

# A Study on Material-Focused Sustainability in Neo-Deconstructive Fashion

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**Abstract** This study investigates the intersection of sustainable materials and Neo-Deconstructive Fashion, focusing on leading brands like Marques Almeida, Loewe, Y/Project, and Balenciaga. The research examines these brands' material choices, production processes, and designs through an in-depth case analysis, aiming to amplify understanding and encourage the integration of sustainable materials within Neo-deconstructive fashion. The movement's core characteristics, including playfulness, diversity, communication, pursuit of new values, and recreation, are redefined through sustainable practices. Playfulness in this movement is transitioning to eco-conscious practices by incorporating recycled items and unconventional textiles. The rise of Millennials and Gen Z has pushed designers to engage actively, balancing creativity and practicality while integrating sustainability in communication methods. The pursuit of new values has reshaped the industry, with brands showcasing their commitment through collaborations, diverse inspirations, and sustainable materials. The concept of recreation drives innovation, leading to waste reduction and unconventional designs. Neo-deconstructive fashion's ongoing evolution demonstrates its enduring connection with sustainability, with designers actively prioritizing eco-friendly materials and showcasing a proactive stance against environmental issues. This relationship underscores collective efforts to address ecological concerns, influenced by societal awareness and technological advancements, shaping the trajectory of sustainable fashion.

**Keywords** Neo-deconstructive fashion, Sustainability, Sustainable fashion, Sustainable materials

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## Introduction

The term sustainable fashion first emerged in the 1960s when consumers recognized the environmental impact of clothing manufacturing and demanded a change in industry practices (Jung & Jin, 2014). The fashion industry's growing negative impact on society and the environment prompted the integration of sustainable practices into design and production processes. In this context, neo-deconstructive fashion emerged deviating from traditional norms by combining different elements that reflect modern values, presenting new perspectives and innovation (Kim, 2019). This movement not only captivates with its distinctive

designs but also serves as a platform for promoting sustainability through the use of eco-friendly materials.

Within the fashion industry, increasing awareness of environmental and social concerns has significantly influenced material choices and production methods. Consequently, there is a pressing need to enhance sustainability within the industry, particularly within the context of neo-deconstructive fashion, where research on sustainability remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the application of sustainable materials in neo-deconstructive fashion, seeking to comprehend the

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Table 1. Previous studies brands and criteria

Study Title /Author/ Year	Mentioned Brands	Selection Criteria
A study on the design characteristics of neo-deconstructivism fashion (Jin & Park, 2022).	Vetements, Marques Almeida	- Vetements was finalist of the LVMH PRIZE 2015 and Marquez Almeida won the final round, recognizing the brand's ability and role as neo-deconstructive brands. (p. 40) - Both brands are believed to have influence coming from Deconstructive Fashion
A study on the aesthetic characteristics of Demna Gvasalia fashion design from neo-deconstructivism (Sun & Kim, 2022).	Vetements, Balenciaga	The role of Demna Gvasalia as an innovator that sparks consumer interest and popularity can be understood through a Neo-deconstructive perspective.
A study on the neo-deconstruction design in Loewe (Kim, 2019).	Loewe	Jhonatan Anderson is considered one of the young designers that evolved new modes of expression of the traditional Deconstructive concept. (p. 16)
A study on aesthetic values of neo-deconstructive fashion (Kim & Ha, 2016).	Vetements, Marques Almeida, Jacquemus	Selected for being among the final eight brands going for the LVMH prize identified as being pioneers of neo- deconstructivism.
A study on the design characteristics in positive deconstruction fashion - Focused on the collections since the 2014 (Kim & Kim, 2017).	Vetements, Marques Almeida, Jacquemus, Y/Project	Drawing on prior research on evolving deconstructive fashion brands such as Vetements, Jacquemus, and Marques' Almeida were selected as subjects for research and based on common characteristics Y Project was also selected. (p. 69)

implications of sustainable material selection and use within this fashion movement. By doing so, we aim to contribute to the advancement of sustainability across the fashion industry.

As a research methodology for this study, the characteristics of neo-deconstructive fashion were analyzed based on previous studies, the concept of sustainable fashion and its modes of expression were identified, and lastly, the use of sustainability was analyzed by conducting case studies focusing on the collections of four representative Neo-Deconstructive fashion brands: Marques Almeida, Loewe, Y/Project, and Balenciaga.

The selection of these brands for representation within the Neo-Deconstructive fashion movement was based on several key factors. Firstly, their recognition in prior academic studies, including works by Kim (2019), Kim and Ha (2016), Jin and Park (2022), Sun and Kim (2022), and Kim and Kim (2017), highlights their significant influence within the movement (Table 1). This recognition positions these brands as worthy subjects for further research. Secondly, each of these brands has a reputation for pushing boundaries and experimenting with unconventional design techniques. They are known for their innovative approaches to deconstruction and reconstruction of garments, which aligns closely with the principles of Neo-Deconstructive fashion. Moreover, while Neo-Deconstructive fashion

primarily focuses on avant-garde design, sustainability has become an increasingly important aspect of the movement. These brands have been proactive in incorporating sustainable practices into their operations, such as using eco-friendly materials, implementing ethical production processes, or promoting circularity in fashion. By examining their sustainability initiatives, we can gain insights into how leading Neo-Deconstructive brands are addressing environmental and social concerns.

