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Sustainable Fashion Consumption: An Expanded Theory of Planned Behavior

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Introduction. Sustainable consumption is defined as use of goods and services to cater to one's basic needs and to enhance quality of life while minimizing resources used, such that future generations' needs are not jeopardized (Dolan, 2002). In terms of fashion products, it is important because apparel production has a substantial impact on environmental pollution (Claudio, 2007). Moreover, Claudio (2007) cited the *Environmental Protection Agency Office of Solid Waste* report, which suggested that on average an American discards 68 pounds of textile and clothing every year. The considerable attention academicians (e.g., Bissonnette & Contento, 2001), organizations (e.g., United Nations Division for Sustainable Development), and companies (e.g., Target) give sustainable consumption reflects its importance. The present study is an effort to understand consumers' perceptions of sustainable consumption towards fashion, including their beliefs, attitude, and behavioral intention toward purchase sustainable fashion products, which may be used to increase demand for sustainable fashion, thus diminishing the negative impact of fashion products on the environment.

Conceptual background & hypotheses. According to Ajzen's (1985) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model—attitude (i.e., evaluation of the behavior in question), subjective norm (SN; i.e., perceived social pressure to perform the behavior in question), and perceived behavioral control (PBC; i.e., perceived control over the behavior in question) affect an individual's behavioral intention, which in turn guides an individual's behavior. Subsequently, additional constructs have been incorporated to modify the TPB, resulting in an "expanded TPB" (ETPB). An ETPB that contains perceived self-identity (PSI; i.e., the way one perceives oneself [Sparks & Shepherd, 1992]) and perceived ethical obligation (PEO; i.e., the way one perceives one's obligation towards a behavior [Sparks, Shepherd, & Frewer, 1995]) will be instrumental in understanding behavior towards sustainable fashion consumption. Moreover, the present researchers created additional variables--beliefs (i.e., perceptions about sustainable fashion products) and perceived availability (PA; i.e., one's perceptions of the availability of such products)--for use in the ETPB to better understand an individual's behavioral intention toward the purchase of sustainable fashion products. Consistent with the ETPB in a sustainable fashion products context, it is proposed that beliefs affect attitudes (H1); and attitudes (H2), subjective norm (H3), perceived behavioral control (H4), perceived self-identity (H5), perceived ethical obligation (H6), and perceived availability (H7) positively affect behavioral intention (BI) toward purchase sustainable fashion product. **Method**. An online survey was used to collect data from two samples $(G_1 \& G_2)$. Respondents in G_1 were college students (ages 18-25; mean = 22) enrolled at a major university. The total number of respondents in G₁ was 692. Respondents in G₂ were collected using Amazon Mechanical Turk, an online survey data collection tool maintained by Amazon, Inc. Respondents in the G₂ sample came from across the United States (ages 18-74; mean = 43). The total number of respondents in G_2 was 273. A grand total of 965 useable surveys were analyzed. The survey consisted of 28 ETPB items for attitude, SN, PBC, PSI, PEO, PA, and BI, 14 items for beliefs, and demographic items, All items (except beliefs) were adapted from existing scales with acceptable reliabilities ($\alpha > .70$). Items for sustainable fashion product beliefs came from modifications of existing scales (e.g., Bissonnette & Contento, 2001) and content analysis of consumer discussion forums (e.g., www.readymade.com).

Results. Based on exploratory factor analysis, a three-item belief construct was identified. Then measurement structures for all factors were confirmed using structural equation modeling (SEM) in MPlus 6.0. Cronbach's *alpha* coefficients ranged from .73 to .94, supporting factor reliability. The χ^2 difference test comparing the fit of constrained and unconstrained measurement models to the data was non-significant ($\Delta \chi^2 = 29.40$, $\Delta df = 20$), indicating that the models were equivalent for the two samples. The resulting indices for the constrained measurement model demonstrated an adequate fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 2348.88$, df = 684, p < .001, CFI = 0.92, RMSEA = .07). The same process was completed to compare the constrained and unconstrained structural models for the two samples, resulting in a non-significant difference between the groups ($\Delta \chi^2 = 7.16$, $\Delta df = 7$). The fit indices for the constrained structural model indicated adequate fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 2479.81$, df = 683, p < .001, CFI = .91, RMSEA = .07). Given the non-significant results, the two samples were combined in one SEM analysis resulting in adequate fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 1908.18$, df = 328, p < .001, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .07). All hypotheses, except H4 and H7, were supported. The path coefficients and significance levels for the supported hypotheses are H1 ($\beta = 0.91$, p = .000), H2 ($\beta = 0.13$, p = .002), H3 ($\beta = 0.13$, p = .000), H5 ($\beta = 0.32$, p = .000), and H6 ($\beta = 0.35$, p = .000).

Conclusion. Findings of the present study suggest that beliefs, attitude, subjective norm, perceived self-identity, and perceived ethical obligation are significant predictors of behavioral intentions toward sustainable fashion consumption. These findings are consistent with previous literature (e.g., Vermeir & Verbeke, 2009). Our study has some practical implications. For example, our study suggests that beliefs strongly influence attitude, which in turn influences behavioral intention toward sustainable fashion consumption. Vermier and Verbeke suggested that consumers' attitude and beliefs are altered using well-developed advertising strategies. Furthermore, Bissonnette and Contento (2001) maintained that experiential learning amplifies consumers' awareness of environmental issues, which will consequently influence consumers' attitudes, beliefs, and self-identities. Accordingly, we propose that marketers of sustainable fashion brands should design appropriate advertisements and employ experiential marketing strategies to promote sustainable fashion consumption.

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