

Holistic Leadership in the Fashion Industry

A literature analysis of perspectives on new leadership in the fashion and textile industry

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Abstract

This article investigates the role of leadership in the sustainability transition of the fashion and textile industry. The central question addressed is to what extent the dimensions from the HOLISTIC Leadership Framework are tenable in the existing literature on leadership models in this sector. Through a literature analysis of 49 peer-reviewed articles and reports, twelve contemporary leadership models are analysed for the presence of eight dimensions of the HOLISTIC Leadership Framework: Humanity, Openness, Long-term Vision, Integrity, Sustainability (strategy and system), Transformation, Inclusion, and Consciousness. The findings indicate that the analysed leadership models address various dimensions of the HOLISTIC Leadership Framework to a greater or lesser extent. However, no single model consistently scores highly on all dimensions, and there appears to be a stronger focus in the literature on the organisational system and the leader's role within it, compared to the leader's intrinsic values and mindset. The research suggests that the HOLISTIC Leadership Framework can offer a valuable frame of reference for the development of leadership capacities that are essential for a sustainable future of the fashion and textile industry. It is concluded that an integrated approach to leadership, encompassing both system change and personal development, is necessary to address the complex challenges of the sustainability transition in this sector.

Keywords Keywords: Holistic leadership, Fashion and textile industry, Sustainability transition, Personal values, Mindset, System change, Conscious leadership, Systemic leadership.

When the Great Tao (perfect order) prevails, the world is like a Commonwealth State shared by all, not a dictatorship. Virtuous, worthy, wise, and capable people are chosen as leaders. Honesty and trust are promoted, and good neighborliness cultivated. All people respect and love their own parents and children, as well as the parents and children of others. The aged are cared for until death; adults are employed in jobs that make full use of their abilities; and children are nourished, educated, and fostered. Widows and widowers, orphans and the old without children, the disabled and the diseased are all well taken care of. Every man and woman has an appropriate role to play in society and in the family. They hate to see resource lying idle or cast away, yet they do not necessarily keep them for themselves. They hate not to make use of their abilities, yet they do not necessarily work for their own self-interest. Thus intrigues and conspiracies do not arise, and thievery and robbery do not occur; therefore, doors need never be locked. This is the ideal world - a perfect world of equality, fraternity, harmony, welfare, and justice. This is the world called "Da-Tong." (Hwang, 2010)

Introduction

The (ultra-fast) fashion and textile industry is globally the second-largest industry and polluter. Consequently, this fascinating yet complex industry is receiving increased attention regarding the unsustainability of its production and consumption methods. Mass production and consumption lead to extensive negative impacts, including poor working conditions, social vulnerability, poverty and inequality, biodiversity loss, water and soil pollution, resource depletion, excessive land use, and significant ecological footprints (Meadows & Randers, 2012; Hooge, 2024; Pietersen et al., 2024). Despite these negative consequences, fashion and textile production and sales continue to rise annually (United Nations, 2022). Products are replaced at increasingly rapid rates before their end-of-life (Park, 2010), with fast fashion chains like ZARA, MANGO, and Shein experiencing continuous growth (Retailtrends, 2025).

Many producers in the fashion and textile industry operate based on traditional profit-maximisation strategies, insufficient for addressing global wicked problems (McKinsey, 2025; Porter & Kramer, 2011). When companies such as Primark, H&M, and Zara are asked to account for sustainable production, practices, and product aftercare, they frequently fail to respond adequately (Nieuwsuur, 2025). Society's call for new leadership, emphasizing awareness and the development of sustainable values, is growing louder (Pietersen et al., 2024; Polman, 2021; Buy Now, 2024).

The prevailing Make-Take-Waste paradigm underpins strategic decisions within the fast fashion industry and has been visible in conventional clothing for the past two decades (Lohmeyer & Schüßler, 2018). Questions linked to this paradigm often focus on how producers can consciously and sustainably respond to colour and trend demands; where previously two conventional collections per year were typical, today fast fashion produces at least two collections weekly (Cassady, 2018). Clothing quality has drastically decreased (NOS, 2024). Another major issue is how companies respond to consumer identity, the role marketing plays, and how consumer needs are addressed (Derwanz, 2018). Conversely, attention is also directed towards technical solutions for recycling fibres, repairing garments, and buying second-hand clothing, aiming at new business models (Durrani, 2018). Collaboration, transparency, and power dynamics within supply chains are also significant topics. Companies like TexTracer gain market traction through blockchain and Digital Product Passports (TexTracer, 2025; European Union, 2024). The complexity of these systems attracts criticism from consumers and fuels increasing grassroots activism (Fontana, 2018). Within supply chains, sustainability is often pursued from strategic economic motives rather than philanthropic ones (Baron, 2001; Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Ecological and social contributions are frequently challenging to integrate into organisational core principles and are rarely included in corporate governance (Lee, 2010). Alternative consumption and production models could better align with this complexity.

Leadership and decision-making roles connect all the aforementioned challenges, focusing on consumer behaviour or producer strategies (Heuer & Becker-Leifhold, 2018). The strategic choices of producers form the core question addressed in this research.

Leaders in the fashion and textile industry face complex challenges (McKinsey, 2025). A shift towards conscious, sustainable leadership is increasingly evident among frontrunners such as Stella McCartney (2024), VEJA (2025), MUD Jeans (2025), and Patagonia (2024), who integrate sustainable practices at their core. Companies like Decathlon (Circular Textile Days, 2024) and Fabienne Chapot (2024) also actively pursue sustainable production and sales. Noticeably, local and regional (social) entrepreneurs increasingly attempt fully sustainable fashion and textile production (SOURCE). Events like the Dutch Sustainable Fashion Week in the Netherlands illustrate these efforts (DSFW, 2024). Additionally, policies such as the EU's Extended Producer Responsibility for Textiles influence industry practices (European Union, 2022; Overheid.nl, 2023).

Industry formal leaders include board members, shareholders, heads of design, supply chain managers, purchasing managers, sales managers, and marketing managers. They must actively commit to sustainability, as organisations bear increasing responsibility for contributing to sustainable development and community well-being (Porter & Kramer, 2011; Boiral et al., 2013). Research and management literature emphasise that sustainability involves protecting natural resources for future generations, not merely reducing environmental harm (McKinsey, 2025). Leaders are expected to proactively develop strategies addressing climate change and societal challenges rather than merely reacting to regulations (Wittneben et al., 2012). By embracing sustainable leadership, the industry can not only reduce its environmental impact but also create long-term value for stakeholders and positively influence broader society (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

Transforming the fashion and textile industry towards sustainability requires profound organisational changes in structure, management, and operational methods (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Successful sustainability implementation depends on strong leadership, internal commitment, and flexible strategies for creating impact and value (Andersen & Petersen, 2015; Jonker & Faber, 2019). Management commitment is essential, as senior executives determine strategic direction, allocate resources, and reward performance that drives change. Without this dedication, sustainability remains an isolated initiative lacking structural impact (Jonker & Faber, 2019).

Leadership is a complex subject, intertwining behaviour, strategy, and societal interests, demanding much from new leaders. Attention to new leadership is vital from ecological, social, short-term, and long-term perspectives, considering economic sustainability and organisational structures. Such leadership must address numerous facets and skills, recognising leadership as

among the most complex social processes. Despite abundant studies and theoretical approaches (Fry & Kriger, 2009), there remains no unified definition or comprehensive model capturing all dimensions of new sustainable leadership, particularly within the fashion and textile industry.

