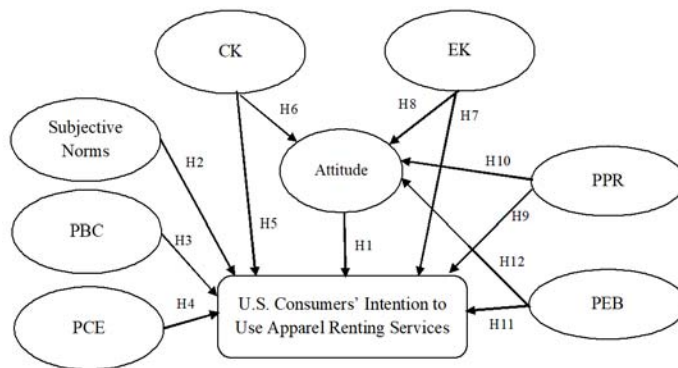


## Renting than Buying Apparel: An Empirical Study of U.S. Consumers

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*Introduction and Literature Review.* Environmental issues posed by the excessive apparel consumption can be addressed without denying consumers’ desire for new and trendy fashion. Collaborative consumption, which involves using products at a price for a temporary period of time, is considered a more sustainable consumption pattern (Belk, 2014). Apparel rental services as one of the most common collaborative consumption modes has been gaining popularity among the U.S. consumers in recent years. However, our knowledge on this changing consumer behaviors are limited (Lang & Armstrong, 2018). To address the gap in the literature, this study aimed to identify the factors significantly influencing the U.S. consumers’ intent to use apparel rental services. Specifically, the objectives of this research were fourfold. First, a research model was proposed building on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Second, the psychometric properties of the proposed model were examined using the gathered survey data. Third, the effects of significant factors on U.S. consumers’ intent to use apparel rental services were determined. Finally, some implications were provided for academia and industrial practitioners. Figure 1 illustrates the developed model with the proposed hypotheses.



Note: PBC = Perceived behavioral control; PCE = Perceived consumer effectiveness; CK = consumer knowledge on apparel renting; EK = environmental knowledge; PPR = Perceived personal relevance; PEB = Past environmental behavior.

Figure 1. Proposed Model for U.S. Consumers’ Intention to Rent Apparel

*Methodology.* The scales for attitude (AT), subjective norms (SN), perceived behavioral control (PBC), perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE), and use intention (UI) were adapted from Zheng and Chi (2015). The scales for consumer knowledge on apparel renting services (EK) and personal relevance (PPR) were adapted from Kang et al. (2013). The scale for environmental knowledge (EK) was adapted from Barbarossa and Pelsmacker (2016). The scale for past

environmental behavior (PEB) was adapted from Fraj and Martinez (2006). A five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5 = strongly agree) was applied for all adapted scales. The demographic variables including gender, age, education level and income level were included as control factors. The primary data were collected by a Qualtrics survey of U.S. consumers via Amazon MTurk, which enabled to reach a wide range of eligible consumers (Chi & Zheng, 2016; Goodman et al., 2012). 338 eligible responses were gathered for data analysis and hypothesis testing. Multiple regression method was applied for determining the proposed statistical relationships (hypotheses) using SPSS 26.

*Findings and Discussion.* Table 1 presents the testing results of all the hypotheses. Eight of them (H1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10) are statically significant at a  $p < 0.05$  level and H3, 5, 6, and 12 are insignificant. Attitude (AT), subjective norms (SN), perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE), environmental knowledge (EK), perceived personal relevance (PPR), and past environmental behavior (PEB) significantly affect U.S. consumers' intention to use apparel renting services. There are no significant differences between ages, genders, education levels, and income levels in regard to their intention to rent apparel. Environmental knowledge (EK) and perceived personal relevance (PPR) positively influence U.S. consumers' attitudes toward use of apparel renting services. The demographic variables including ages, genders, education levels, and income levels don't significantly affect U.S. consumers' attitudes toward renting apparel behavior. The proposed research model exhibits a very good explanatory power, accounting for 74.7% of variance in U.S. consumers' intention to use apparel renting services.

Table 1. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hyp.	DV	IDV	Std. Coef. ( $\beta$ )	t-value	Sig. at $p < .05$	Control variable	Std. Coef. ( $\beta$ )	t-value	Sig. at $p < .05$	Total $R^2$	Sig. at $p < .05$
	UI	Constant		-.194	.846	Age	-.007	-.245	.807		
H1	Y	AT	.246	5.453	.000	Gender	.025	.885	.377	.747	<.000
H2	Y	SN	.178	3.504	.001	Education	.042	1.344	.180		$F = 78.96$
H3	N	PBC	.027	.862	.389	Income	.022	.742	.459		(12/321)
H4	Y	PCE	.249	5.649	.000						
H5	N	CK	.004	.081	.935						
H7	Y	EK	.101	2.398	.017						
H9	Y	PPR	.379	7.429	.000						
H11	Y	PEB	.091	2.326	.021						
	AT	Constant		4.593	.000	Age	-.046	-1.077	.282		
H6	N	CK	.116	1.865	.063	Gender	.007	.160	.873	.434	<.000
H8	Y	EK	.167	2.079	.012	Education	.028	.605	.545		$F = 31.20$
H10	Y	PPR	.492	7.554	.000	Income	.005	.102	.919		(8/325)
H12	N	PEB	.043	.730	.466						

Note: Hyp.= Hypothesis; Y: Hypothesis Supported; N: Hypothesis Not Supported; Std. Coef.=Standardized Coefficients, DV: Dependent variable. IDV: Independent variable.

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