By combining theoretical research and case analysis, this study seeks to contribute to the field of sustainable fashion by exploring the potential relationship between neo-deconstructive fashion and sustainability. Aiming to provide a theoretical foundation for future research while offering fresh insights on integrating sustainable principles into avant-garde fashion.

## Theoretical Background

### Characteristics of Neo-deconstructive Fashion

Neo-deconstructive fashion finds its roots in the philosophical theories of 1960s Deconstructivism presented by Jacques Derrida, a movement that denied traditional

Western values and presented a new perspective that impacted several fields such as literature, criticism, social psychology, and art (Lee, 2019). This fashion movement gained prominence by introducing postmodern concepts into the industry. It meant a departure from established values and norms that contributed to economic instability and environmental pollution (Kim & Ha, 2016).

Neo-deconstructivism has surfaced amid the digital age, driven by a growing acceptance of diverse cultures, a rejection of normcore trends, a shift towards optimism in facing challenges, and the evolving cultural values embodied by Millennials and Gen Z as key consumers (Wu, 2021).

According to Kim and Ha (2016), Demna Gvasalia's Vetements marked the movement's inception in 2014, rejecting conventional glamour for asymmetry, unconventional cuts, and vibrant colors, leading the way for designers like Jacquemus, Y/Project, and Marques'Almeida, all of whom infuse their designs with playfulness and a celebration of individuality.

This study will define Neo-deconstructive fashion as a

contemporary fashion movement that reflects the changes of the times by including the reinterpretation of daily life items with innovation, playfulness, and acceptance of diversity, drawing inspiration from the principles of deconstructive fashion that emerged in the 1990s.

Neo-deconstructive fashion is associated with distinct characteristics. Jin and Park (2022) define it with the characteristics of "Pursuit of heterogeneous novelty," "Acceptance of contemporary diversity," "Playfulness," "Respect for individuality," and "Active social participation." Sun and Kim (2022) emphasize its aesthetic aspects, highlighting "Communication," "Playfulness," and "Diversity." Hong and Kim (2022) offer a comparison with deconstructivism, noting that while deconstructivism features critical thinking, resistance, and rough imagery, Neo-deconstructive fashion leans towards positive imagery, playfulness, diversity, convergence, and harmony. Yoo and Lee (2021) classify its characteristics as "Playfulness," "Recreation," "Communication," "Inclusiveness," and "Daily." Lastly, Kim (2019) identifies "Communication," "Recreation,"

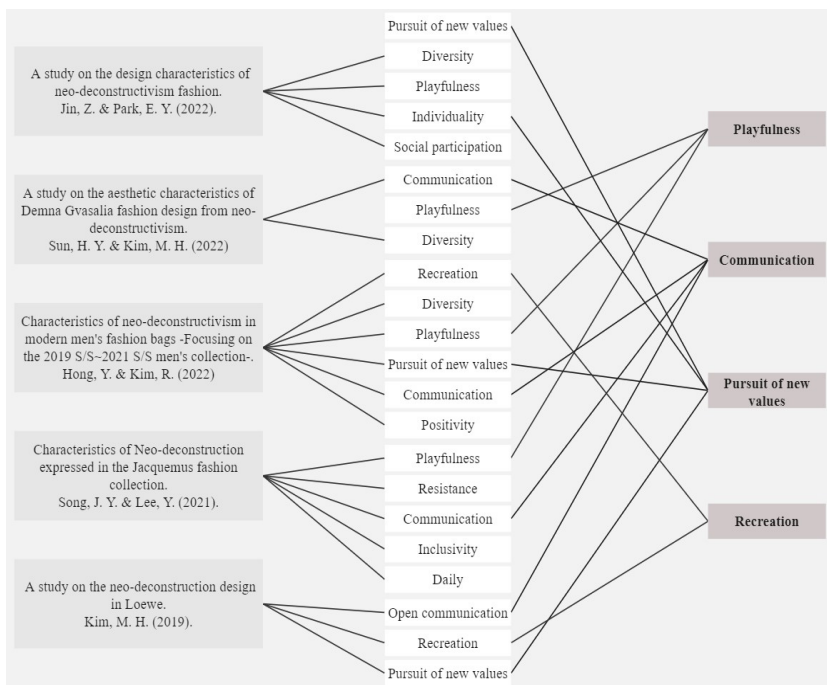


Figure 1. Neo-deconstructive fashion characteristics

and “Pursuit of new values” as key attributes of Neo-deconstructive fashion.

Therefore, after analyzing the commonality of the characteristics of Neo-deconstructivism mentioned in previous studies, this study emphasizes playfulness, communication, pursuit of new values, and recreation as the main characteristics of this movement. The previous contents are summarized in Figure 1.

