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Case Project Paper on the Promoting Brand Transparency, Consumer Trust, and Purchase Decisions in an Apparel Business in Fujian Province, China

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Abstract: This project examines brand transparency in Fujian Province's apparel industry and its impact on consumer trust and purchase decisions amid rising global demand for sustainability and ethical business practices. The study explores how integrating sustainability initiatives, enhancing supply chain transparency, and utilizing digital platforms influence consumer loyalty and buying behavior. It identifies challenges such as limited supply chain visibility, reliance on traditional manufacturing, and weak communication of transparency efforts. The research proposes actionable strategies, including implementing traceability systems, adopting advanced manufacturing technologies, improving communication, and leveraging social media engagement. These measures aim to align the company with consumer values, differentiate it competitively, and build a foundation for long-term success.

Keywords: brand transparency; consumer trust; sustainability; traceability; apparel industry; Fujian province

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1. Introduction

In today's globalized and competitive market, brand transparency has become a key strategic element, especially in industries where ethical concerns are prominent — such as apparel. Consumers increasingly demand clear information about how products are made, including sourcing practices, environmental impact, and labor conditions. Transparency not only supports informed consumer decisions but also fosters long-term trust and brand loyalty.

Fujian Province, China, plays a vital role in the national apparel industry, supplying both domestic and international markets. As awareness of sustainability and corporate responsibility grows, businesses in this region are encountering new challenges: increasing expectations for openness, rising scrutiny over sourcing and labor, and the need to maintain competitiveness in a shifting global economy.

This chapter introduces the concept and importance of brand transparency, outlines its role in shaping consumer behavior, and presents the context and objectives of this research within Fujian's apparel industry.

1.1. Importance of Brand Transparency

Brand transparency refers to the practice of openly disclosing accurate, relevant information about a company's operations, values, and product sourcing. It empowers consumers to make informed choices and fosters trust and long-term loyalty [1].

Studies have shown that transparency — particularly regarding sustainability, cost structures, and production processes — positively affects perceptions of authenticity and purchase intentions [2]. For example, companies that share details about ethical sourcing are seen as more credible and trustworthy, especially in industries historically criticized for labor exploitation and environmental harm.

Digital platforms further amplify the role of transparency. Social media allows brands to showcase behind-the-scenes practices, respond to consumer concerns, and highlight ethical commitments. As Chari et al. emphasize, user-generated content and transparent digital messaging significantly enhance brand trust and engagement [3].

In Fujian's apparel industry, adopting transparent practices is essential for aligning with consumer expectations and global sustainability trends. It provides a means to differentiate from competitors, build stronger consumer relationships, and ensure resilience in an increasingly value-driven marketplace.

1.2. Research Context and Objectives

Fujian Province is a leading center of apparel manufacturing in China, characterized by a mix of traditional production methods and growing technological adoption. As consumer expectations shift toward ethical consumption and environmental awareness, transparency has become a crucial issue for apparel brands operating in the region.

Many firms face common challenges: limited visibility into supply chains, over-reliance on traditional manufacturing, and weak communication of sustainability efforts. These gaps hinder trust-building and market differentiation, especially as international standards become more stringent.

This research aims to explore how brand transparency affects consumer trust and purchasing decisions in Fujian's apparel sector. By integrating literature analysis, case insights, and market-specific factors, the study seeks to:

- 1) Identify current gaps in transparency practices within the local apparel industry.
- 2) Examine the influence of transparency on consumer perceptions and purchase behavior.
- 3) Propose actionable strategies to enhance transparency and align with global best practices.

Ultimately, the study contributes to building a practical framework for promoting transparency as a pathway to improved brand equity, consumer engagement, and sustainable business growth in the apparel industry of Fujian Province.

2. Organization Profile and Performance

2.1. Company Overview

2.1.1. Company Background

The company is a prominent mid-sized apparel manufacturer and retailer based in Fujian Province, China. Established over a decade ago, it has grown into a reputable player in the regional textile and apparel industry. Operating under a vertically integrated model — from fabric sourcing and garment production to retail and e-commerce — it ensures high quality, cost efficiency, and timely delivery aligned with its strategic goals. With a workforce of over 500, the company blends traditional tailoring expertise with advanced manufacturing technologies. Its product range includes casual wear, formal attire, and activewear, serving diverse customer segments in both domestic and international markets. Committed to innovation and sustainability, the company stands as a strong and forward-thinking competitor in China's dynamic apparel sector.

2.1.2. Organizational Structure

The company's organizational structure is designed to optimize efficiency and accountability. Key departments include:

- 1) **Sourcing and Procurement:** Responsible for acquiring high-quality raw materials, such as organic cotton and recycled fabrics, from local and international suppliers.
- 2) **Production and Quality Control:** Overseeing the manufacturing process, this department ensures that garments meet quality standards while adhering to sustainability goals.
- 3) **Marketing and Sales:** Tasked with promoting the brand, this team manages retail operations, e-commerce platforms, and customer engagement initiatives.
- 4) **Research and Development (R&D):** Focused on innovation, this department explores new technologies, sustainable practices, and product designs to meet evolving market demands.
- 5) **Sustainability and Compliance:** Dedicated to implementing eco-friendly practices, this unit monitors adherence to ethical labor and environmental standards throughout the supply chain.
- 6) **Customer Service:** Aimed at building strong consumer relationships, this team handles inquiries, feedback, and post-purchase support.

The company operates through a combination of physical retail stores and an e-commerce platform, ensuring a broad market reach. Its organizational design reflects a balance between traditional practices and modern management approaches, enabling it to respond effectively to market changes and consumer expectations.

2.1.3. Core Values and Vision

The organization is driven by core values that shape its mission. Integrity guides ethical sourcing, fair labor, and transparent customer relations. Customer satisfaction is prioritized through quality products and responsive service.

Sustainability is key, with efforts to minimize environmental impact via eco-friendly production and resource management. Innovation supports these goals through technological investments to enhance operations and anticipate industry trends.

The company's vision is to lead sustainable apparel manufacturing in China, upholding global ethical standards and leveraging Fujian's textile strengths to set benchmarks in transparency, quality, and environmental responsibility.

2.2. Operations and Market Position

2.2.1. Operations and Supply Chain

The organization integrates sourcing, manufacturing, and retail seamlessly. It partners with local and international suppliers to procure high-quality materials such as organic cotton and recycled textiles, ensuring an ethical and sustainable supply chain. Manufacturing takes place in advanced facilities using lean principles to optimize efficiency and reduce waste, with strict quality control throughout production.

Retail employs a dual-channel strategy, combining physical stores and a strong e-commerce platform, enabling service to both urban online consumers and local markets.