In summary, given societal pressures to transition the fashion and textile industry towards sustainability, this research aims to understand the role of leadership in this sustainability shift. The study seeks to identify the necessary actions new industry formal leaders must take towards a sustainable future. Specifically, it explores what existing peer-reviewed articles and reputable industry reports reveal on this topic. The central research question is: 'To what extent are the dimensions of the HOLISTIC Leadership Framework sustainable within existing leadership models in the fashion and textile industry?'. The central question will be addressed by analysing eight dimensions from the HOLISTIC Leadership Framework introduced by the researcher. This framework provides a comprehensive view of leadership requirements—systemic, strategic, mindset, and awareness—and aims, through literature research, to offer a more complete understanding essential for sustainable leadership in the fashion and textile industry.

2. Theory

To underpin the HOLISTIC Leadership Framework (HLF), it is essential to gather objective, peer-reviewed literature relevant to this framework. Before conducting the analysis of selected literature, it is necessary to outline the theories on leadership and sustainability developed over the past two decades, particularly those related to the fashion and textile industry. This study is fundamentally based on the assumption of Fry & Kriger (2009) that leadership encompasses not only visible actions and organisational behaviour aligned with strategy but also the leader's internal world of emotions, thoughts, intuitions, and mental states. Fry and Kriger assert that leadership extends beyond surface-level actions and includes deeper elements such as visions, values, and images contributing to the social construction of an organisation. Hoogenboom and Van Lingen further emphasise this perspective, stating that new leadership must consider the organisational system, participation within societal systems, and the leader's role and personal internal state (Hoogenboom & Van Lingen, 2024).

2.1 Leadership from strategic and/or intrinsic values perspectives

Table 1 summarises contemporary leadership models, highlighting their common focus on new leadership forms that may facilitate transformation towards sustainable strategic choices.

Table 1. Overview of various leadership models and their relevance to the fashion and textile industry.

Leadership Model	Core Focus	Key Characteristics	Relevance to the Fashion Industry
Goleman's Primal Leadership	Emotional intelligence and leader effectiveness	Six styles (visionary, coaching, affiliative, democratic, pacesetter, commanding), flexible application requiring self-awareness, regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills	Flexible response to diverse situations and employee needs
Sustainable Leadership	Long-term balance of economic performance, social responsibility, ecological sustainability	Long-term goal orientation, stakeholder value creation, sustainable culture development	Crucial due to increasing awareness of resource and ethical production chains
Systemic Leadership	Broader systems involving relationships, structures, long-term impact decisions	Yin (reflection, intuition) and yang (action, goal orientation) balance, core competency of self-awareness	Promotes sustainable supply chains by considering ecological and social factors
Transformational Leadership	Inspiring, motivating, developing followers	High self-awareness, authenticity, integrity	Relevant in rapidly changing sectors requiring innovation and sustainability
Female Leadership	Specific traits, benefits, challenges for female leaders	Inclusive, empathetic, collaborative; strong system-thinking and complexity management	Supports sustainable, innovative organisations; important due to gender challenges in fashion industry
Taoistic Leadership (purpose-driven)	Compassion, harmony, cooperation, integrity, humility, prudence	Soft, modest, flexible yet powerful approach; Wuwei (effortless action)	Encourages fluid, harmonious sustainable approaches enabling natural organisational development
Responsible Leadership	Leader responsibility for stakeholder, societal, environmental impact	Balance between profit, social responsibility, environmental awareness	Framework for sustainable, ethically responsible fashion industry future
Mindful Leadership	Self-awareness, attention to others	Calmness, clarity in challenging situations	Helps fashion businesses balance creativity, business success, innovation, sustainability
Authentic Leadership	Integrative elements from transformational, ethical leadership, positive behaviour; aligning personal self with environment	High ambiguity tolerance, openness to change	Creates environment promoting flexibility, innovation, essential for sustainability strategies
Conscious Leadership	Care for people, nature, climate, combined with Yin-Yang philosophy	Balance between feminine (soft) and masculine (decisive) energies, awareness of ecological and social impacts	Leaders take long-term responsibility for their decisions
Spiritual Leadership	Shared vision, values; intrinsic motivation; viewing work as a calling	Vision, hope/faith, altruistic love	Enhances meaningful work environment, employee satisfaction, reduces burnout

Leadership Model	Core Focus	Key Characteristics	Relevance to the Fashion Industry
Regenerative Leadership	Active restoration of ecological, social, economic systems beyond sustainability	Integrates regenerative economy, biomimicry, circular leadership principles; leaders as evolving ecosystems	Essential for reversing negative impacts of fast fashion, developing regenerative supply chains

Critical observations indicate that most developed leadership models primarily focus on behaviour, interaction, strategies, and execution (Daft, 2008; Northouse, 2007). Conversely, other models emphasise personal characteristics, competencies, and styles. Additionally, some theories implicitly or explicitly explore spiritual dimensions and the relationship between leadership, values, ethics, and meaning-making (Bolman & Deal, 1995; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Quinn, 1996). A fully holistic compilation, however, remains absent.

Several critical observations are essential to highlight in this review. Most developed leadership models predominantly emphasize behaviors and interactions or strategies and frameworks, placing an explicit focus on doing. Conversely, there are models centered on personal traits, competencies, and leadership styles, thus emphasizing having (Daft, 2008; Northouse, 2007). Additionally, there are theories implicitly or explicitly exploring spiritual dimensions of leadership, emphasizing the relationship between leadership and values, ethics, and purpose (Bolman & Deal, 1995; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Quinn, 1996). The researcher has not encountered any compilation reflecting a completely holistic approach.

The database of Inholland University of Applied Sciences was searched for articles addressing the leadership theories mentioned above, specifically within the context of the fashion and textile industry. The search strategy is detailed in Table 2. Notably, the query "fashion and leadership" initially resulted in 711 articles. However, upon further analysis of the abstracts, it became evident that these articles predominantly focus on consumer behavior and marketing. Only a limited number proved relevant to the primary topic of this paper. When searching specifically for "transformation and leadership," articles mainly discussed the early stages of the supply chain and innovative tools applicable in manufacturing processes. Ultimately, 49 articles were selected as relevant. It is important to note that although several books appeared during the search process, these were excluded, as they fall outside the scope of this study. The researcher exclusively focused on peer-reviewed journal articles selected based on their abstracts.

Table 2. Selection of articles used in this research

Search criteria	Number of articles
"leadership AND sustainability AND fashion AND/OR textile"	19
"sustainable AND Leadership"	1
"systematic AND Leadership"	1
"transformational AND Leadership"	1
"female AND Leadership"	5
"spiritual AND Leadership"	4
"Taoism AND Leadership"	4
"regenerative AND Leadership"	1
"authentic AND Leadership"	4
"responsible AND Leadership"	1
"conscious AND Leadership"	1
"purpose driven AND Leadership"	1
"fashion AND Leadership"	3

The 49 selected articles were subsequently analyzed according to two specific characteristics. These characteristics relate directly to the points discussed at the beginning of this chapter. On one hand, they examine *how* leadership plays a role within the organization, focusing specifically on the leader's position within the organizational system and how the leader influences strategic decisions aimed at organizational survival and growth from a sustainability perspective. On the other hand, they examine the leader's mindset, their conscious actions, and their intrinsic motivations. These two characteristics were then assessed using five distinct levels ranging from Not Present to Fully Present. Table 3 below illustrates how these analytical choices were supported by existing theoretical literature on leadership.