Due to the various negative circumstances prevalent in modern society, individuals have actively pursued positivity amidst adversity. Deconstructive fashion now conveys a playful and uplifting message through the use of vibrant, diverse, and symbolic colors (Kim & Kim, 2017). It is characterized by the transformation of elements that may typically evoke psychological disturbance in traditional deconstructionism into elements that exude with and enjoyment (Hong & Kim, 2022). Designers embracing this characteristic infuse their creations with a sense of whimsy, joy, and lightheartedness; this playful approach adds an element of surprise and excitement to their designs (Figure 2).

For this study, we will define playfulness as a characteristic that expresses positive, cheerful, and playful elements through unexpected and fun design principles.

Communicativeness means two-way communication

between designers and the public (Wu, 2021). In neo-deconstructive fashion, communication can be said to be an open attitude that reflects the needs of Millennials and Gen Z (Sun & Kim, 2022). Brands like Vetements and Yeezy are using clothing to convey social messages, challenging norms by showcasing unfinished pieces at high-fashion events. This deliberate juxtaposition sparks strong reactions, showing the power of fashion as a form of communication. Designers are not just creating clothes; they’re actively engaging with the cultural and political landscape, making communication a key element of this fashion movement (Illingworth & Hall, 2016). Designers who embrace this approach push boundaries, encouraging viewers to challenge established concepts, embrace diversity, and engage in deeper conversations about societal issues and cultural values. It also encompasses the use of social media as a tool for self-expression, enabling designers to connect closely with consumers and understand their ideas and needs.

For this study, we will define communication as a characteristic focused on consumer-oriented design that reflects diverse consumer needs, tastes, and values by actively communicating with consumers.

The pursuit of new values is characterized by the active discovery of a new generation’s youth culture that rejects the



Figure 2. Playfulness, Marques Almeida, 2023 Spring (Garcia-Furtado, 2022)



Figure 3. Recreation, Y/Project, 2023 Fall (Y/project, n.d.-b)

older generation and identifies with subcultures that stand apart from mainstream culture or established fashion norms (Hong & Kim, 2022). It generates new interpretations, challenges fashion stereotypes and attitudes and breaks boundaries bringing novelty, resistance and chaos to the traditional fashion concept (Skivko, 2020). This characteristic blend existing classical fashion with the aesthetic values of younger generations, emphasizing DIY concepts. This approach highlights the idea that fashion truly comes to life when it reflects the wearer's unique preferences and tastes (Kim & Ha, 2016).

For this study, we will define the pursuit of new values as a characteristic that introduces fresh styles and designs by incorporating creative, unique, and culturally influenced elements. It takes the form of practical DIY clothing, aiming to be versatile and adaptable to changes in appearance while also reflecting the personal emotions and diverse preferences of consumers.

Recreation involves the deliberate disassembly of the functionality and meaning of existing objects, followed by their recombination to establish a fresh perspective and value (Sun & Kim, 2022). Gill's (1998) exploration of deconstructive ideals emphasizes this process in the recreation of clothing. Here, the aim is to challenge conventional views of fashion by dismantling established forms and meanings, thereby paving the way for unique and inventive creations.

Designers, inspired by these ideals, embrace elements such as asymmetry, irregular shapes, and unexpected combinations, resulting in avant-garde and thought-provoking designs. This characteristic transcends standardized design and functionality, introducing entirely different types and creating innovative designs, it derives new functionality while expressing the wearer's individuality (Hong & Kim, 2022) (Figure 3).

For this study, we will define Re-creation as a characteristic that aesthetically reinvents existing concepts based on the individual's personality, tastes, emotions, etc. Deriving new designs and functions through reinterpretation and application of new types to show the wearer's personality.

## Sustainable Fashion

Sustainable fashion goes beyond aesthetics and centers on the integration of social, environmental, and cultural values. This movement is distinguished from conventional fashion by various expressive methods, all of which share the common objective of mitigating environmental impact, fostering social responsibility, and ensuring long-term viability (ApparelMagic, 2023). In considering the application of sustainable fashion, the methods can be conveniently categorized into three main groups: Environmental Impact Reduction, Social Responsibility and Cultural Values, and Long-Term Viability and Circular Economy.

Environmental Impact Reduction focuses on cutting the industry's ecological footprint through innovative materials and processes, such as recycled, organic, and upcycled fabrics, as well as technologies like textile printing and 3D knitting that avoid surplus production (Niinimäki, 2013, p. 26), digital design software, etc. This method of applying sustainability is being used by various brands in different fashion sectors, for example, At Patagonia, designers select organic, recycled, and traceable materials in sustainable product line development. (Wang & Shen, 2017). This can be seen through their collections over the years such as the Truth to Materials capsule collection made with reclaimed or sourced materials (Clayton, 2014).

Social Responsibility and Cultural Values include ensuring ethical sourcing, fair labor practices, responsible production standards, and raising awareness to inspire conscious consumer behavior and empathy towards global issues. This expression characteristic fosters trust and encourages responsible consumption.

Long-Term Viability and Circular Economy include the adoption of circular economy principles which focus on creating clothing that can be easily recycled, repurposed, or reused at the end of its life cycle, zero waste techniques aiming to eliminate or significantly reduce fabric waste during the production process, new business strategies which include renting, sharing, swapping, and borrowing, that increase sustainable fashion consumption (Peleg Mizrahi & Tal, 2022) and upcycling that increases high utilization and value by giving aesthetic value to waste resources of useless materials and recreating them differently from existing uses

(Kim et al., 2021).