2.2.2. Market Position and Customer Base

The company holds a strong market presence in Fujian and nearby regions, serving mainly middle-class families seeking quality and affordable apparel. It also exports extensively to North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia through strategic international retail partnerships. The brand stands out by blending quality, affordability, and sustainability, appealing to eco-conscious consumers and enhancing its reputation.

2.2.3. Financial Performance

Over the past five years, the company has achieved steady revenue growth of 10–12% annually, with 60% from domestic sales and 40% from exports, balancing international market risks. Profit margins have stabilized around 15%, reflecting efficient production and cost control. Investments in technology and sustainability support long-term competitiveness, though rising material costs and demand for transparency pose challenges.

2.2.4. Strategic Focus

The company has recently shifted its strategic focus to transparency and sustainability, recognizing these as critical factors in building consumer trust and loyalty. Initiatives include:

- 1) Establishing traceability systems to provide consumers with detailed information about product origins and manufacturing processes.
- 2) Expanding the use of sustainable materials, such as organic and recycled fabrics, in its product lines.
- 3) Enhancing digital marketing efforts to communicate transparency initiatives and engage directly with consumers.

2.3. Sustainability and Transparency

2.3.1. Sustainability and Transparency Efforts

The organization actively promotes sustainability by increasing the use of organic and recycled fabrics, reducing textile waste, and adopting energy-efficient machinery and renewable energy in production. Transparency initiatives include piloting traceability systems for consumers to track product origins. Despite progress, communication on pricing and supplier practices still needs enhancement.

2.3.2. Performance Metrics

To measure its success, the organization employs key performance indicators (KPIs) across operational, financial, and sustainability domains. These include:

- 1) Operational Efficiency: Metrics such as production lead time, defect rates, and supply chain performance.
- 2) Financial Stability: Revenue growth, profit margins, and return on investment.
- 3) Sustainability Impact: Reduction in carbon emissions, waste generated, and percentage of eco-friendly materials used.
- 4) Consumer Trust: Customer retention rates, feedback scores, and engagement levels on transparency initiatives.

2.3.3. Statement of the Problem

- 1) What are the current gaps in transparency within Fujian's apparel industry?
- 2) How do transparency practices influence consumer trust and purchase decisions in the local context?
- 3) What global best practices can be adapted for Fujian's apparel businesses?
- 4) What are the measurable outcomes of implementing transparency-focused strategies in pilot businesses?

2.4. Study Design and Rationale

2.4.1. Objectives of the Study

Fujian's apparel industry faces growing consumer demands for ethical sourcing, sustainability, and transparency. While the region is a key player domestically and internationally, many businesses struggle to meet these expectations. Transparency, in particular, is crucial for building consumer trust and influencing purchase decisions.

This study aims to explore and implement strategies to enhance brand transparency in Fujian's apparel sector. By analyzing local market trends, identifying best practices, and conducting pilot initiatives, the project seeks to offer practical insights and a replicable model to help regional businesses strengthen their market position.

Objectives:

- 1) Evaluate the existing transparency levels in Fujian's apparel industry, including communication about sourcing, production, and sustainability practices.
- 2) Identify key transparency factors influencing consumer trust and purchase decisions in Fujian's local and international markets.
- 3) Develop effective strategies tailored to the local context, incorporating global best practices such as traceability systems, digital communication platforms, and ethical sourcing disclosures.
- 4) Conduct pilot initiatives with selected apparel businesses to test the effectiveness of proposed transparency strategies in enhancing consumer trust and driving purchase decisions.
- 5) Create a scalable and replicable framework for promoting transparency in the apparel industry, tailored to the specific needs of Fujian Province.

2.4.2. Significance of the Study

This study is vital for Fujian's apparel industry as it tackles key challenges and opportunities related to enhancing brand transparency. With rising consumer demand for ethical and sustainable practices, transparency has become essential for building trust and influencing purchases. The research offers actionable insights to help apparel companies improve transparency, boost consumer confidence, and sustain competitive advantage.

The study benefits multiple stakeholders:

- 1) Apparel companies gain practical strategies to align with global standards while addressing local market needs, strengthening reputation, customer loyalty, and market share.
- 2) Consumers benefit from greater transparency, enabling informed choices and higher trust in brand ethics.
- 3) Policymakers and regulators receive a framework for policies promoting ethical business and sustainability, positioning Fujian as a leader in responsible apparel production.
- 4) Academics are provided with a foundation for further research on transparency, consumer behavior, and sustainability.
- 5) Global industry leaders and investors can better understand local consumer dynamics and identify collaboration or investment opportunities.

By bridging global standards with Fujian's market realities, this study serves as a comprehensive guide to fostering trust, driving purchases, and promoting sustainability in the apparel sector.

2.4.3. Definition of Terms

Brand Transparency: The practice of openly sharing accurate and complete information about a company's processes, policies, and products, including sourcing, production, and pricing, to build trust with consumers.

Consumer Trust: The confidence consumers place in a brand based on their perceptions of its honesty, reliability, and commitment to meeting their needs.

Purchase Decisions: The process through which consumers evaluate, choose, and buy products based on various factors, including price, quality, and brand reputation.

Sustainability: Business practices that focus on minimizing environmental impact, promoting ethical labor standards, and ensuring long-term resource viability.

Traceability: The ability to track the journey of a product through all stages of production, from raw materials to the final consumer, ensuring accountability and ethical compliance.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): A company's commitment to ethical practices, including environmental sustainability, community engagement, and employee welfare, aimed at creating positive social and environmental impacts.

E-Commerce: The buying and selling of goods and services online, often facilitated through dedicated websites or digital marketplaces.

2.4.4. Acronyms

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility.

DPP: Digital Product Passport.

ESG: Environmental, Social, and Governance.

KPI: Key Performance Indicator.

UGC: User-Generated Content.

3. Brand Transparency and Consumer Trust

Promoting brand transparency is increasingly vital as businesses face competitive markets, rising consumer expectations, and complex social issues. This synthesis draws on multiple studies to examine how transparency shapes consumer trust, perceptions, and purchase behavior, offering insights for both managers and scholars.

Brand transparency means openly sharing information about a company's practices, values, and products, including details on processes, costs, and sustainability efforts. Montecchi et al. define transparency as multidimensional — covering observability, comprehensibility, and intentionality — which affects consumer brand evaluations [4]. In industries like fashion and food, revealing cost structures and sustainability practices reduces skepticism and aligns with consumer values, enhancing perceived brand integrity [5,6]. Konuk similarly finds that transparency is crucial for building trust and loyalty in organic food markets [7].

3.1. *The Role of Transparency in Consumer Decision-Making*

Transparency fosters perceptions of fairness and value, influencing consumer choices. Jung et al. show that cost transparency enhances price fairness perceptions in apparel, helping consumers evaluate value [8]. Transparent CSR efforts, as noted by Yu et al., build trust and encourage customer engagement in environmental initiatives [9]. Duesterhaus demonstrates similar effects in higher education, where price transparency improved brand positioning and perceptions of status goods [10].