Table 3. Rubric for Sustainable Leadership in the Fashion and Textile Industry (extended with theory)

Characteristic	1 (Not Present)	2 (Weak)	3 (Moderate)	4 (Strong)	5 (Fully Present)
1. System and strategic approach	No evidence of systems thinking or strategic approach.	Limited attention to system change or strategic planning.	Some attention to structural changes and strategic initiatives.	Clear focus on system change and strategic planning.	Full integration of systems thinking and strategic approach in all aspects of the organization.

Theoretical basis	No reference to system theory, shared value (Porter & Kramer, 2011) or circular economy principles.	Superficial reference to system theory, shared value or circular economy principles.	Demonstrable attempts to integrate system theory, shared value or circular economy principles, but inconsistent application.	Leadership clearly based on system theory, shared value and circular economy principles; demonstrable implementation in strategy.	Complete and consistent implementation of system thinking, shared value and circular economy principles in all strategic decisions and organizational processes.
2. Intrinsic motivation and mindset	Limited attention to mindset and personal beliefs.	Some attention to the role of mindset and intrinsic motivation.	Clear focus on the importance of intrinsic motivation and mindset.	Deep integration of personal values, intrinsic conscious motivation and a growth mindset.	Profound integration of personal values, intrinsic conscious motivation and a growth mindset throughout the organization.
Theoretical basis	No reference to growth mindset, spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003) or authentic leadership.	Superficial reference to growth mindset, spiritual leadership or authentic leadership.	Demonstrable attempts to integrate growth mindset, spiritual leadership or authentic leadership, but inconsistently applied.	Leadership is clearly based on growth mindset, spiritual leadership and authentic leadership; demonstrable implementation in personnel policy and culture.	Full and consistent implementation of growth mindset, demonstrable positive impact on employee engagement and performance.

Several key findings emerged from this analysis, forming part of the foundation for research into the HOLISTIC Leadership Framework. The articles addressing sustainability and leadership predominantly focus on the organizational system and the role of leaders within that system, with significantly less attention given to mindset and personal beliefs. Apart from articles on Spiritual Leadership, Regenerative Leadership, and Systemic Leadership, there is limited discussion on how leaders can practically initiate transformation. With the exception of Systemic Leadership, there appears to be no model providing a holistic perspective integrating both identified leadership characteristics. Notably, articles on Systemic Leadership explicitly address the integration of both these characteristics.

Articles on Authentic Leadership show a clear emphasis on systemic change as well as strategic planning, with strategies explicitly grounded in principles of shared value and circular economy. Articles examining Female Leadership also focus predominantly on organizational aspects but provide less consideration to core values and the mindset of leaders. Their main emphasis is on gender, specifically women, and the role of leadership within organizational contexts.

Interestingly, articles on Spiritual Leadership consistently and thoroughly emphasize implementing a growth mindset, self-awareness, and ensuring these principles permeate all organizational layers, demonstrably leading to increased employee engagement and performance. Purpose-Driven Leadership demonstrates a similar effect. Additionally, several models do acknowledge the leader's inner world. Remarkably, Taoist and Spiritual Leadership place significant emphasis on a higher purpose and personal development as essential foundations for effective leadership, while giving less attention to strategic systems and organizational structures. In contrast, Systemic and Authentic Leadership are examples of

approaches combining one or more deeper dimensions of leadership with organizational roles. Female Leadership primarily highlights gender (women) within organizations, rather than exploring feminine and masculine qualities within organizational sustainability strategies, as Taoist Leadership explicitly does.

tabel 4. Overzicht scores artikelen per thema en type leiderschap

type of leadership AND	Systeem/ strategie	Rol van de leider	Kernwaarden & Mindset	Tools	aantal artikelen
totaalscore	168	185	148	96	49
Sustainability AND leadership	3,4	3,8	2,0	2,0	19
Systematic AND leadership	4	5	5	5	1
Transformational AND leadership	4	3	3	3	1
Female AND leadership	4	3,8	2,2	1,4	5
Spiritual AND leadership	2	4,5	5	4,5	4
Taoism AND leadership	2,2	3,8	2,3	2,5	4
Regenerative AND leiderschap	4	3	3	4	1
Authentic AND leiderschap	3,5	4,8	4	2,8	4
Responsible AND leadership	3	5	4	1	1
Conscious AND leadership	3	3	5	1	1
Purpose driven AND leadership	3	5	5	3	1
Fashion AND leadership	3,7	2,7	1,7	1,0	3

Leadership theories all emphasise the importance of vision and values as the driving forces behind inspiring and meaningful leadership. However, research that confirms this specifically within the fashion and textile industry is scarcely to be found. Regenerative leadership does highlight the necessity, though not necessarily within the fashion and textile industry.

2.2 Conclusion

The existing leadership models all display characteristics that are important for new leadership. However, no single leadership model scores five points on all aspects. From this perspective, and with the components of the existing leadership models integrated, the researcher has

identified eight dimensions. These eight dimensions are summarised in Table 5. To provide a foundation for these dimensions, further study was undertaken, and Chapter 3 describes the Methodology.

Table 5. Integration of dimensions of existing leadership models substantiated with theoretical insights

Dimension	Leadership Models	Theoretical Insights
H – Humanity	Female Leadership, Conscious Leadership, Spiritual Leadership	Leadership based on empathy and collaboration. Goleman (2002) emphasizes emotional intelligence as a key skill for effective leaders. Female leadership styles are often associated with relational intelligence and caring leadership.
O – Openness	Transformational Leadership, Systematic Leadership, Taoistic Leadership	Openness to change and innovation is crucial in sustainability. Transformational leaders stimulate innovation. Taoistic leadership emphasizes flexibility and adaptability.
L – Long-term Vision	Sustainable Leadership, Responsible Leadership, Regenerative Leadership	Sustainable leadership focuses on value creation for future generations. Regenerative leadership goes further by actively restoring and strengthening systems.
I – Integrity	Authentic Leadership, Responsible Leadership	Integrity and ethical action form the core of authentic leadership. Responsible leaders take their social responsibility seriously.
S – Sustainability, Strategy & System	Regenerative Leadership, Sustainable Leadership, Systematic Leadership	Regenerative strategies show how organizations can contribute to ecosystem restoration. Systematic leadership emphasizes the importance of holistic decision-making.
T – Transformation	Transformational Leadership, Regenerative Leadership, Conscious Leadership	Transformational leaders inspire change. Regenerative leadership restructures organizations to continuously evolve. Conscious leadership focuses on transformation from inner awareness.
I – Inclusion	Female Leadership, Mindful Leadership, Responsible Leadership	Inclusive leadership connects diverse perspectives. Mindful leadership helps with deeper connections within teams.
C – Consciousness	Spiritual Leadership, Conscious Leadership, Taoistic Leadership	Spiritual and conscious leaders develop profound reflection and self-awareness. Taoistic leaders cultivate inner peace and a holistic view of life.