This circular economy-based fashion can be seen in EILEEN FISHER'S Renew program, where customers bring back their used garments to be renewed, repaired, and given a new life. For garments that cannot be renewed, the brand takes apart the unsalvageable garments, repurposes the fabrics, and creates unique, one-of-a-kind styles. They use every bit of fabric, down to scraps, to make something that would otherwise likely be created from virgin textile stock (Read, 2019).

In the case of Neo-deconstructive fashion, Sustainable fashion activities are characterized by a commitment to eco-friendly material selection and innovation, creation of sustainable lines, employment of zero waste and upcycling techniques to minimize fashion carbon footprint (Hall, 2020). The movement promotes thoughtful consumption by challenging fast fashion norms and emphasizes timeless designs. Storytelling runways convey narratives of environmental awareness and societal issues (Behzadi & Bakhtiary, 2023), while diverse and inclusive designs challenge traditional gender norms. Neo-deconstructive fashion explores innovative scientific and technological alternatives, contributing to a sustainable and forward-thinking industry. Fashion shows within this movement are reimaged as platforms for change, aiming to provoke dialogue and inspire fresh perspectives on pressing environmental and social matters (Wu, 2021), reflecting a holistic approach to sustainability.

## Material-Focused Sustainability in Neo-Deconstructive Fashion

The relationship between Neo-deconstructive fashion and sustainability is complex and multi-faceted. Despite being primarily recognized for its experimental and unconventional design approach, Neo-deconstructive fashion exhibits a significant intersection with sustainability through thoughtful approaches, but most importantly, Neo-deconstructive designers place a strong emphasis on material selection, prioritizing eco-friendly and innovative fabrics place a strong emphasis on material selection, prioritizing eco-friendly and innovative

fabrics.

The emphasis on material selection within this movement derives from its fundamental principles of deconstruction, recreation, pursuit of new values, and its relationship with the evolution of social media. Deconstruction initially sought to repurpose fabric scraps, displaying early manifestations of sustainable practices. However, as the impact of environmental concerns became increasingly prominent, Neo-deconstructive designers began to intertwine their approaches with sustainable principles, consciously choosing fabrics originating from recycled or upcycled sources, developing alternative materials, and integrating 3d-printed details. This fusion of unconventional techniques and eco-friendly materials drives positive change in the fashion industry, promoting a responsible approach.

## Brand Overview

### Marques Almeida

Marques Almeida, founded in 2011 by Portuguese designers Marta Marques and Paulo Almeida, embraces an innovative and unconventional design philosophy influenced by Helmut Lang. The brand gained fame for its frayed denim pieces and challenging traditional fashion norms with oversized silhouettes and bold colors. In 2015, they received the LVMH prize, marking their success. In 2020, Marques Almeida embarked on a sustainable journey, prioritizing organic and recycled materials, responsible manufacturing, and transparent supply chains. They partnered with denim recycling companies, repurposing discarded jeans, and they launched the "reM'Ade" line producing new and classic designs with dead stock and waste materials (Niesink, 2021). The brand also reduced collection frequency and emphasized sustainability in their "M'A SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY MANIFESTO." (Marques' Almeida, n.d.). Marques Almeida's combination of artistic creativity and eco-friendly practices has established them as a significant influence in contemporary fashion.

### Loewe

Founded in Madrid in 1846, Loewe is a renowned luxury

fashion brand celebrated for its craftsmanship and innovative designs. Official supplier to the Spanish Royal House since 1905 and part of the LVMH group since 1996, Loewe experienced a rebranding phase under creative director Jhonatan Anderson in 2013. Anderson's vision blends traditional craftsmanship with modern design, introducing gender fluidity and emphasizing sustainability. The brand's commitment to sustainability is evident in its Eye/LOEWE/Nature collection, focusing on sustainable materials, manufacturing processes, and supply chain transparency. Initiatives like The Surplus Project and using vintage materials have reduced CO2 emissions by 25% (Loewe, n.d.-a), showcasing Loewe's dedication to ethical and eco-friendly practices, contributing to a more responsible fashion industry.

## Y/Project

Y/Project, originally founded by Yohan Sefarty in 2011, underwent a transformative shift when Glenn Martens assumed the role of creative director following Sefarty's passing in 2013. Originally designed for men, transformed under creative director Glenn Martens, expanding to include womenswear (Dalton, 2016). Known for avant-garde designs, the brand blends art, architecture, and fashion, pushing boundaries and emphasizing individuality. Amid the pandemic, Martens introduced sustainable practices in the SS21 Collection, launching the "evergreen collection" a line of timeless styles crafted ethically that will be expanded every season to create longevity garments made through an environmentally conscious production process (Y/Project, n.d.-a). Martens' commitment to eco-conscious principles showcases the brand's dedication to positive change, marking Y/Project's evolving journey toward sustainability.