3.2. *Transparency as a Driver of Consumer Behavior in Sustainability Contexts*

Transparency is vital in sustainability and CSR. Kim et al. and Lee & Chen highlight that disclosing environmental and social impacts increases consumer engagement and strengthens brand equity [11;12]. Mohamed Nada's analysis of Nike underscores the importance of consistent and credible green transparency, which builds long-term consumer confidence and brand loyalty [13].

3.3. *Technology as an Enabler of Transparency*

Emerging technologies like blockchain revolutionize transparency. Adewusi et al. illustrate blockchain's role in agricultural supply chains by enabling real-time traceability and reducing information asymmetry [14]. Digital tools also facilitate clear communication of CSR and pricing transparency, enhancing consumer satisfaction and engagement.

3.4. Challenges and Risks of Transparency

Despite benefits, transparency risks information overload and increased scrutiny. Montecchi et al. caution that excessive or unclear disclosures may overwhelm consumers or invite criticism [4]. Miner et al. note consumer reluctance to adopt generics despite transparency on cost and quality, indicating trust-building must address deeper biases [15]. Strategic transparency balancing openness with clarity is essential to optimize consumer perceptions.

3.5. Effects of Promoting Brand Transparency on Consumer Trust and Purchase Decisions

Brand transparency — openness, clarity, and accurate disclosure about a company's processes, products, and values — is crucial for building consumer trust and influencing purchases. Across industries, transparency reduces skepticism, enhances perceived value, and drives buying behavior. This synthesis offers a comprehensive analysis of how transparency interacts with trust and shapes consumer decisions.

3.5.1. Transparency as a Driver of Trust

Transparency is essential for building consumer trust. Clear, timely, and evidence-based communication helps consumers assess brand intentions [16]. In agri-food supply chains, blockchain ensures traceability and combats fraud, boosting confidence in product quality and sourcing [17]. Ethical AI use with transparent data disclosures also strengthens trust in digital marketing [18].

Transparency mitigates the negative effects of deceptive practices like greenwashing. In regions with prevalent greenwashing, such as Algeria, transparent sustainability communication reduces skepticism and builds green brand trust [19]. Similarly, Swedish fashion brands enhance reputation and loyalty through transparent sustainable sourcing [20].

Supply chain transparency also aids crisis management. Disclosing sustainability efforts reassures consumers and positions brands as responsible stewards, lessening long-term reputational damage [21]. In food safety crises, transparency moderates trust erosion, with greater openness needed to recover from intentional missteps [22]. Proactive transparency thus serves as both protection and recovery for brand trust.

3.5.2. Transparency and Purchase Decisions

Transparent practices positively impact consumers' purchase intentions by enhancing perceptions of quality and value. Tong and Su find that cost transparency in apparel increases perceived quality and brand favorability, especially among socially responsible consumers [23]. Transparency in sustainability further boosts engagement, with Ahmed et al. showing it strengthens the effect of green advertising on purchase intentions by fostering trust [19].

In retail, transparency enhances store brand equity by improving trust and satisfaction, particularly in developing markets where relationship quality is crucial [24]. The beauty industry illustrates transparency's importance through the case, where ethical transparency failures led to consumer skepticism and reduced brand popularity, highlighting openness as key to sustaining loyalty [25].

3.5.3. Mitigating Perceived Risk and Enhancing Trust

In high-risk sectors, transparency reduces consumer uncertainty and builds trust. Chopdar and Paul show that in food delivery, transparency about hygiene and safety lowers perceived risk and boosts engagement, especially post-pandemic [26]. In digital advertising, transparency around AI-driven data use addresses privacy concerns and strengthens trust, aligning brands with ethical standards [27].

3.5.4. Promoting Brand Authenticity and Evangelism

Transparency enhances brand authenticity, fostering consumer advocacy. Li et al. find that green transparency validates sustainability claims, strengthening brand connections and encouraging brand evangelism by overcoming skepticism [28]. Nurapni et al. highlight that transparency improves corporate brand image, which mediates its positive impact on purchase intentions, emphasizing authenticity's role in loyalty [29].

3.5.5. Building Long-Term Brand Loyalty

Transparency builds lasting consumer relationships through trust and satisfaction. Yuana et al. identify transparency as a key driver of brand loyalty, especially when consumers can clearly see brand operations [30]. Nguyen et al. emphasize supply chain transparency as crucial for protecting reputation and sustaining customer retention by meeting demands for ethical accountability [31].

4. Challenges in Promoting Transparency

4.1. Key Challenges and Barriers

While transparency offers clear advantages, its implementation is fraught with challenges. Excessive or poorly focused disclosures can overwhelm consumers and reduce trust. Sansome et al. argue that effective transparency requires prioritization of relevant issues over indiscriminate data sharing [16]. Additionally, inconsistencies between stated values and actual practices — especially in sustainability — can seriously damage brand credibility and consumer confidence [32].

Technological limitations also present barriers. Blockchain, while promising for traceability, faces scalability and cost challenges [17]. In digital marketing, the ethical use of AI must balance personalization with user autonomy, avoiding perceptions of manipulation [18]. As scholars emphasize, transparency must be clear, accurate, and relevant to be effective; irrelevant or excessive information can increase consumer skepticism [33]. Nonetheless, radical transparency, when embedded across company culture, can become a strategic asset that reinforces trust and strengthens brand equity [34].

4.2. Implications for Practice and Policy

Transparency should align with consumer priorities such as sustainability, pricing, and ethical sourcing. Companies need to foster open dialogue across all touchpoints to strengthen consumer trust [16]. At the same time, investments in technologies like blockchain must be matched by consistent and honest communication to prevent greenwashing or ethical breaches [19,20].

Policymakers also play a vital role by creating regulatory frameworks that promote transparency while protecting consumers from deceptive practices. As some researchers argue, policy support can enhance public trust and incentivize responsible business conduct, especially in industries like fashion and agriculture [17,32].

4.3. Best Practices and Strategic Approaches

Successful transparency strategies combine innovation, ethics, and technology to build trust and shape consumer behavior. Integrating brand value into financial transparency supports better decision-making and investor confidence. Co-creation and two-way communication — especially under the DART model (Dialogue, Access, Risk Assessment, Transparency) — strengthen consumer satisfaction [35]. Brands that share both achievements and shortcomings and disclose operational details like cost and production processes are often perceived as more authentic and trustworthy [1,36].

On social platforms, genuine user-generated content and proactive engagement increase credibility [3]. Radical transparency, including open disclosures on sourcing and sustainability, reinforces legitimacy and fosters deeper consumer trust [37,38].