3. Methodology

In the previous chapter, it became evident that the discussed leadership models all highlight various aspects crucial for a successful sustainability transition. The existing leadership models all demonstrate characteristics that are relevant to new leadership. However, no single leadership model achieves a score of five on all components. From this perspective, and with the integration of components from the existing leadership models, the researcher has identified eight dimensions that encompass the necessary elements. These eight dimensions are summarised in Table 5 in the previous chapter.

The researcher will now assess the presence of these dimensions in the 49 articles. This thus forms the basis for the identification of eight dimensions that are essential for the new leader in the fashion and textile industry. The core question that the researcher aims to answer is as follows: “To what extent are the dimensions from the HOLISTIC Leadership Framework tenable in the literature in the fashion and textile industry based on existing leadership models?”.

Based on the aforementioned integration of theory with the resulting eight dimensions for a new leader, an examination will be conducted on how the 12 existing contemporary leadership models, distilled from the 49 collected articles, quantitatively score on the eight described dimensions. These eight dimensions emerge to a greater or lesser extent in the existing leadership models.

3.1. Framework application and coding

The analysis explicitly establishes the link between the scores on the HOLISTIC dimensions and the discussed leadership models. This is documented in the rubric in Table 6. This rubric assists the researcher in determining the extent to which existing models already address the various aspects of the HOLISTIC framework within the context of sustainability. Through this comparison, dimensions of the HOLISTIC framework that are less strongly emphasised in the existing leadership models and the broader literature can be identified.

For each selected leadership model (the unit of analysis), an assessment will be made regarding the degree to which the eight dimensions of the HOLISTIC Leadership Framework (Humanity, Openness, Long-term Vision, Integrity, Sustainability, Transformation, Inclusion, Consciousness) are emphasised. In this process, Table 4 (Rubric Core Values, Competencies and Mindset of the New Leader) serves as the guiding principle.

Table 6. Rubric Core Values, Competencies and Mindset New Leader

Dimension (HOLISTIC)	1 - Minimal presence	2 - Partial presence	3 - Average presence	4 – More than average presence	5 - Fully integrated
H - Humanity	Focus is primarily on performance and structures, little attention to people and community.	Leadership acknowledges the human side, but little focus on empathy and well-being.	Leadership stimulates empathy and collaboration, but not central.	People-oriented leadership is clearly present and part of decisions. Morality and empathy present.	Humanity and ethical leadership are central; ensures collective growth. Compassion is central.
O - Openness	Closed leadership style, little room for feedback or innovation.	Limited flexibility and openness to other perspectives.	Some openness to feedback, but little	Active encouragement for dialogue, reflection, and innovation. Constructive feedback is welcomed.	Culture of continuous learning and experimentation. Leaders actively seek diverse

			change in leadership style.		perspectives and are open to radical new ideas.
L - Long-term Vision	Focus mainly on short-term results, sustainability is not a consideration.	Some attention to future, but mainly focused on the next few years.	Considers long-term consequences of decisions, but sustainability is not always a priority.	Strategic decisions are made from a long-term sustainability perspective. The long term extends beyond the next generations to the continued existence of the Earth.	A clear and inspiring long-term vision for a sustainable future is the guiding principle in all decisions and actions.
I - Integrity	Little ethical anchoring, decisions mainly based on profit or power.	Ethical behaviour present, but inconsistently applied. .	Integrity is important, but there are still compromises with business interests.	Leadership based on values and transparency, few compromises.	Highest level of integrity and ethical leadership, no compromises on human values.
S - Sustainability	Resistance to change, clinging to existing systems.	Open to change, but little active direction towards transformation.	Transformative thinking is acknowledged, but implementation remains limited.	Active change agent with a focus on sustainable innovations and aware of the organisation's role in society.	Leadership is fully focused on radical system change within the organisation and participation in change outside the organization.
T - Transformation	Resistance to change, clinging to existing systems.	Open to change, but little active direction towards transformation.	Transformative thinking is acknowledged, but implementation remains limited.	Active change agent with a focus on sustainable innovations and aware of organisation's role in society.	Leadership is fully focused on radical system change within the organisation and participation in change outside the organization.
I - Inclusion	Limited diversity, little attention to collaboration or shared leadership.	Some degree of inclusion, but no fundamental diversity strategy.	Inclusion is present in language and policy, but not yet integrally applied .	Active focus on diversity, collaboration, and shared leadership.	Inclusion and diversity are central, leadership is fundamentally participative.
C - Consciousness	Decision-making is mainly rational and business-like, little self-reflection.	Some attention to awareness and ethics, but not explicit.	Self-reflection is encouraged, but not yet a holistic approach.	Leadership based on inner awareness and the leader's impact on the environment .	Deep awareness, authentic connection with a higher purpose, humanity, and the system.

The assessment will be quantitative in nature, seeking explicit mentions, discussions, or examples relevant to each dimension within the context of sustainable transformation in the fashion and textile industry, based on the 49 selected articles. The analysis will consider the core focus and key characteristics of the leadership models discussed in the literature (as presented in Table 1) and how these relate to the HOLISTIC dimensions.

The report will provide an overview of the general emphasis on the HOLISTIC dimensions in the analysed literature. The relationship between the HOLISTIC dimensions and the existing leadership models will be discussed, including any potential blind spots. The findings will be

discussed in light of the necessity for sustainable transformation in the fashion and textile industry and the role of leadership therein.

4. Results

The research focuses on the eight dimensions described in Chapter 2, which are present to a greater or lesser extent in the 49 selected articles. These articles were pre-selected based on how they address leadership. Table 1 showed that the majority of the articles focus on the organisation and less on the intrinsic values of the leader. It also appeared that most articles do not combine the role of the leader within the organisation with the personal characteristics the leader needs to transition to sustainable action.

Table 7 presents the quantitative scores based on the rubric in Table 6, with the eight dimensions set out against the various leadership models. The scores in Table 7 indicate that the analysed leadership models score relatively high on various dimensions of the HOLISTIC Leadership Framework. For example, Sustainable Leadership, Female Leadership, Taoistic Leadership, and Responsible Leadership score high on the Integrity dimension. The emphasis on ethical behaviour and staying true to values is therefore strongly reflected.

Table 7. Overview with scores per leadership model HOLISTIC leadership framework

Leadership Model	H (Humanity)	O (Openness)	L (Long-term Vision)	I (Integrity)	S (Sustainability, strategy and system)	T (Transformation)	I (Inclusion)	C (Consciousness)	Total average score
Goleman's Primal Leadership	4	4	3	4	2	3	3	3	3.3
Sustainable Leadership	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	2	4.1
Systemic Leadership	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.1
Transformational Leadership	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3.6
Female Leadership	5	4	4	4	3	4	5	3	4.0
Taoistic Leadership (purpose driven)	5	4	5	5	3	4	4	5	4.4
Responsible Leadership	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	4.4
Conscious Leadership	5	4	4	5	4	3	4	5	4.3

Authentic Leadership	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	4.3
Spiritual Leadership	5	4	4	5	3	3	4	5	4.1
Regenerative Leadership	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	3	4.1

Empathy and morality are relevant to all the models. However, not all models demonstrate a focus on collective growth and compassion. Regarding the Openness dimension, all the leadership models score a 4, indicating that there is only an active encouragement of dialogue, reflection, and innovation. Impartiality and objective observation with a continuous search for new paths are not found in the articles.