## Balenciaga

Founded by Cristóbal Balenciaga in 1919, the renowned luxury fashion house has left a mark on the fashion industry with its innovative techniques and groundbreaking designs. Balenciaga has undergone transformations under creative director Demna Gvasalia since 2015. Embracing a modern aesthetic merging high fashion with streetwear influences, the brand challenges traditional style norms through various

design choices, including gender-inclusive runways, unconventional models, and even unconventional items like Crocs and maxi pads and political infused runways (Vogue, 2021). This evolution redefines luxury and style. Balenciaga has also shown a growing commitment to sustainability, implementing ethical practices and environmentally conscious initiatives. They utilize responsible materials like recycled and upcycled fabrics, develop metal-free tanned leather, collaborate with sustainable organizations, and promote responsible fashion practices, including animal welfare by adopting a fur-free stance and establishing a transparent supply chain (Mower, 2021). While Balenciaga's sustainability journey is recent, it reflects the broader industry trend towards ethical and environmentally conscious practices.

## Use of Sustainable Materials in Neo-deconstructive Fashion

### Playfulness

Playfulness in fashion is achieved through a combination of textures, colors, and distinctive design elements, engaging wearers and observers creatively. Central to the manifestation of playfulness in fashion are the materials chosen by designers. These materials serve as a canvas upon which the designer can express and amplify the desired sense of lightheartedness and positivity. Designers use materials like sequins, feathers, suede, and metallics to express lightheartedness. Traditionally, these materials were not environmentally friendly, but now, playfulness is manifested through recycled items, vegan leather, inventive fabric combinations (e.g., denim with lace), and 3D-printed embellishments. Unconventional textiles like bubble wrap and repurposed trash bags, along with vintage fabrics, contribute to playful fashion while adhering to sustainable practices.

Marques Almeida's collections embody a sense of playfulness, by a harmonious merge of asymmetry, oversized silhouettes, bold hues, and unexpected fabric combinations. This creative spirit often is found in garments crafted from repurposed vintage or deadstock fabrics. For their Fall 2022

collection, the brand presents an oversized, patchwork jacket characterized by vibrant fabric scraps. These lively, colorful fabric scraps are employed as positive design elements, while the patchwork technique transforms discarded materials into captivating, unpredictably enjoyable designs. Furthermore, Figure 4 showcases Marques Almeida's distinct approach with a pair of wide-leg cargo pants in vibrant bubble pink, crafted from recycled polyester taffeta. These pants are paired with a strapless dress featuring an open front, fastened by an exceptionally long belt, resulting in an ensemble that stands out as unique and innovative. Notably, these captivating pieces are all created using sustainable materials, exemplifying the brand's commitment to responsible fashion practices.

In the case of Loewe, within its signature sustainable line EYE/LOEWE/NATURE, some collections stand out for their playful details. An example is found in their Spring/Summer 2022 collection, a fusion of outerwear garments of bold colors, geometric designs, patchwork, fabric amalgamations, logomania, and unexpected silhouettes. The collection comprises an array of pieces including cargo pants, knitwear, jackets, windbreakers, Bermuda shorts, and

more. The designs show Loewe's ability to infuse playfulness into their designs. For example, a fleece patchwork jacket is paired with white pants adorned with a line pattern. A logo-covered fanny pack featuring bio-based cords crafted from recycled polyester. This ensemble includes pillow-like bright pink sandals, resulting in an ensemble that not only captures attention but also exudes vibrancy and playfulness.

Y/Project places a strong emphasis on wearability, experimentation, and fun details in their collections. In the Spring 2021 collection, the brand effectively repurposed deadstock materials, reimagining previous designs with a fresh twist. This approach highlights Y/Project's dedication to sustainable practices while maintaining an eclectic and versatile product range. This collection showcases Martens's signature design attributes, including the introduction of inventive elements like rotating-collar shirts and elevated-shoulder blazers.

Under the creative direction of Demna Gvasalia, Balenciaga has introduced playful designs that challenge traditional fashion norms. Oversized silhouettes, bold graphics, and unexpected combinations of materials contribute

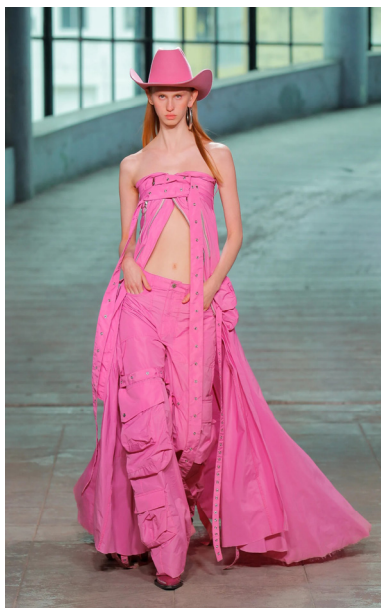


Figure 4. Playfulness, Marques Almeida, Fall 2023 (Nast, 2023)



Figure 5. Playfulness, Balenciaga, Pre- Fall 2021 (Nast, 2021)



to a distinct playfulness while pushing fashion boundaries. On their last collections, Balenciaga has begun to integrate sustainable materials as part of its efforts to align with ethical and eco-conscious practices as instead of using real fur or petrochemical fakes they chop up and embroider recycled cotton. In their Pre-Fall 2021 collection, all of the fabrics are sustainable from recycled to certifiably environmentally friendly materials. Figure 5 illustrates this presenting an oversized pink hoodie adorned with a playful “Gay pride” parody-style text. This design showcases Demna’s playful and exaggerated aesthetics, all while adhering to the use of sustainable materials.