Emotional intelligence in leadership also plays a key role. Transparent and empathetic communication during crises helps protect brand image and preserve trust [39]. Technologies like blockchain enable traceability in influencer partnerships and supply chains, while AI and Web 2.0 enhance interactive and personalized consumer communication [17,40,41]. Adhering to data privacy laws such as GDPR or CCPA builds long-term digital trust [42].

Transparent sustainability practices help counter greenwashing and foster consumer loyalty. Credible disclosures from companies like Nike and Unilever during crises demonstrate how transparency enhances trust [43,44]. Aligning green communication with consumer values encourages brand attachment and advocacy [2,45]. Tools like Digital Product Passports and ESG reporting further support informed consumer choices [46,47].

Additionally, transparent packaging and product information improve perceived quality and trust [48]. In times of crisis, timely and sincere communication is essential for repairing consumer trust. Ethical marketing practices, including disclosure of sponsorships and avoiding manipulative messaging, are critical for long-term engagement [49]. As shown in Mitsubishi's response to corporate scandal, transparency, emotional appeal, and swift action outperform delayed or vague strategies [50]. Finally, social media enables transparency through reviews, education, and direct consumer interaction — an increasingly powerful tool for trust-building and purchase influence [51].

5. Best Practices of the Company

1) Vertically Integrated Business Model

The company controls the entire production process, ensuring quality, cost efficiency, and agility in responding to market changes.

2) Commitment to Sustainability

Using eco-friendly materials, reducing waste, and investing in energy-efficient, renewable-powered machinery demonstrate a strong environmental commitment.

3) Focus on Product Traceability

Traceability systems enable consumers to track product journeys, building trust and ensuring compliance with sustainability and labor standards.

4) Diverse Product Offering

A broad range of apparel caters to varied consumer segments, enhancing market resilience.

5) Strong E-Commerce Presence

An integrated online and offline retail strategy expands reach, especially to younger, tech-savvy customers.

6) Collaboration with Ethical Suppliers

Partnerships with certified suppliers ensure ethical sourcing and labor practices, minimizing risks.

7) Consumer-Centric Marketing

Transparent communication through social media fosters engagement, trust, and loyalty.

8) Employee Development Programs

Training initiatives enhance workforce skills and satisfaction, supporting adaptability and retention.

9) Community Engagement and CSR

Active local involvement through artisan support, education, and development projects reinforces social responsibility.

10) Regular Monitoring and Compliance

Frequent audits ensure adherence to labor and environmental standards, promoting continuous improvement and credibility.

Based on the company's operational strengths and challenges discussed above, Table 1 presents a detailed SWOT analysis, outlining key internal and external factors that influence its competitive position in the apparel industry.

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of the Apparel Company.

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Vertically integrated business model ensuring quality and cost control.	1. Limited supply chain transparency in certain operations.
2. Established reputation in Fujian Province and growing regional market presence.	2. High dependency on traditional manufacturing processes, requiring modernization.
3. Commitment to sustainability and eco-friendly materials.	3. Inadequate communication of transparency and sustainability efforts to consumers.
4. Diverse product portfolio catering to multiple market segments.	4. Challenges in meeting international regulatory standards for ethical practices.
5. Robust e-commerce platform complementing physical retail stores.	5. Rising costs of raw materials and production.
Opportunities	Threats
1. Increasing consumer demand for ethical and sustainable apparel.	1. Intense competition from both domestic and international apparel brands.
2. Growing market for digital and traceability-based transparency systems.	2. Fluctuating export demand due to global economic uncertainties.
3. Expansion into global markets through partnerships and branding.	3. Rapidly changing consumer preferences and trends.
4. Leveraging social media to promote transparency and sustainability.	4. Potential backlash from greenwashing claims if transparency efforts are inconsistent.
5. Technological advancements to optimize production and supply chain operations.	5. Regulatory challenges and rising compliance costs in global markets.

1) Strengths

The company's vertically integrated model ensures quality, cost control, and flexibility, minimizing third-party reliance. It has a strong regional reputation in Fujian and growing market influence, supported by consistent product quality and a commitment to sustainability using organic and recycled materials. A diverse product range and robust e-commerce platform enable it to meet varied consumer needs and reach younger customers effectively.

2) Weaknesses

Limited supply chain transparency in some areas risks consumer trust. Reliance on traditional manufacturing hinders competitiveness against tech-savvy rivals. Poor communication of sustainability efforts reduces brand differentiation. Compliance with international regulations is challenging and costly. Rising raw material and production costs add financial pressure.

3) Opportunities

Growing demand for ethical and sustainable apparel offers chances to expand sustainable lines and enhance transparency using digital tools. Global market expansion via partnerships can diversify revenue. Social media engagement boosts brand visibility, especially among younger consumers. Adopting automation, AI, and blockchain can improve efficiency and transparency, ensuring long-term competitiveness.

4) Threats

Intense domestic and international competition risks market share. Economic uncertainties and trade disruptions threaten export revenues. Rapid changes in consumer preferences may render products outdated. Greenwashing accusations could damage brand reputation. Increasing regulatory requirements and compliance costs add operational complexity and strain resources.

6. Analysis, Results and Alternatives

6.1. Alternative Courses of Action

Brand transparency has shifted from a strategic advantage to a fundamental consumer expectation, driven by growing awareness of ethical sourcing, environmental sustainability, and corporate responsibility. This demand is especially strong in the apparel industry, historically scrutinized for its environmental and labor practices. Transparency is now a crucial factor in building consumer trust and influencing purchase decisions.

In Fujian Province, a rapidly growing apparel hub, transparency poses both challenges and opportunities. While benefiting from a robust manufacturing base and expanding markets, local businesses must reconcile traditional production with rising demands for ethics and sustainability. For apparel companies here, embedding transparency is essential to foster trust, loyalty, and long-term growth.

This study examines how brand transparency affects consumer trust and buying behavior in Fujian's apparel sector. Focusing on a mid-sized, vertically integrated company, it evaluates current practices, consumer perceptions, and relevant global best practices. The findings aim to provide actionable strategies for leveraging transparency as a competitive and sustainable advantage in both domestic and international markets.

To effectively enhance brand transparency and consumer trust, the company can consider a range of actionable strategies, each with distinct advantages, challenges, resource requirements, potential risks, and expected outcomes. Table 2 outlines these key approaches to corporate transparency (ACOA) that align with the company's goals and market conditions.

Table 2. Strategic Approaches to Corporate Transparency (ACOA) in the Apparel Industry.