All the models show attention to a balance between the short and long term. Goleman's Primal model does not show a radical long-term vision. In transformational leadership, the search for balance also remains. Female leadership does show significantly more future vision, but it is focused on the female gender. When it comes to feminine and masculine characteristics, this is visible in Taoism or Spiritual leadership. Regenerative Leadership is fully focused on the future and radical changes of course.

Integrity reaches almost or completely the highest level of integrity and ethical leadership in all the models, with no compromises on human values. When it comes to the 'S' (Sustainability, Strategy & System) of the HLF, there is more variation. This also shows that not all models were developed for sustainability, nor regarding the view of how the organisation and its own system, and the role of the organisation in society, are experienced by the leader. This is especially the case with Goleman's Primal model.

Some integration of sustainable values, but no fundamental change, underlies almost all the models. However, Systematic Leadership, Sustainable Leadership, and Regenerative Leadership do have this as a foundation of leadership.

However, Systemic Leadership, Sustainable Leadership, and Regenerative Leadership do have this as a fundamental aspect of leadership.

The HLF emphasises the importance of a leader who is not only strategic and results-oriented, capable of reasoning and making decisions from a systems perspective, but also possesses a strong compassionate compass, is conscious of the impact of their actions on people and the environment, and is able to inspire and motivate others towards sustainable action. Consequently, the HLF is a potential approach that is interesting for training leaders.

Table 8. HOLISTIC Leadership Framework

Core value	Description	Relevance for sustainable transformation	Core competencies for leaders
H - Humanity	Leadership starts with human- and nature-oriented action and showing compassion.	Sustainability requires engagement with people and nature; empathetic leadership helps with inclusive transition.	Empathy, compassion, connecting.
O - Openness	Being open to innovation, feedback, and new perspectives without being prejudiced. Impartiality is fundamental.	Willingness to learn and to think and act outside the box.	Listening skills, flexibility, open mindset, impartiality with vision.
L - Long-term Vision	Making decisions that create value not only today but also in the future.	Sustainability requires a holistic vision and not just short-term profit.	Future-oriented, strategic thinking, value creation, integrating sustainability into business models.
I - Integrity	Acting ethically and transparently, staying true to values.	Sustainable leaders must be reliable and consistent in their principles.	Ethical reflection, moral courage, authenticity.
S – Sustainability, Strategy & System	Taking responsibility for ecological, social, and economic sustainability strategy.	Central pillar of sustainable transformation; leaders must integrate sustainability into decision-making. Vision is the driving force. Making impact and value creation is the goal.	Systems thinking, responsible entrepreneurship, stakeholder engagement.
T - Transformation	Leader as a catalyst for positive change.	The ability to achieve breakthrough changes.	Willingness to change, innovative power, inspiring, systemic thinking and acting as leader and employees.
I - Inclusion	Stimulating diversity and collaboration, listening to all voices.	Seeing and acting upon the collective challenge that requires collaboration between sectors and stakeholders.	Embracing diversity, developing inclusive policies, participation.
C - Consciousness	Self-awareness and connection with a higher purpose in the environment.	Deep self-reflection on values and actions, taking into account not only oneself but also fellow humans regarding the impact of business activities.	Mindfulness, self-reflection, acting with attention and compassion.

5. Conclusion

The main research question of the literature study is: “To what extent are the dimensions from the HOLISTIC Leadership Framework tenable in the literature in the fashion and textile industry based on existing leadership models?” and will be answered in this chapter.

The analysis of the number of articles per theme and type of leadership shows that relatively few articles specifically address leadership models in relation to sustainability within the fashion and textile industry . This suggests that the specific intersection of leadership theories and sustainability transformation in the fashion and textile industry is under-researched in the existing literature.

Table 9 indicates the total scores of the different models, based on the averages of the eight dimensions from Table 5. All the models score above average on the dimensions, ranging from a score of 3 to 4.

Table 9. Total score per leadership model HOLISTIC leadership framework

Leadership Model	Total Score
Goleman's Primal Leadership	3
Sustainable Leadership	4
Systemic Leadership	4
Transformational Leadership	4
Female Leadership	4
Taoistic Leadership	4
Responsible Leadership	4
Conscious Leadership	4
Authentic Leadership	4
Spiritual Leadership	4
Regenerative Leadership	4

From this, it can be deduced that the majority of the 49 selected articles are focused on how the role of the leader contributes to the strategic implementation of sustainability. There is often discussion about the organisation's strategy and how the leader can respond to it. The leader is seen as a means to achieve this. However, there is generally less description of how the leader should approach this from their own personal mental state. Therefore, the 49 articles pay

less attention to the leader's intrinsic experiences and how they can demonstrate their commitment to achieving a sustainable strategy based on their intrinsic drives, motivation, considerations, and values. Endorsed tools are also under-researched.

The scores in Table 9 indicate that various leadership models score above average on the dimensions of the HLF. This is based on an average score across all eight dimensions. Goleman's Leadership shows some focus across several dimensions and a degree of balance, but its emphasis on sustainability transformation (S) is limited. The other models generally demonstrate attention to all the dimensions of the HLF, which suggests that the HLF is a viable framework. No single model achieves an average score of 5.

However, the Taoistic Leadership Model comes close to the HLF, although the strategy and system (S) dimension is not fully incorporated. Table 9 provides an overview of the scores for each leadership model on the eight HOLISTIC dimensions, based on the 49 selected articles. These articles address the eight dimensions to varying extents. All the leadership models function at an average or above-average level, with the exception that Goleman's Primal Leadership is not directly focused on sustainability and strategy.

The articles focusing on Sustainable Leadership and Regenerative Leadership strongly emphasise the Sustainability dimension and Long-term Vision. There is less attention paid to the leader's consciousness in these models. Conversely, the leadership models from Taoism and Authenticity extensively address consciousness. The same applies to the Humanity dimension. Spiritual Leadership is noticeably more focused on the people-oriented dimensions and less on strategy, sustainability, and the long-term implications.

It is evident from the articles that there is limited insight into the leader's intrinsic experiential world and what that signifies for their commitment or lack thereof to sustainability transformation. This is particularly true at the level of how the leader should approach this and what the leader themselves requires to learn this or how they can achieve it.

7. Discussion

The results indicate a strong balance between the different dimensions, which is also supported by the literature. This leads to the HLF, where a balance exists between Humanity, Openness, Long-term Vision, Integrity, Strategic Sustainability and Systemic Organisation, Inclusivity, and Consciousness. All the literature identifies these elements as necessary dimensions of the new leader.

7.1 Necessity of integrating system change and personal leadership development

There is a necessity to integrate system change and personal leadership development. Further research should focus on the integration of system change and personal leadership development in practice, to obtain a more complete picture of the factors that contribute to a sustainable future for the fashion and textile industry. The research does emphasise that a successful sustainability transition requires a combination of both.

7.2 An integrated approach is necessary

The results suggest that although different leadership models emphasise separate dimensions of the HLF, an integrated approach is necessary for a successful sustainability transition in the fashion and textile industry. The HLF, which integrates elements of Regenerative, Systemic, Transformational, Authentic, Conscious and Spiritual Leadership, is seen as a possible starting point for training leaders.

7.3. Learning through development via a strong programme

The development of new leadership programmes is beneficial. By focusing more on the dimensions from the HLF, leaders in the industry can develop the necessary competencies, which can make a positive contribution to the sustainability transformation of the industry. The HLF is an interesting starting point for training leaders in the fashion and textile industry in the required competencies for sustainable transformation.