### Communication

The digital revolution and the rise of the Millennials and Gen Z demographic have reshaped fashion trends and consumer behavior. This transition enabled individuals to become more aware of their surroundings, Neo-Deconstructive designers engage actively with consumers through direct methods like slogans, graphics, collaborative campaigns, and social media posts to convey beliefs and advocate for causes. Indirect

methods involve storytelling in runway presentations, material selection, and abstract designs to communicate messages related to specific causes.

Marques Almeida employs a multifaceted approach to communication and sustainability, manifesting through both direct and indirect strategies. A representative example of these dual methods can be observed within the brand’s Fall 2020 collection. In this collection, the brand ingeniously merges both direct and indirect approaches in a single garment. The collection features six printed ensembles with the message “It’s actually really important too,” representing the significance of sustainability within contemporary society and the realm of clothing production. Beyond the slogan, what makes these garments exceptional is that they are crafted from plastic retrieved from ocean sources, and subsequently transformed into yarn, thereby highlighting a direct connection between the message and sustainable material sourcing (Figure 6).

Loewe, known for its storytelling prowess, incorporates narratives into its creations, infusing depth and meaning. The brand’s recent focus on nature and sustainability is evident in its 2023 Spring Menswear Collection. This collection draws



Figure 6. Communication, Marques Almeida, Fall 2020 (Nast, 2020)



Figure 7. Communication, Loewe, Spring 2023 (Mower, 2022)

inspiration from technology, sustainability, nature, and communication (Figure 7). The collection showcases a harmonious fusion of the natural and the artificial, achieved through a dynamic collaboration between Jonathan Anderson and bio-designer Paula Ulargui Escalona. Chia plants are ingeniously integrated across multiple runway pieces, seamlessly incrusting over padded nappa bomber jackets and ozone-treated cotton shirts. Screens on select models display videos exploring themes of nature and humanity, highlighting the relationship between technology and the natural world. The collection sparks a discourse on the balance between technological advancement and nature preservation.

Y/Project, while notably embodying distinct communication characteristics within their collections, presents a relatively modest and indirect approach to conveying sustainability values. While the brand's designs are replete with communicative elements, the spotlight on sustainability remains subtle and indirect in nature. Glenn Martens, the creative director behind the brand, has mentioned that sustainability is currently encapsulated primarily within their dedicated sustainable line, which constitutes only 20% of the brand's overall offerings. "With Y/Project, we launched Evergreen in 2020, an eco-responsible line that represents 20% of our collection. But we can't change everything at once. We are trying to incorporate more and more sustainable elements as we go along." (Muret, 2022)

Balenciaga stands out as a brand renowned for its innovation-driven activism and strategic endeavors. The brand's commitment to making a meaningful impact is evidenced through a variety of methods, ranging from thought-provoking runway presentations and cutting-edge technological integration to boundary-pushing collaborations and occasionally controversial campaigns. Balenciaga's multifaceted efforts often intersect with environmental concerns, showcasing their engagement with pressing global climate issues. One representative example is their Winter 2022 collection, where the runway setting evoked an apocalyptic snowstorm, offering a visual of a potential future winter shaped by ongoing climate challenges. In a display of their innovative approach to sustainability, Balenciaga

introduced the groundbreaking material "Epeha" an alternative leather material derived from mycelium. Furthermore, an indirect yet impactful method of sustainability communication is evident in Balenciaga's Summer 2021 collection, where 93.5% of the collection was produced from certified sustainable materials. This dedication underscores the brand's commitment to weaving eco-consciousness into its offering.

### Pursuit of New Values

Neo-deconstructive fashion embodies the pursuit of new values, adapting to contemporary consumer attributes by breaking limitations, promoting versatility, and allowing personal expression through design. This connection fosters dynamic self-representation for wearers. The current consumer context obligates fashion brands to reconfigure their approach, embracing sustainability as a core principle in the pursuit of new values. As the relationship between Neo-deconstructive fashion and sustainability strengthens, designers are increasingly compelled to incorporate sustainable materials and ethical practices. This evolution represents the industry's responsiveness to the evolving preferences of the modern consumer.

Designs embracing new values often draw inspiration from the designer's past experiences, seamlessly integrating them into contemporary contexts. Marques Almeida exemplifies this in their Spring 2022 collection, inspired by Portuguese designers, artisans, and artists. Their creative vision reflects an appreciation for craftsmanship, innovative business practices, and a commitment to collaboration, departure from fast-paced industry norms, and amplifying the voices of independent and queer artists. Marques Almeida collaborated with local artisans, employing sustainable work processes, and featured transparently manufactured signature pieces using sustainable materials, showcasing their dedication to ethical practices. The collection also focuses on the creation of versatile garments that empower consumers to style them according to their preferences, while optimizing fabric utilization through innovative applications.