ACOA	Description	Pros	Cons	Required Resources	Potential Risks	Expected Outcomes
1. Full Implementation of Traceability System	Roll out product-level traceability across all product lines using blockchain or similar tech.	-Enhances transparency and consumer trust -Supports ethical sourcing -Differentiates brand	-High initial investment -Tech adoption challenges	IT infrastructure, blockchain platform, supplier cooperation	-Data integration issues -Consumer data privacy concerns	Improved trust, stronger brand equity, higher market competitiveness
2. Sustainability Certification Program	Obtain third-party certifications (e.g., GOTS, Fair Trade) for eco-materials and labor practices.	-Increases credibility -Appeals to eco-conscious markets -Boosts export potential	-Certification costs -Time-consuming audits	Certification consultants, training for staff, compliance tools	-Failing audits -Inconsistent supplier practices	Enhanced reputation, better compliance with global standards
3. Transparent Pricing Disclosure	Disclose breakdown of product pricing (e.g., materials, labor, markup) on website and packaging.	-Builds trust through honesty -Perceived fairness -Encourages value-based consumption	-Competitor visibility into cost structure -Consumer confusion without proper framing	Marketing redesign, training for sales staff, content team	-Misinterpretation of pricing -Negative comparison with low-cost competitors	Greater consumer loyalty and improved brand perception

4. Social Media Transparency Campaigns	Launch a multi-platform campaign showcasing behind-the-scenes content and ethical practices.	-Direct consumer engagement -Boosts brand authenticity -Inexpensive relative to ROI	-Needs consistent, high-quality content -Risk of negative feedback	Creative team, social media manager, content strategy	-Reputational risks if backlash occurs -Overpromising underdelivering	Increased engagement, improved brand image, stronger consumer connection
5. Supplier Transparency Partnership Program	Develop supplier compliance checklist and require reporting on environmental and labor standards.	-Drives supply chain accountability -Aligns with CSR -Reduces greenwashing risks	-Supplier resistance -Potential loss of non-compliant partners	Compliance team, supplier onboarding support, auditing tools	-Supplier non-compliance -Supply disruption	Stronger ethical sourcing reputation, long-term cost reduction
6. Establish Transparency-Focused Customer Feedback Loop	Create a digital portal for customer reviews and suggestions on transparency efforts.	-Consumer empowerment -Valuable insight for strategy -Boosts UGC	-Needs continuous moderation -Requires digital platform integration	Web development team, community managers	-Negative reviews -Privacy/legal concerns	Better consumer relationships, improved transparency practices
7. Launch Pilot Transparency Retail Store	Design a concept store highlighting traceability, sustainable materials, and pricing disclosure.	-Experiential branding -High media and consumer interest -Testbed for new ideas	-Expensive setup -High risk in underperforming location	Storefront investment, creative direction, local marketing	-Low foot traffic -Inability to scale	Enhanced brand reputation, learning model for replication
8. Staff Training on Ethical Transparency Communication	Educate employees on how to communicate sustainability and transparency practices to customers.	-Consistent brand messaging -Empowers frontline staff -Reduces misinformation	-Training time and cost -Resistance from existing staff	HR and training team, learning materials	-Poor knowledge retention -Messaging misalignment	Improved customer service, better informed consumers
9. Public Sustainability Report Publication	Release an annual or bi-annual public report detailing sustainability KPIs and transparency efforts.	-Enhances stakeholder trust -Meets investor and policy expectations -Benchmarking progress	-Time and resource-intensive -May expose weaknesses	ESG consultant, data analysts, design/PR team	-Negative perception of performance gaps -High scrutiny	Greater transparency accountability, stakeholder confidence

The ACOA table presents ten strategic options for enhancing transparency and building consumer trust in Fujian's apparel sector, balancing internal capabilities with external

market demands. Key strategies include blockchain-based traceability, which ensures verifiable sourcing and aligns with global trends despite high resource needs [17, 37, 46], and third-party certifications (e.g., GOTS, Fair Trade) that enhance credibility among eco-conscious consumers, albeit with compliance costs [20]. Transparent pricing disclosure promotes fairness and authenticity but demands careful messaging to avoid misunderstanding [1, 8]. Social media campaigns and supplier partnerships offer cost-effective engagement and improved supply chain visibility, strengthening ethical branding [3, 19, 47, 51]. A digital feedback loop and transparency-focused retail store foster consumer interaction and emotional connection [35, 48], while staff training ensures consistent ethical messaging during crises [29, 39]. Regular sustainability reporting reinforces accountability through data-backed disclosures [16], and partnerships with advocacy groups provide external validation and policy influence despite potential scrutiny [43].

6.2. Strategic Evaluation and Financial Considerations

The Decision Matrix evaluates ten transparency strategies based on multiple criteria such as impact on consumer trust, feasibility, cost-effectiveness, scalability, and alignment with company goals. This structured assessment supports prioritizing effective strategies tailored to the company's needs. Table 3 presents the decision matrix, which aids the company in evaluating and ranking these strategies to guide implementation priorities [4].

Table 3. Decision Matrix for Evaluating Transparency Strategies.

ACOA	Impact on Consumer Trust (30%)	Feasibility (20%)	Cost-Effectiveness (20%)	Scalability (15%)	Alignment with Strategic Goals (15%)	Weighted Total Score (100%)
1. Full Implementation of Traceability System	9 (2.7)	6 (1.2)	6 (1.2)	8 (1.2)	9 (1.35)	7.65
2. Sustainability Certification Program	8 (2.4)	7 (1.4)	7 (1.4)	7 (1.05)	8 (1.2)	7.45
3. Transparent Pricing Disclosure	8 (2.4)	8 (1.6)	8 (1.6)	8 (1.2)	7 (1.05)	7.85
4. Social Media Transparency Campaign	7 (2.1)	9 (1.8)	9 (1.8)	8 (1.2)	8 (1.2)	8.1
5. Supplier Transparency Partnership Program	8 (2.4)	6 (1.2)	7 (1.4)	7 (1.05)	9 (1.35)	7.4
6. Customer Feedback Loop	7 (2.1)	8 (1.6)	8 (1.6)	9 (1.35)	8 (1.2)	7.85
7. Pilot Transparency Retail Store	9 (2.7)	5 (1.0)	5 (1.0)	5 (0.75)	9 (1.35)	6.8
8. Staff Training on Transparency Communication	7 (2.1)	8 (1.6)	8 (1.6)	8 (1.2)	8 (1.2)	7.7
9. Public Sustainability Report	8 (2.4)	7 (1.4)	7 (1.4)	6 (0.9)	9 (1.35)	7.45
10. Strategic Partnerships with Advocacy Groups	8 (2.4)	6 (1.2)	6 (1.2)	7 (1.05)	9 (1.35)	7.2

Legend:

- 1) Scores are on a scale of 1 to 10.
- 2) Weighted scores (in parentheses) are calculated by multiplying the raw score by its weight.
- 3) Total score is the sum of all weighted scores.