7.4 Integration of the models ensures a next step

Acknowledging that the integration of leadership models is a next step in the studies of leadership and sustainability. The model that meets the needs of the fashion and textile industry integrates elements of Regenerative, Systemic, Transformational, Authentic, Conscious, and Spiritual Leadership. This emphasizes the importance of leaders who are not only strategic and results-oriented, but also possess a strong moral compass, are aware of their impact on people and the environment, and are able to inspire and motivate others to act sustainably.

In short, the sustainability transition in the fashion and textile industry requires a new kind of leadership that goes beyond traditional profit-driven models and embraces a holistic approach that includes both system changes and the personal values and consciousness of leaders. The HLF offers a valuable frame of reference for the development of such leadership.

8. Limitations of the research

There were few articles that focused on leadership in the fashion and textile industry. There is a need for further research that concentrates on the integration of system change and personal

leadership development to gain a more complete understanding of the factors that contribute to a sustainable future for the fashion and textile industry.

There is an underemphasis on the personal drivers and values of leaders. The literature on leadership in the sustainability transition of the fashion and textile industry pays insufficient attention to the personal drivers, values, and their development in leaders. The research identifies a gap in the investigation of the development of these personal values and how they influence leadership decisions.

There is a limited focus on the intersection of leadership and sustainability within the industry. The literature search reveals that very few articles are available that address leadership (models) and sustainability specifically within the fashion and textile industry. Many articles that do contain 'Fashion AND Leadership' as search terms primarily focus on consumer behaviour and marketing. This suggests that the specific intersection of leadership theories and sustainability transformation in the fashion and textile industry is under-researched in the existing literature, as previously indicated. Additionally, the names of leadership models are sometimes used interchangeably, making categorization difficult. For example, Taoistic leadership is combined with Purpose-driven leadership (Zu, 2019). As a result, the researcher was sometimes obliged to categorize based on interpretation.

The methodology is designed to identify dimensions of the HOLISTIC framework based on existing leadership models. Many of these leadership models are further explained and elaborated in management books, which fall outside the scope of this research. This could have potentially provided a broader picture of what is being done.

In summary, the most significant gaps in the research field concern the lack of in-depth research into the personal aspects of leadership in sustainability (case studies), the limited literature that specifically combines the fashion and textile industry with leadership in relation to sustainability, and the need to study the integration of system change and personal development of leaders in an integrated manner.

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Appendix 1

Leadership Models explained in more detail

10.1.1. Goleman's Primal Leadership

The first in the line-up of leadership models that focuses on the inner world of the leader is Daniel Goleman's Primal Leadership model, which is based on emotional intelligence (EQ). Goleman describes six leadership styles that can increase the effectiveness of a leader, depending on the context. These styles were developed based on his work on emotional intelligence and its impact on leader performance. The six styles, as described in *Primal Leadership* (Goleman, 2002), are:

1. **Visionary Leadership:** To bring about change, it is necessary for the organisation's leadership to have a widely supported vision of sustainability. This provides direction and an inspiring vision for the future. It helps teams to focus on long-term goals and boosts motivation, enabling impact to be made. The leader uses this style during times of change or when a clear vision is needed.
2. **Coaching Leadership:** To guide employees in the right direction and motivate them in their work, it is essential for the leader to pay attention to the personal and professional development of employees. This strengthens employees' self-awareness and skills, thereby improving their performance. This can contribute to their commitment towards sustainable actions and thinking. It is also effective when employees need growth and guidance, especially when there is a need for transformation.
3. **Affiliative Leadership (Relational Leadership):** Harmony, emotional connection, and building strong teams are essential to improve trust and collaboration within teams. This is ideal in situations where conflicts or tensions need to be reduced.
4. **Democratic Leadership:** Democratic leadership encourages participation and collaboration in decision-making. In this way, the leader creates involvement and shared responsibility within the team. It is suitable for situations where employees need to be involved in decisions.
5. **Pacesetter Leadership (Directive Leadership):** Pacesetter leadership sets high standards and leads by example. This can be very productive, but it can also overwhelm employees if used too often. It is suitable when a team is already motivated and competent.
6. **Authoritarian Leadership:** Focuses on quick decision-making and direct control. It can be effective in crisis situations, but it is often experienced as demotivating in the long term. It is useful in emergencies or when swift action is required.

According to Goleman, the success of leadership lies in the ability of effective leaders to switch flexibly between these styles, depending on the situation. This requires a high degree of emotional intelligence, which, according to Goleman, consists of five core competencies:

1. **Self-awareness:** The ability to recognise emotions and their impact.
2. **Self-regulation:** The ability to manage impulses and emotions.
3. **Motivation:** Being driven by intrinsic goals.
4. **Empathy:** Understanding and sensing the feelings of others.
5. **Social skills:** Managing relationships effectively.

These five competencies are essential to employ in new leadership.

In addition to these more well-known leadership styles, new forms of leadership are becoming increasingly visible.

10.1.2. Sustainable Leadership

Sustainable leadership is an approach that goes beyond traditional leadership and focuses on the balance between economic performance, social responsibility, and ecological sustainability in the long term. This model is crucial in the fashion industry, where awareness of natural resources and ethical production chains is becoming increasingly important [103, Tex Tracer, 2025]. Research shows that sustainable leaders have a strong focus on organisational culture, strategic orientation, and human development within companies to enable systemic transformation [103, Frontiers, 2023]. Sajjad et al (2022) demonstrate a great need for this more holistic approach to sustainable leadership. An analysis of extensive data shows that there is a necessity to consider the interests of all stakeholders, including employees, society, and the ecosystem. This means that leaders look beyond short-term financial incentives and instead build a shared sustainable culture within their organisation [104, Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011].

10.1.3. Systematic Leadership

Systemic leadership is an approach where leaders not only focus on their individual performance and decision-making, but also incorporate the broader system in which they operate into their thinking and actions. This includes relationships, structures, dynamics, and the long-term impact of decisions, both within the organisation and in society. The principles of yin and yang can serve as a guideline within systemic leadership [105, Li, 2016]. Yin (reflection, intuition, listening) and yang (action, goal-orientation, decisiveness) are both necessary to develop a balanced and adaptive leadership style. Systemic leaders are able to balance these two forces by applying both strategic decisiveness and empathetic leadership.

Scientific research on paradoxical leadership supports this idea. Smith & Lewis (2011) argue that effective leaders can embrace paradoxes (such as flexibility versus stability, or innovation versus efficiency) instead of seeing them as contradictions. Systemic leadership requires leaders not only to think linearly, but also to have an eye for complexity and mutual dependencies within their organisation and market.

Self-awareness is a core competency within systemic leadership. Leaders who are aware of their own thinking patterns, emotions, and behaviours can better anticipate how their decisions and actions will affect the larger system. Scientific research confirms that self-aware leaders have a positive impact on their organisation's performance and that systemic thinking contributes to better leadership [107, DeRue et al., 2011; Goleman et al., 2013].

In systemic leadership, a holistic vision is adopted, whereby the leader understands how different elements within an organisation and its broader context are interconnected. Painter-Morland (2008) discusses systemic leadership and the emergence of ethical responsiveness.