Loewe's 'Eye/LOEWE/Nature' line, guided by Anderson's vision, embodies a fusion of tradition and eccentricity. It represents a harmonious blend of

contemporary sustainability and the brand's distinctive character. Loewe's 'Eye/LOEWE/Nature' line repurposes materials from outdoor gear, transforming them into practical and experimental outerwear pieces, showcasing the brand's mission of functional yet distinct clothing. With each collection launch, Anderson seizes the opportunity to demonstrate his interpretation of practicality and creativity. A garment from the FW21 collection, features patchwork pants, a royal blue shirt, vibrant hiking shoes, and a backpack. The harmonious interplay of colors, coupled with the functional silhouettes, embodies the brand's mission of crafting functional yet uniquely crafted attire through the ingenious repurposing of fabrics.

Y/Project emphasizes versatility, granting consumers the autonomy to tailor their garments according to their individuality—a core principle of their pursuit of new values. This personalization is often channeled through DIY design concepts. An example of this concept is apparent in Y/Project's Fall 2022 collection. Within this collection, garments are equipped with integrated wires, affording wearers the ability to bend, twist, and shape the garments into various forms, styles, and fits. This transformative capability

offers wearers the choice to sport the piece loosely as a traditional jacket or manipulate the wires to craft a jacket with undulating waves, utilizing buttons to adjust both length and fit, or even introduce volumes through wire scrunching (Figure 8).

Balenciaga blends uniqueness, creativity, and contemporary trends with global issues, creating avant-garde designs that challenge fashion norms. While rooted in high fashion traditions, the brand redefines them to align with modern values, including sustainability. Occasionally these collections bear messages that resonate with contemporary values, creating conversations about modern issues. Their design philosophy incorporates characteristics of Millennials and Gen Z, empowering customers' individuality. A notable example is the 520 collection, referencing Chinese Internet Valentine's Day, a phenomenon embraced by Gen Z. The collection bears the slogan "I Love Earth," coupled with a distinctive graphic featuring the phrase "I love" accompanied by a smudged heart emblem. Consumers can personalize the garments using a provided marker, appealing to Gen Z's self-expression and Balenciaga's playful style (Fabris-Shi, 2023) (Figure 9).



Figure 8. Evergreen (Y/Project, n.d.-c)



Figure 9. Balenciaga, I love campaign (Jin Daily, 2023)

## Recreation

In Neo-deconstructive fashion, one of the most significant expressions of sustainability is manifested through recreation, where designers draw inspiration from past eras and reinterpret them with contemporary standards, often incorporating recycled materials. Various approaches are employed, such as revamping existing garments without new materials, infusing sustainability into previous designs, and creating entirely new pieces from fabric remnants. This process showcases a commitment to waste reduction and innovation, demonstrating how Neo-deconstructive fashion seamlessly merges sustainability with imaginative design, redefining industry conventions.

In the case of Marques Almeida, the concept of recreation is exemplified through their use of recycled fabrics and the practice of upcycling materials to transform existing garments and textile waste. In the year 2021, they launched a patchwork collection in collaboration with 7 for All Mankind, featuring an array of garments such as '70s-inspired flare jeans, an oversized trucker jacket, and an asymmetric dress, all crafted from surplus materials and used denim. These pieces also incorporate hardware with minimal environmental impact. Picture 23, a patchwork denim jacket

and jeans, showcases the brand's commitment to reviving fabrics, as mentioned on the collaboration's official website, "The emphasis on patchwork showcases the ways fabric has been given new life: gradients of recycled blue highlight the whiskering and creasing of the original materials." (7 For All Mankind, n.d.)

Loewe's approach to recreation is evident in its creative reinterpretation of signature designs by utilizing discarded materials. This is demonstrated through Loewe's "The Surplus Project," which showcases the brand's commitment to sustainability and innovation. In this initiative, surplus leather pieces, which otherwise might have gone to waste, are ingeniously repurposed to craft a new version of the iconic 'woven bag.' This process involves cutting the leftover leather into uniform rectangular sections, which are then intricately intertwined to form a fresh rendition of the well-known bag (Figure 10). To maximize the utility of the materials derived from the cutting process, Loewe's ingenuity is further showcased through the creation of bag charms ensuring that every ounce of recycled material is utilized to its fullest potential.

Y/Project demonstrates its unique interpretation of recreation through an innovative design approach applied to everyday wear items. Their technique involves merging



Figure 10. Loewe, Surplus Project  
(Loewe, n.d.-b)



Figure 11. Y/Project, Fall 2022  
(Leitch, 2022)

Table 2. Summary of content analysis

Characteristic	Definition	Main mode of expression through sustainability
Playfulness	Expression of positive, cheerful, and playful elements through unexpected and fun design principles.	- Incorporation of repurposed materials and innovative textiles. - Creative textile combinations.
Communication	Focus on consumer-oriented design that reflects diverse consumer needs, tastes, and values by actively communicating with consumers.	- Indirect communication by making sustainable materials choices. - Direct communication through activist slogans and storytelling
Pursuit of new values	Introduces fresh styles and designs by incorporating creative, unique, and culturally influenced elements.	Redefining industry original practices with values aligned to the contemporary customer through sustainable materials, local collaborations, functional repurposing and DIY design.
Recreation	Aesthetically reinvents existing concepts based on the individual's personality, tastes, emotions, etc.	- Redefining functionality through the use of sustainable materials. - Finding sustainable alternatives for each brand's iconic products.