To guide strategic decisions, Table 3 presents a Decision Matrix evaluating ten transparency strategies based on impact on consumer trust, feasibility, cost-effectiveness, scalability, and alignment with company goals. This structured approach helps the Fujian apparel company prioritize initiatives for maximum effect.

The Social Media Transparency Campaign ranks highest (8.1), reflecting its cost-effectiveness, scalability, and strong ability to build emotional connections through user-generated content and real-time interaction [3,51]. Transparent Pricing Disclosure and Customer Feedback Loop follow closely (7.85 each), promoting fairness, authenticity, and participatory engagement [35]. Staff Training (7.7) ensures consistent, empathetic communication, essential for maintaining trust [39].

While the Full Traceability System scored slightly lower (7.65) due to high costs and complexity, its potential for fostering accountability and global credibility through blockchain remains significant [17,46]. Sustainability Certification and Public Reporting (7.45 each) provide external validation but demand substantial resources [20,47]. The Supplier Transparency Program (7.4) strengthens upstream ethics but requires extensive supplier cooperation [19]. Strategic Partnerships with advocacy groups (7.2) offer credibility but may limit flexibility [43]. The Pilot Transparency Retail Store (6.8) delivers immersive consumer experience but is resource-intensive and less scalable [48].

Overall, consumer-facing digital strategies deliver immediate, scalable benefits aligned with Fujian's evolving market and infrastructure. Longer-term investments in traceability and certification are crucial for international competitiveness. A phased strategy balancing quick wins with foundational reforms will enable sustainable growth, strengthen brand trust, and position Fujian as a leader in ethical apparel production globally.

Table 4 presents the financial analysis of the ten alternative courses of action (ACOA) for enhancing brand transparency. It details the initial investment, ongoing costs, cost-effectiveness ratings, expected ROI timelines, financial risk levels, and potential revenue impacts for each strategy. This comprehensive financial overview enables the apparel company to balance strategic benefits with economic feasibility when selecting transparency initiatives.

Table 4. Financial Analysis of Transparency Strategies (in CNY).

Strategy (ACOA)	Initial Investment (CNY)	Ongoing Costs (CNY/year)	Cost-Effectiveness Rating (1-10)	Expected ROI Timeline	Financial Risk Level	Revenue Impact Potential
1. Full Traceability System	¥1,080,000	¥288,000	6	Long-term (3-5 years)	Medium-High	High (export growth, premium branding)
2. Sustainability Certification Program	¥576,000	¥180,000	7	Medium (2-3 years)	Medium	Medium-High (CSR value, market access)
3. Transparent Pricing Disclosure	¥216,000	¥72,000	8	Short-term (1-2 years)	Low-Medium	Medium (trust-based sales growth)

4. Social Media Transparency Campaign	¥144,000	¥86,400	9	Immediate (within 1 year)	Low	Medium-High (brand visibility, loyalty)
5. Supplier Transparency Program	¥432,000	¥144,000	7	Medium (2–3 years)	Medium	Medium (risk mitigation, supply chain value)
6. Customer Feedback Loop	¥180,000	¥72,000	8	Short-term (1–2 years)	Low	Medium (improved engagement and retention)
7. Pilot Transparency Retail Store	¥1,440,000	¥432,000	5	Long-term (3–5 years)	High	Medium-High (flagship branding, learning)
8. Staff Training on Transparency	¥108,000	¥36,000	8	Immediate to short-term	Low	Medium (service quality, brand integrity)
9. Public Sustainability Report	¥360,000	¥108,000	7	Medium (1–2 years)	Medium	Medium (stakeholder trust, investment appeal)
10. Advocacy Group Partnerships	¥288,000	¥86,400	6	Medium (2–3 years)	Low-Medium	Medium (credibility, industry influence)

The financial analysis presented in Table 4 offers a detailed overview of the initial investments, ongoing costs, cost-effectiveness ratings, financial risks, expected ROI timelines, and revenue impact potential for each transparency strategy (ACOA) considered by the apparel company in Fujian Province. For example, the Full Traceability System requires the highest initial investment of ¥1,080,000 with annual costs of ¥288,000, carrying a medium-high financial risk and promising high revenue impact mainly through export growth and premium branding over 3–5 years. In contrast, lower-cost strategies like the Social Media Transparency Campaign (¥144,000 initial, ¥86,400 yearly) have high cost-effectiveness (rating 9), low financial risk, and immediate ROI within one year, making them highly suitable for short-term gains. Similarly, Transparent Pricing Disclosure and Customer Feedback Loop both have moderate investments (around ¥180,000–¥216,000 initial) with favorable cost-effectiveness (rating 8) and medium to medium-high revenue potential.

More capital-intensive options such as the Pilot Transparency Retail Store require ¥1,440,000 initially and have high ongoing costs (¥432,000/year), accompanied by high financial risk and long ROI timelines, making them best suited for flagship branding efforts rather than broad implementation. Mid-range investments include the Sustainability Certification Program (¥576,000 initial, ¥180,000 annual), Supplier Transparency Program (¥432,000 initial, ¥144,000 annual), Public Sustainability Report (¥360,000 initial, ¥108,000 annual), and Advocacy Group Partnerships (¥288,000 initial, ¥86,400 annual), all scoring moderately on cost-effectiveness and offering medium revenue impact with medium financial risk.

Staff Training on Transparency stands out for its low initial investment of ¥108,000 and low ongoing costs (¥36,000/year), paired with a strong cost-effectiveness rating (8)

and immediate to short-term ROI, highlighting it as a highly accessible strategy for improving ethical communication and brand integrity.

Overall, this comprehensive financial evaluation allows decision-makers to balance cost, risk, and strategic impact effectively, supporting a phased approach that prioritizes immediate, low-risk initiatives while preparing for longer-term, higher-impact investments to enhance transparency, consumer trust, and market competitiveness.

7. Solutions and Recommendations

7.1. Solutions

To address the growing demand for transparency and sustainability in Fujian's apparel industry, and to align with both local expectations and global best practices, a multi-tiered strategy is required. The following solutions have been formulated based on detailed financial, operational, and strategic analyses, with the goal of enhancing consumer trust, improving market competitiveness, and ensuring long-term business sustainability.

7.1.1. Implement a Phased Transparency Strategy

Given the varying cost and risk profiles of different transparency initiatives, a phased approach is recommended. In the short term, the company should focus on low-cost, high-impact strategies such as:

- 1) **Transparent Pricing Disclosure:** Share breakdowns of product pricing on websites and product tags to build trust through openness and fairness.
- 2) **Social Media Transparency Campaigns:** Use digital platforms to showcase sustainable practices, share behind-the-scenes content, and engage directly with consumers.
- 3) **Customer Feedback Loop:** Create an interactive portal or survey system where consumers can give feedback on transparency-related initiatives and product experiences.
- 4) **Staff Training on Ethical Communication:** Ensure frontline employees are well-versed in the company's sustainability and transparency goals, fostering consistent brand messaging.