10.1.4. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leaders go beyond simply managing and motivating their teams; they also inspire, motivate, and develop their followers to reach their full potential [108, Bass & Riggio, 2006]. This model of leadership is particularly relevant in rapidly changing and creative sectors such as the fashion industry, where innovation, sustainability, and ethical decision-making are becoming increasingly important. By integrating systemic thinking within transformational leadership, leaders can not only foster a culture of continuous growth and innovation but also contribute to broader social and ecological goals.

Transformational leaders possess strong self-awareness, which enables them to act authentically and with integrity. According to research by DeRue et al. (2011), self-awareness is a fundamental characteristic of successful leaders because it helps them regulate emotions, make strategic decisions, and build trust within teams.

Within a transformational leadership style, the power of self-awareness is particularly visible in idealised influence. Transformational leaders are seen as role models, which is only possible if they have a good understanding of their own values and drivers and consistently act according to their principles [110, Goleman et al., 2013]. This aligns with insights from authentic and servant leadership, where self-awareness and moral integrity also play a central role.

10.1.5. Female Leadership

Female Leadership is a unique approach within leadership theories. Female leadership is a concept that focuses on the specific characteristics, benefits, and challenges associated with women in leadership roles. Research suggests that women often exhibit different leadership

styles compared to men, often characterised by being more inclusive, empathetic, and collaborative. These qualities can lead to more sustainable and innovative organisations [111, Weiner et al., 2019]. Studies have shown that female leaders are often praised for their ability to understand complex systems and adopt holistic approaches in decision-making. This is particularly valuable in sectors where sustainability goals and social responsibility are important [111, Weiner et al., 2019].

Transformation and a focus on the long term: Research indicates that female leaders are more inclined to integrate sustainability into their leadership style [111, Fernández et al., 2021]. They promote ethical business practices, social responsibility, and long-term strategies over short-term profits [111, Fernández et al., 2021].

However, the challenges for female leaders in the masculine fashion industry are significant. Despite the positive impact that female leaders have, structural barriers persist. Many women experience prejudice and face higher expectations than their male counterparts. This often stems from the perception that leadership is traditionally associated with male characteristics such as assertiveness and dominance [112, Eagly & Karau, 2002]. A lack of networks and support is also often noticeable [113, Shah, 2015]. Research shows that female leaders often have less access to professional networks and mentorship programmes, which hinders their career development [113, Shah, 2015]. Balancing work and private life, especially with motherhood, is challenging [113, Moazzam & Jabeen, 2016]. Female leaders more often face the challenge of balancing their professional and personal responsibilities, with motherhood often being a factor, which can influence their career progression [113, Moazzam & Jabeen, 2016].

10.1.6. Taoistic Leadership (Purpose-driven Leadership)

The fashion industry is a dynamic sector characterised by constant change, technological innovations, and evolving consumer preferences [114, Lang & Armstrong, 2018]. In this complex and ever-changing environment, traditional, hierarchical leadership models often fall short. Adaptive leadership models are necessary to understand and navigate the fluctuating reality within organisations. Within these adaptive models, being dynamic, resilient, flexible, thinking systemically, having a rapid learning capacity, and engaging in decentralised decision-making are essential.

Traditional leadership theories likely fall short in explaining this dynamic, creating a need for an integrated approach. Consider, for example, Goleman's model, which requires constantly changing roles depending on the situation; however, this is no longer feasible for the complex issues faced by leaders in the fashion industry. The system theory of leadership, on the other hand, emphasises a synthesis of wisdom, creativity, and intelligence [115, Sternberg, 2007; Karp

& Helgo, 2009]. Yet, no single approach has so far fully addressed the diverse and sometimes contradictory demands of the fashion industry.

Taoistic leadership offers a unique perspective by focusing on natural harmony, balance, and long-term value creation. This perspective aligns with the increasing call for purpose-driven leadership in sustainable business practices.

A Taoistic approach to leadership is often compared to the properties of water: soft, modest, and flexible, yet powerful and persistent [116, Lee et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2013]. This is reflected in five fundamental characteristics of Daoist leadership: altruism, modesty, flexibility, transparency, and gentleness. Taoist-inspired leaders avoid coercion and guide change through collaboration and natural flow, rather than through hierarchical control. Just as water effortlessly fills empty spaces and adapts without forcing itself, effective leaders work with the natural dynamics within an organisation and the people who are part of it. This aligns with the principle of wuwei, which refers to acting without imposing or artificial intervention [117, Burik, 2016]. The starting point is that social harmony and organisational order develop organically, from the bottom up and in accordance with natural principles.

The principles of yin and yang also play a crucial role in Taoistic thinking, where these are seen not as opposing forces but as complementary aspects that together form a greater whole [118, Wang, 2003; Liu, 2006]. In this perspective, opposites, such as stability and change, hierarchy and collaboration, are essential for progress. This idea is directly applicable to leadership in the fashion industry, where innovation and tradition, speed and sustainability, creativity and commerce are in constant dialogue.

Within the Taoistic framework, leadership is compared to water: soft, modest, and flexible, yet powerful and persistent [118, Lee et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2013]. Such an approach encourages leaders to work with natural forces within their organisation, rather than resisting them. This means that leaders in the fashion industry should not enforce sustainability and innovation through top-down control but should allow them to emerge through collaboration and organic growth. The principle of wuwei, or 'action without forcing', emphasises the importance of strategic influence without being overbearing [119, Burik, 2016]. This fits well with the need to integrate sustainable fashion practices without imposing them solely through rigid regulations or external pressure [120, Burik, 2016].

Furthermore, the five-element theory closely aligns with how the fashion industry functions as a dynamic ecosystem [120, Bai, 2008]. Just as the five energies strengthen and regulate each other in nature, fashion companies must harmoniously balance different forces—such as design, production, marketing, sustainability, and consumer behaviour—to ensure long-term success. When these elements are in balance, it leads to a natural flow of innovation and

sustainable development. Taoistic leadership, therefore, offers a valuable perspective that is focused on creating balance and long-term value. This perspective provides a valuable alternative to the often competitive and short-term-oriented mentality that characterises the fashion industry.

10.1.7. Responsible Leadership

“Responsible leadership is an orientation or mind-set taken by people in executive-level positions toward meeting the needs of a firm’s stakeholder(s). As such, it deals with defining those stakeholder(s), assessing the legitimacy of their claims, and determining how those needs, expectations, or interests can and should best be served.” [121, Waldman et al., 2020, p. 5-6].

According to Wihler et al (2024), responsible leadership is a concept that focuses on the responsibility of leaders to consider not only the interests of their organisation but also their broader impact on stakeholders, society, and the environment. While some researchers define responsible leadership as a mindset aimed at fulfilling the needs of stakeholders [122, Waldman et al., 2020], others emphasise the moral and ethical dimension, where leaders bear a social and relational responsibility [123, Maak & Pless, 2006]. However, the literature shows that various interpretations exist, with some studies focusing on corporate governance [123, Filatotchev & Nakajima, 2014], sustainability goals [123, James & Priyadarshini, 2021], or stakeholder relations [123, Maak & Pless, 2021b]. To bridge this variation, responsible leadership is increasingly seen as a holistic concept that integrates these different aspects. Wihler et al (2024) introduced the concept of 'polymathic responsible leadership', which involves a leader with broad knowledge and skills across different domains, enabling them to effectively address complex sustainability challenges. This form of leadership is crucial for the transition to a circular economy, where leaders need to understand the interconnectedness of ecological, social, and economic systems.