various elements within a single garment or incorporating unconventional materials to give new functionality. This design process challenges preconceived notions of fashion, inviting viewers to see familiar elements from a new perspective. Their Fall 2023 runway featured jeans and jackets with denim panels attached using multiple buttons, creating engaging textures and enhanced volume. They also reinvented conventional jeans with multiple cuffs along the legs, this detail serves a dual purpose: the cuffs can be rolled in or out to dynamically alter the overall style and appearance of the jeans. What may seem like a standard design is thoughtfully transformed into a versatile and adaptable piece (Figure 11). Y/Project's commitment to sustainability is evident through the use of organic cotton and ozone-washed technique, reducing water waste and promoting eco-conscious production. Their designs demonstrate versatility, adaptability, and a dedication to innovative, eco-friendly fashion.

Demna Gvasalia brings innovative artistic reinvention to Balenciaga, going beyond mere replication to reimagine established concepts. This shift in design philosophy is evident in the Fall 2022 couture collection, where he transformed gazar, a fabric historically linked with Cristobal Balenciaga's iconic voluminous gowns. In this collection, gazar was transformed, finding new life into figure-hugging dresses and tailored jackets, diverging from traditional couture norms. Gvasalia's approach involves sustainable modifications, showcasing his ability to infuse innovation into historical elements. Balenciaga also incorporates streetwear elements like hoodies and denim, repurposing them within a

high-fashion context, demonstrating a blend of creativity and reinterpretation in the brand's collections. The results of the previous analysis content are summarized in Table 2.

## Conclusion

This study explores the intricate relationship between sustainable materials and Neo-Deconstructive Fashion, emphasizing the fusion of creativity and ethical responsibility within the fashion industry. In response to the development of technology, social networks, and the increasing environmental consciousness of consumers, Neo-deconstructive fashion brands have integrated sustainable materials into their core characteristics.

Playfulness in Neo-deconstructive fashion manifests through a blend of textures, colors, and design motifs. Traditionally, these materials and processes were not environmentally friendly, but the movement is transitioning towards sustainability. Designers are incorporating recycled and repurposed items, faux materials, and unconventional textiles, demonstrating a shift toward eco-conscious practices.

The rise of Millennials and Gen Z as primary fashion consumers has influenced designers to engage more actively with their audience. Neo-deconstructive fashion resonates with this demographic's pursuit of individuality and multiculturalism, leading to a harmonious balance between creativity and practicality. Sustainability becomes integral to this communication, addressing environmental concerns through both direct and indirect methods. Brands like

Marques Almeida, Loewe, Y/Project, and Balenciaga subtly incorporate sustainability through material choices and innovative initiatives, emphasizing a brighter fashion future and the potential of fashion as a medium for activism and change.

The pursuit of new values within Neo-deconstructive fashion has redefined the industry by adapting to contemporary consumer attributes. Marques Almeida integrates past experiences, diverse inspirations, collaborations with local artisans, and sustainable materials to showcase their commitment to ethical practices. Loewe repurposes materials into functional yet distinctive pieces, aligning with their pursuit of new values and sustainability. Y/Project's emphasis on versatility and DIY design empowers individuality, while Balenciaga adeptly integrates Millennials and Gen Z characteristics into garments, enabling personal expression.

The concept of recreation within Neo-deconstructive fashion brings new life into existing ideas and materials, emphasizing waste reduction and innovative design. Brands like Marques Almeida, Loewe, Y/Project, and Balenciaga exemplify this characteristic by integrating recycled fabrics, upcycling materials, creatively utilizing surplus pieces, and redefining functionality through unconventional materials. These practices signify the industry's commitment to sustainable practices and imaginative design, challenging traditional norms and shaping the future of fashion.

As Neo-deconstructive fashion continues to evolve, its deep connection with sustainable practices remains evident. Designers prioritize eco-friendly fabrics and innovative materials, demonstrating a proactive stance towards environmental issues. The relationship between Neo-deconstructive fashion and sustainability underscores a collective effort to address ecological concerns, shaped by societal awareness, technological advancements, and digital platforms, influencing the trajectory of sustainable fashion.

This study addresses a significant gap in the literature by focusing on the intersection of sustainability and neo-deconstructive fashion. While sustainability in fashion has been studied extensively, its application within this specific movement remains underexplored. Through a methodological approach that combines theoretical research with case studies of prominent neo-deconstructive fashion

brands, this study provides a new understanding of how sustainability can be integrated into avant-garde fashion movements and offers practical insights into real-world applications of sustainable practices within the Neo-Deconstructive Fashion movement.

This methodology can serve as a model for future research in analyzing sustainable initiatives within the fashion industry. Furthermore, this study identifies specific sustainable practices within Neo-Deconstructive Fashion, such as the use of recycled items, unconventional textiles, and innovative production processes. This identification contributes to a broader understanding of sustainable fashion beyond traditional approaches, promoting creativity and innovation. Moreover, the findings highlight the broader potential for fashion to act as a catalyst for change, propagating responsible practices that resonate with contemporary values.

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