These solutions are relatively low in financial risk and can generate immediate returns in the form of improved customer satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty.

7.1.2. Invest in Medium-Term Structural Enhancements

To build on initial gains and move toward industry leadership in transparency, the company should pursue the following medium-term strategies:

- 1) **Supplier Transparency Partnership Program:** Develop standardized ethical guidelines and conduct audits with upstream suppliers to ensure transparency throughout the value chain.
- 2) **Sustainability Certification Program:** Secure credible third-party certifications such as GOTS or OEKO-TEX to strengthen brand reputation and fulfill international buyer requirements.
- 3) **Public Sustainability Reporting:** Release annual sustainability reports that highlight KPIs, material sourcing, production ethics, and environmental impact.

These initiatives strengthen credibility, help prevent accusations of greenwashing, and support international expansion efforts.

7.1.3. Plan for Long-Term Innovation and Brand Differentiation

To establish a competitive advantage in both domestic and global markets, the company should begin preparing for long-term investments such as:

- 1) **Full Traceability System:** Implement blockchain or other digital systems that enable consumers to track the origin and journey of each product, enhancing accountability and brand trust.

- 2) Pilot Transparency-Focused Retail Store: Design and launch a flagship retail space that offers an immersive experience around sustainability, ethical production, and consumer education.

These high-investment strategies are ideal for building deep consumer loyalty, expanding into high-value export markets, and positioning the company as a pioneer in ethical fashion.

7.1.4. Collaborate with External Stakeholders

Strategic collaboration can amplify transparency efforts. Partnering with advocacy groups, industry watchdogs, and policy bodies can help the company:

- 1) Gain credibility and third-party validation.
- 2) Influence regional and national standards for sustainable apparel.
- 3) Access shared resources and knowledge from broader transparency initiatives.

Such partnerships also facilitate alignment with ESG expectations and enhance the company's legitimacy in the eyes of both consumers and investors.

7.1.5. Integrate Technology to Enhance Transparency

Technology is a key enabler of scalable and credible transparency. Beyond traceability, the company should explore:

- 1) Digital Product Passports (DPPs): Include QR codes on garments that link to detailed product histories.
- 2) Blockchain for Supply Chain Management: Use decentralized ledgers to ensure transparency and immutability of sourcing and labor practices.
- 3) Data Analytics Tools: Monitor customer feedback and social media responses to transparency campaigns for continuous improvement.

7.2. Comprehensive Action Plan for Promoting Brand Transparency

Table 5 outlines a concise action plan for implementing transparency strategies, detailing objectives, timelines, responsible departments, required resources, and key performance indicators (KPIs). The plan balances short-term initiatives, such as transparent pricing and social media campaigns, with medium-to long-term projects like supplier transparency programs, sustainability certifications, and product traceability systems. By tracking progress through specific KPIs, this roadmap provides a clear framework to enhance brand transparency and consumer trust for apparel companies in Fujian Province.

Table 5. Implementation Roadmap and Key Performance Indicators for Brand Transparency.

Action Step	Objective	Timeline	Responsible Department(s)	Resources Required	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
1. Launch Transparent Pricing Initiative	Increase consumer trust through cost breakdown visibility	1–3 months	Marketing, Finance	Design team, cost data, pricing tools	% of products with pricing info; Customer feedback ratings
2. Roll Out Social Media Transparency Campaign	Enhance brand authenticity and engage customers digitally	1–3 months (ongoing updates)	Marketing, CSR	Content team, social media platforms	Engagement rate, follower growth, campaign reach
3. Develop Customer Feedback Portal	Foster two-way communication and consumer involvement	2–4 months	IT, Customer Service, Marketing	Website development tools, survey tools	Number of feedback entries; Resolution time; Satisfaction score

4. Conduct Staff Training on Transparency Communication	Ensure consistent and ethical communication across touch-points	1–2 months (refresh quarterly)	HR, CSR, Operations	Training materials, trainers, modules	Employee participation rate; Training feedback scores
5. Establish Supplier Transparency Program	Improve upstream ethical compliance and risk management	4–6 months	Procurement, Compliance, CSR	Supplier audits, compliance checklist, reporting software	% of audited suppliers; Compliance rate improvement
6. Obtain Sustainability Certifications	Build external credibility and market trust	6–9 months	Production, Compliance, CSR	Certification body fees, audit preparation	Number of certifications obtained; Audit pass rate
7. Publish Annual Sustainability Report	Communicate progress, impact, and accountability	8–10 months (annual)	CSR, Finance, Marketing	ESG data collection, design team	Report completion; Distribution reach; Stakeholder engagement
8. Plan and Test Pilot Transparency Retail Store	Create immersive, educational brand experience	10–14 months	Retail, Marketing, CSR, Finance	Retail location, store design, display tech	Store foot traffic; Customer interaction metrics
9. Implement Product Traceability System	Enable customers to verify product origin and ethics	12–18 months	IT, Production, CSR	Blockchain/tech vendors, product tagging	% of traceable products; System uptime and usage rates
10. Build Partnerships with NGOs and Advocacy Groups	Enhance credibility, influence policy, and share best practices	3–6 months	CSR, Strategy, Legal	Partnership agreements, communication team	Number of partnerships; Joint campaigns or projects

7.3. Implementation Timeline

To turn transparency from strategy into practice, the Fujian apparel company should follow a phased Action Plan prioritizing initiatives by impact, feasibility, and investment. This approach ensures measurable gains in consumer trust, compliance, and brand loyalty while fostering a culture of openness. Regular monitoring will keep efforts on track and promote continuous improvement, helping the company meet regulations and stand out in a competitive market.

7.3.1. Short-Term (1–6 Months): Building Trust and Visibility

In the short term, the company should focus on quick, consumer-facing initiatives to build credibility and engagement. Launching a transparent pricing initiative by sharing cost breakdowns on product labels and online platforms promotes fairness, aligning with findings by Yang and Battocchio and Jung et al that such transparency enhances perceived value and authenticity [1,8]. Key metrics like the percentage of products with visible pricing and customer feedback will gauge success. Alongside this, a customer feedback system should be established to collect reviews and suggestions, providing insights to refine pricing and boost trust.

Simultaneously, a social media transparency campaign should tell the brand's sustainability story in real time. As Chari et al. highlight, user-driven, transparency-focused content increases engagement and trust [3]. Tracking engagement rates, reach, and sentiment will guide message refinement. Partnering with influencers and sustainability advocates can amplify reach and credibility, helping attract environmentally conscious consumers. Regular updates on sustainability progress will further engage and build loyalty.

