanian students, brand attachment is closely tied to self-expression and group affiliation. In contrast, Italians decouple personal identity from brand signals.

6.3 Social responsibility and sports fashion: similarities and differences between Italians and Romanians

Both groups report high normative expectations regarding social responsibility in sports fashion, with no statistically significant difference in the composite sustainability index. Students widely endorse statements such as “companies should protect the environment” and “garments must be produced ethically,” and a majority in each cohort indicates a willingness to pay a price premium for sustainable products (agree/strongly agree: RO 64%, IT 59%).

6.4 Gender-based patterns in perceptions and attitudes

Table 2

Comparison between males and females

Dimension	RO Male (n=119) Mean ± SD	RO Female (n=56) Mean ± SD	t	p	d	IT Male (n=74) Mean ± SD	IT Female (n=78) Mean ± SD	t	p	d
Health	3.73 ± 0.84	3.68 ± 0.79	0.40	.69	0.06	3.39 ± 0.83	3.54 ± 0.79	1.08	.28	-0.18
Sustainability	3.78 ± 0.54	3.74 ± 0.57	0.46	.64	0.08	3.62 ± 0.54	3.73 ± 0.66	1.17	.24	-0.19
Teamwork	3.65 ± 0.76	3.48 ± 0.79	1.24	.22	0.21	3.23 ± 0.82	3.33 ± 0.79	0.74	.46	-0.12
Cultural Identity	3.31 ± 0.86	3.38 ± 1.06	0.45	.65	-0.08	3.28 ± 0.80	3.33 ± 0.84	0.32	.75	-0.05
Brand Loyalty	3.25 ± 0.82	3.11 ± 0.82	1.01	.32	0.16	2.55 ± 0.78	2.58 ± 0.87	0.24	.81	-0.04

Note. Values are means ± SD. Cohen's d interprets values of 0.20 as small, and 0.50 as medium.

Independent-samples t-tests were run separately within each Country to examine whether male and

female students differed on the five composite dimensions (health, sustainability, teamwork, cultural identity, and brand loyalty). The single non-binary respondent in the Italian survey ($n = 1$) was excluded from inferential tests but is noted descriptively (Table 2).

Across all five dimensions under study, gender does not emerge as a meaningful source of variation. Statistical tests revealed no significant differences between male and female students in either Country (all p -values exceeded .05), and the associated effect sizes were consistently trivial to small ($|d| \leq 0.21$). In Romania, men registered marginally higher mean scores for teamwork and brand loyalty, yet these gaps (approximately $d \approx 0.20$) lacked statistical significance. Conversely, Italian women expressed slightly stronger concerns for health and sustainability, but again, the differences were minimal. Exploratory two-way ANOVAs confirmed the absence of any Country \times Gender interaction; the pattern of gender similarity therefore holds across both national settings. The single non-binary respondent in the Italian sample recorded scores that closely mirrored the overall Italian averages, offering no indication of an outlying profile—although one case is, of course, insufficient for generalization.

The evidence suggests that gender is not a significant predictor of how young Italians or Romanians prioritise health, teamwork, cultural identity, sustainability, or brand loyalty about sportswear. The cross-national contrasts noted earlier (Sections 6.1–6.3) thus appear to reflect broader cultural or experiential factors rather than gender-specific perspectives within each Country.

7. Discussion

The findings of this cross-national survey paint a nuanced—but remarkably coherent—picture of the meanings that young Italians and Romanians assign to sportswear. Foremost, sustainability emerges as a shared moral baseline: regardless of Country, gender, or sporting status, respondents expect brands to minimize environmental impact and guarantee fair labour conditions, and most are willing to pay a premium for garments that meet these standards.

However, symbolic uses of sportswear diverge along cultural lines. Romanian students associate sports clothing with meanings of teamwork and cultural identity, exhibiting stronger brand loyalty. Italians, by contrast, emphasize practicality, health, and comfort, and voice a guarded scepticism toward

overt status signaling. These contrasts resonate with broader cultural indicators: Italy's higher individualism score may temper collectivist symbolism in everyday dress, whereas Romania's more communitarian ethos makes sports labels a natural vehicle for group identity.

Perhaps the most striking result is what did not vary: gender. Across all five latent dimensions—health, sustainability, teamwork, cultural identity, and brand loyalty—male and female students were almost indistinguishable, and Country \times Gender interaction tests confirmed that this similarity held in both national contexts. The lone non-binary respondent also clustered neatly around the Italian mean scores. These patterns challenge long-standing marketing assumptions that sports fashion is highly gendered and suggest that age cohort and cultural background now outweigh biological sex in shaping attitudes among Generation Z.

8. Limits, conclusions and future developments of the study

Although the results of our research yield valuable insights, they should be viewed within the context of several methodological limitations. First, the reliance on convenience sampling through university channels curtails generalisability; future projects would benefit from probability sampling that reaches other faculties and non-student populations. Second, because all measures are self-reported, social desirability bias may have inflated declarations of sustainability concern. Linking survey responses to actual purchase data would strengthen ecological validity. Finally, the qualitative component was limited to a single open-ended prompt about the understandability of the questionnaire; focus-group work could generate richer narrative details. Future studies should also incorporate experimental manipulation such as eco-labels, local-heritage cues, or team-building slogans, to test their causal impact on purchase intentions across cultures.

However, beyond its commercial relevance, sportswear possesses significant pedagogical potential as a vehicle for sustainability education, civic engagement, and identity formation. Initiatives such as "upcycle-your-jersey" workshops can integrate hands-on craft competencies with critical reflection on textile waste streams, thereby fostering both technical and ethical literacy. Similarly, intercultural kit-design projects—linking Italian and Romanian classrooms in virtual collaboration—could offer a platform for visualizing a shared European heritage while

simultaneously valorizing distinctive local motifs. Furthermore, assignments that require students to evaluate existing brands against environmental, social, and governance (ESG) benchmarks could foster a reflexive, ethically informed consumer mindset. In this perspective, sports fashion transcends its status as a lifestyle commodity and becomes a material discourse through which young people negotiate health, community membership, and cultural affiliation.

In conclusion, although Italian and Romanian students share a common commitment to environmental responsibility, they employ divergent symbolic repertoires within the sports-fashion domain. Attending to both the shared ethical foundation and the culturally specific inflexions enables educators, policymakers, and industry actors to devise interventions—and develop products—that resonate more profoundly with Europe's emerging generations while simultaneously cultivating sustainable, value-oriented identities within the framework of an educational science and pedagogy of fashion.

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