10.1.8. Conscious Leadership ("Mothering Leadership")

Just as Mother Earth cares for us as humanity. I use "Mothering" as a term to bring together these characteristics, which are traditionally associated with motherhood [132, Held, 2006]. In this context, "mothering" is not a gender-bound concept but a leadership quality that can be embraced gender-neutrally, where care for people, nature, the climate, and the future are central.

At the same time, years of studying the yin-yang philosophy, originating from Chinese philosophy, offer a powerful framework for leadership [133, Nisbett, 2003]. Yin, the feminine energy, stands for softness, reflection, and receptivity, while Yang, the masculine energy, represents decisiveness, decision-making, and action [133, Nisbett, 2003]. This duality forms the

basis for the holistic leadership model, in which both forces are not opposed but complement and strengthen each other.

By combining these principles with the values of awareness, a new and necessary form of leadership emerges: conscious leadership, also known as "Mothering Leadership". This involves leaders who are deeply aware of their own values, intentions, and impact on their environment and who lead with care and responsibility for the well-being of all stakeholders and the planet.

10.1.9. Authentic Leadership

Self-awareness forms the foundation of authentic leadership and is essential for effective self-management [124, Drucker & Wartzman, 2010]. According to Peter Drucker, no one can effectively lead others without first managing themselves [124, Drucker & Wartzman, 2010]. Self-awareness enables leaders to understand their inner drivers, strengths, and weaknesses [124, George, 2015]. This process is not easy but is essential for self-acceptance and ultimately self-actualisation, allowing leaders to realise their full potential [124, George, 2015]. Various philosophical traditions, including Taoism, emphasise the importance of self-knowledge as a prerequisite for wisdom. Laozi states that whoever knows others is clever, but whoever knows themselves is truly wise. By embracing this principle, leaders not only develop insight into their own behaviour but also learn how to connect with the world around them and create sustainable impact.

A mindful leader combines self-awareness with attention to others and the ability to maintain calmness and clarity in challenging situations [125, Hougaard et al., 2016]. Mindfulness enables leaders to act consciously rather than reacting impulsively to stressful circumstances [126, Hougaard et al., 2016]. This capacity for reflection and strategic focus allows them to lead with empathy and create a working environment where employees feel valued and motivated. Taoistic leadership also emphasises the principle of wuwei, which means that leaders guide naturally without being intrusive or coercive [126, Burik, 2016]. By integrating mindfulness into leadership, fashion companies can find a balance between creativity and business success, innovation and sustainability. When leaders understand themselves well, they can act authentically and with integrity, which not only increases their own effectiveness but also has a positive influence on the entire organisation.

10.1.10. Authentic Leadership

The way in which a leader takes on their role is crucial in determining the strategy and effectiveness of an organisation. Authentic leadership plays a crucial role in this context because it is an integrative yet distinct concept that combines elements from transformational leadership, ethical leadership, and positive organisational behaviour [128, Cao & Elking, 2022]. One of the core principles is that both leaders and followers have a moral duty to respect and

promote the interests of the collective, such as the organisation, the supply chain, or society. This makes Authentic Leadership relevant to the fashion and textile industry. Furthermore, authentic leadership is characterised by a high tolerance for ambiguity and an open attitude towards change. This creates a working environment that stimulates flexibility and innovation, which is essential for the successful implementation of an ambidextrous strategy, where both exploitation and exploration are balanced within the organisation.

According to Cao and Elking (2022), the values and ethical behaviours of leaders are directly reflected in the actions of their followers. They argue that companies with leaders who demonstrate high moral integrity, make ethically responsible decisions, and adopt a collective approach are better able to transform a supply chain into a sustainable one. This is very essential for the issues in the fashion and textile industry. Organising this requires not only clear policymaking but also flexibility and adaptability to realise sustainability goals, which demands a lot from leadership. Authentic leadership comes into play here, characterised by self-awareness, an internal moral conviction, and transparency. The leader promotes a positive ethical working environment and collaboration among the stakeholders of the supply chain. In the current competitive fashion and textile industry, supply chain management extends beyond the boundaries of a company and influences the quality of external relationships. By implementing authentic leadership, companies can strengthen their partnerships with suppliers, leading to better collaboration and innovation, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and effective supply chain strategy.

10.1.11. Spiritual Leadership

Spiritual leadership is a leadership approach that focuses on creating a sense of meaning and purpose among followers by appealing to their spiritual needs and values [133, Fry, 2003]. It is based on the idea that when leaders connect with the inner lives of their employees and inspire them through a shared vision and a sense of calling, it leads to higher levels of employee engagement, commitment, and organisational performance [134, Fry, 2003]. Spiritual leadership consists of three key elements: a compelling vision that inspires hope and a sense of calling, a belief in the possibility of achieving the vision, and altruistic love, which involves caring for the well-being of oneself and others. A compelling vision paints an inspiring picture of the future and motivates people to work towards realising it. Hope and faith are the second element, referring to the confidence that the mission, vision, and goals of an organisation are achievable. The third element is altruistic love, which stands for a feeling of harmony, the greater whole, and well-being that comes from love, care, and compassion for oneself and others. By bringing these elements together, spiritual leadership can contribute to a more engaged and meaningful work environment in which employees feel motivated to collectively contribute to the organisational goals.

According to the literature analysis between 1980 and 2021 by Vedula and Arguwal (2024), spiritual leadership has received increasing academic attention in recent years. The values-based approach enables leaders to express spirituality in the workplace. This type of leadership pays attention to the fact that if employees are intrinsically motivated to see their work as a calling, it ultimately leads to better organisational performance. Research shows that spiritual leadership stems from the positive interaction between the spiritual well-being of leaders in both their personal and professional lives, which translates into higher job satisfaction among employees. In addition, spiritual leadership contributes to reducing burn-out, stimulating innovation, and promoting corporate citizenship. Furthermore, it helps create a work environment where meaning and purpose are central, leading to deeper engagement and motivation within the organisation.

Appendix 2.

Explanation of rubric table 4.

1. **System and strategic approach:** This characteristic assesses the extent to which the article or organisation has a holistic view of the fashion and textile industry as a complex system. It includes the implementation of circular business models, sustainable supply chain management, transparency, and technological innovation. A high score (4-5) implies that the organisation strategically plans and acts to bring about sustainable changes throughout the system.
2. **Intrinsic motivation and mindset:** This characteristic measures the degree to which leaders and employees are intrinsically motivated to act sustainably, driven by personal values and beliefs. It includes having a growth mindset, where one believes in the developability of skills and capacities. A high score (4-5) means that sustainability is deeply rooted in the personal values and daily behaviours of the leaders and employees, in accordance with the principles of spiritual leadership, Taoism, and/or authentic leadership.
3. **Combination of both:** This characteristic assesses the integration of systems thinking and personal mindset in the leadership approach. It examines how leadership both initiates structural changes in the system and promotes a culture of intrinsic motivation and personal responsibility. A high score (4-5) implies that the organisation succeeds in seamlessly combining system changes and personal development, thereby stimulating sustainable transformation at all levels, in line with the principles of Taoism (Zu, 2019) and systemic leadership.

Leadership is largely determined by the characteristics and behaviours of the leader, which are often considered crucial for success [140, Bai, 2011]. Success in sustainability and making an impact is the underlying motivation for transforming towards.