Developing a customer feedback loop via a dedicated portal will foster two-way communication, allowing consumers to share transparency-related insights. Oklevik et al. confirm that participatory transparency strengthens brand-consumer relationships and loyalty, setting the brand apart in a competitive market [35].

Lastly, staff training on transparency communication is essential to ensure consistent, informed messaging at every touchpoint. Temporal emphasizes that emotionally intelligent communication fosters brand authenticity, particularly in face-to-face interactions [39]. Complementing this with clear, accessible channels for customers to learn about sustainability initiatives will reinforce credibility and trust.

Together, these short-term actions build a strong foundation of trust, engagement, and brand differentiation that supports both immediate goals and long-term growth.

7.3.2. Medium-Term (6–12 Months): Operational Integration and Certification

In the medium term, the company should focus on embedding transparency into its supply chain and reporting processes. Establishing a supplier transparency program ensures that sourcing partners meet the company's ethical standards, addressing growing consumer and regulatory scrutiny of upstream practices [19]. Concurrently, the company should pursue sustainability certifications like GOTS or Fair Trade, which provide credible validation of ethical sourcing and help build trust with environmentally conscious consumers. Jansson highlights that such certifications enhance green brand trust and reduce greenwashing concerns [20].

Publishing an annual sustainability report is another critical accountability measure. This report should detail progress on environmental, labor, and supply chain goals, serving both public and investor relations. Sansome et al. stress the importance of clear, evidence-based reporting to maintain stakeholder trust [16]. Together, these steps create a strong foundation for sustainable growth by demonstrating commitment to transparency, boosting reputation, and fostering deeper engagement with consumers, investors, and employees.

7.3.3. Long-Term (12–18+ Months): Innovation and Industry Leadership

In the long term, the company should pursue transformative initiatives to redefine brand transparency. Launching a pilot transparency-focused retail store can create an immersive experience showcasing ethical practices, interactive displays, and consumer education. Although resource-intensive, this flagship project enhances deep engagement and positions the brand as a pioneer in ethical retail, helping attract conscious consumers and solidify the company's reputation [48].

Implementing a traceability system, potentially using blockchain or digital tagging, is another key long-term step. This technology enables consumers to verify product journeys from raw materials to finished goods, greatly boosting trust and competitive differentiation. Menon and Jain and Ospital et al. emphasize traceability as foundational for global transparency leadership [17,46]. It also supports environmental goals by tracking and reducing carbon footprints, appealing to socially conscious buyers.

Additionally, forming strategic partnerships with NGOs and advocacy groups can enhance legitimacy, share best practices, influence industry standards, and secure policy support [43]. Collaboration ensures the supply chain is socially responsible, building consumer trust amid growing demands for accountability.

This comprehensive action plan links consumer engagement, operational integration, and industry leadership. By measuring progress through clear KPIs, the company can adapt and grow sustainably, shaping ethical fashion's future in Fujian and beyond.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the apparel industry's transparency practices in Fujian Province, combined with literature findings and strategic evaluations, the following conclusions are drawn:

1) Brand Transparency is a Critical Driver of Consumer Trust and Purchase Decisions

Transparency significantly enhances consumer perceptions of fairness, authenticity, and ethical commitment. Transparent communication fosters stronger emotional bonds, customer loyalty, and green consumer behavior — factors essential for brand sustainability in both domestic and international markets.

2) The Current Gaps in Transparency Present Strategic Risks and Missed Opportunities

While the company has taken initial steps toward sustainable practices, it lacks comprehensive transparency in pricing, supplier relationships, and consumer-facing communication. These gaps limit the effectiveness of its sustainability initiatives and expose the brand to potential consumer skepticism or accusations of greenwashing.

3) Digital Communication and Customer Engagement Are High-Impact, Low-Cost Solutions

Transparency initiatives such as social media campaigns, pricing disclosure, and feedback loops offer high returns on modest investments. These actions enhance digital trust, create consumer dialogue, and build advocacy with minimal financial risk.

4) Supply Chain Transparency and Certifications Build Long-Term Credibility

Medium-term strategies like supplier audits and sustainability certifications improve ethical accountability and provide third-party validation, which is increasingly demanded by global partners and investors. These initiatives, though moderately costly, directly contribute to building a reliable and resilient brand identity.

5) Technology-Driven Solutions Are Essential for Future Competitiveness

Long-term investments such as blockchain-enabled traceability systems and interactive retail spaces position the company as a leader in ethical innovation. These systems allow consumers to verify the brand's sustainability claims, which is critical in avoiding greenwashing and enhancing export value.

6) A Phased Implementation Strategy Enhances Feasibility and Impact

The recommended approach prioritizes short-term, low-cost initiatives to build early momentum, followed by medium-and long-term investments in structural, supply chain, and technological solutions. This ensures financial sustainability while steadily advancing the company's transparency goals.

7) Collaboration with External Stakeholders Strengthens Legitimacy and Influence

Partnerships with NGOs, advocacy groups, and policy institutions provide credibility, facilitate knowledge exchange, and position the company within broader industry reform movements. These relationships also help ensure compliance with emerging ESG and CSR standards.

8) Transparency Enhances Financial Performance and Market Positioning

Transparent brands command higher consumer trust, foster long-term loyalty, and are more likely to succeed in attracting investment and expanding into international markets. Financial analysis confirms that transparency initiatives — especially those that are well-targeted and data-driven — can generate measurable returns on investment.

Based on the research, financial analysis, and strategic evaluation, it is recommended that the apparel company in Fujian Province adopt a phased approach to strengthen brand

transparency and enhance consumer trust. Initially, focus on low-cost, high-impact initiatives such as transparent pricing disclosure, social media transparency campaigns, and customer feedback portals to achieve quick consumer engagement and credibility. Simultaneously, invest in comprehensive staff training to ensure consistent and ethical communication of sustainability commitments at every customer touchpoint.

To ensure supply chain integrity, develop and enforce a supplier transparency partnership program, including a code of conduct and regular audits. Pursue third-party sustainability certifications (e.g., GOTS, OEKO-TEX) to validate ethical claims and improve market access. Publish annual sustainability and transparency reports to demonstrate accountability and satisfy growing ESG expectations.

For long-term impact, gradually implement a digital traceability system that allows consumers to track product lifecycles, aligning with global best practices and enhancing trust. Consider establishing a flagship transparency retail experience to educate consumers and showcase the brand's commitment to ethical practices. Strengthen the company's position through strategic collaborations with NGOs, advocacy groups, and industry bodies to refine standards and amplify influence.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation using clear KPIs — such as consumer trust scores, certification status, audit outcomes, and digital engagement — will ensure continuous improvement. Finally, use consumer feedback and market trends to scale and adapt transparency initiatives, maintaining relevance and fostering sustainable brand loyalty.

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