The Impact of Slow Fashion Orientation (SFO) on Socially Responsible Consumption (SRC):
Moderating Effects of Industry Irresponsibility and Consumer Irresponsibility
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Over the past three decades, the trend toward fast fashion (FF) has exploded, upending the traditional fashion calendar and resulting in a fundamental shift in consumer shopping behavior toward overconsumption and disposal. FF's success factors, including quick response to continuously changing fashion trends and low prices, perpetuate overproduction, waste and resource exploitation across its supply chains (Fletcher, 2007; Ghemawat & Nueno, 2003; Sull & Turconi, 2008). In recent years, coinciding with a larger push in the apparel sector toward sustainable development, FF companies, to varying extents, have ramped up their commitments to sustainability within their supply chains, invested in R&D for sustainable product innovation, and created internal compliance and reporting standards related to sustainability. What's more, many companies in the FF industry (e.g., H&M, Zara) attempt to position themselves as sustainable consumer choices through consumer-facing initiatives such as garment recycling programs and sustainably produced collections. Although commendable, these initiatives do not address the fact that the FF business model (i.e., continuous change, low cost, high volume) is inherently at odds with sustainable consumption (Kim et al., 2013). This "greenwashing" creates confusion among consumers about which companies actually employ socially responsible business strategies.

The prevailing culture of overconsumption, spearheaded by the fast fashion (FF) industry, has given rise to movements such as slow fashion, a counter movement to the consumption practices that support the FF industry. Slow fashion constitutes slow production (e.g., quality, craftsmanship) at the company level, and conscious consumption and disposal at the consumer level (Ertekin and Atik, 2015; Jung & Jin, 2016; McNeill & Moore, 2015). The slow fashion concept encourages consumers to consider the responsibility or irresponsibility of their purchase, use, and disposal behaviors. For consumers, engaging in the slow fashion movement through slow consumption necessitates a shift from quantity to quality-focused consumption, a willingness to engage in alternate forms of consumption (e.g., second-hand market), and a commitment to conscientiously dispose of used clothing (Jung & Jin, 2014; 2016). Although slow production and consumption cycles may increase production costs, this approach increases the quality of products. Unlike disposable clothing (i.e., FF), slow fashion garments can remain in use longer. Further, consumers are able to practice conscious disposal by identifying second-life alternatives for their garments (e.g., donation, resale platforms). As a result, consumers perceive more value in what they buy and care for their clothing in a more responsible manner (Fletcher, 2007). Cavender and Lee (2018a; 2018b) introduced the concepts of industry responsibility and consumer responsibility as two distinct aspects of socially responsible consumption and disposal. Apparel production relates to industry responsibility while apparel consumption attaches to consumer responsibility (Cavender et al., 2018a; 2018b). On the industry side, high levels of production have exacerbated the negative environmental (e.g., natural resource depletion) and social (e.g., working conditions) impacts of the clothing industry. At the consumer level, overconsumption has resulted in drastic increases in post-consumer waste and landfills that are quickly reaching their capacities (Hill & Lee, 2012). The researchers propose that consumers are often cognizant of social responsibility, or the lack thereof (i.e., industry irresponsibility), within the apparel industry, but they are less conscious of how their own consumption and disposal behaviors are

responsible or irresponsible. The pro-environmental attitude-behavior gap may also influence consumers' ability to assume responsibility for their own behaviors within the apparel supply chain (Sadachar et al., 2016). Research suggests that, in order for a paradigm shift toward slow fashion (i.e., production, consumption) to occur in the mainstream market, the concept of responsibility will be "valuable as it describes the longitudinal processes that turn collective social issues into issues of personal responsibility" (Luchs et al., 2015, p. 13). Arguably, consumers are not sufficiently educated about socially responsible consumption (SRC) to advocate for marketplace change (Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013), a necessary step to transition to a collective sustainability-oriented identity within the fashion system (Ertekin & Atik, 2015).

Based on this assumption, we expected that slow fashion orientation (SFO) supports socially responsible apparel consumption (SRC). However, it is necessary to confirm which dimensions of slow fashion orientation support SRC. Furthermore, how industry irresponsibility and consumer irresponsibility moderate these relationships should be examined to discuss the recent slow fashion movement. This study assessed how slow fashion orientation (SFO) influences socially responsible apparel consumption (SRC). The moderating effects of industry irresponsibility and consumer irresponsibility are tested on the relationship between slow fashion orientation and socially responsible apparel consumption.

Hypothesized Relationships: SFO consists of five dimensions including: Equity, Authenticity, Functionality, Localism and Exclusivity. These five dimensions positively influence SRC. There are moderating effects of Industry Irresponsibility and Consumer Irresponsibility, which strengthen the relationship between SFO and SRC

Research Methods: A self-administered questionnaire was used for the study. The survey instrument for this research was an online questionnaire consisting of eight demographic questions and 103 closed-ended interrogative questions on a 7-point Likert scale. Items were adapted from existing scales in order to measure consumers' motivational drivers of apparel consumption (e.g., trend, price; Lichtenstein, Ridgway, & Netemeyer, 1993) and orientation to slow fashion (Jung & Jin, 2014; 2016). The researchers developed items to measure consumers' sustainable and unsustainable consumption behaviors and propensity toward sustainable and unsustainable clothing disposal. Items were also developed to measure consumers' level of knowledge seeking for sustainability as the researchers consider this construct useful in understanding consumers' potential for slow fashion. As this is an exploratory study, the researchers perceive these newly developed measures to be acceptable initial indicators of consumers' potential for slow fashion in their consumption and disposal of apparel. Data were collected from a convenience sample of retailing students at two U.S. universities, yielding 405 usable responses. The sample was 85 percent female ($n = 344$) and 15 percent male ($n = 61$). Ninety-nine percent of respondents were 18-25 years old, with the majority being Caucasian (82%) followed by African-American (8.9%). Sixty-three percent ($n = 255$) of respondents reported that they shop for apparel more than three times per month and eighty-five percent ($n=361$) reported spending less than \$100 per shopping trip.

Results and Discussion: Individual principle component analyses were employed to examine the dimensions of the constructs. All the constructs were one-dimensional and explained more than 67% of their respective average variances. All item loadings were above 0.70. Reliability values of each construct ranged from 0.78 to 0.95. The PLS path model analysis showed that all measures met the commonly accepted threshold for assessing reliability and validity of the constructs. (AVE, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and Stone Geisser's Q2 values). All five SFO dimensions (Equity, Authenticity,

Functionality and Localism) except Exclusivity are significantly influence SRC ($p < 0.05$) which support our hypotheses. There are moderating effects of consumer irresponsibility between some SFO dimensions (i.e., Authenticity and Functionality) and SRC. However, there are no moderating effects of industry irresponsibility. This study examines the effect of slow fashion orientation on socially responsible consumption and it confirms that slow fashion is closely related to consumer social responsibility. Interestingly, consumers may not recognize the impacts of industry irresponsibility in apparel industry and sustainable consumption practice.

Conclusion: Consumer social responsibility and apparel sustainability research have focused more on a macro institutional approach that “incorporates the buyer’s contribution to the solution of the social issue, rather than putting responsibility for the issue exclusively with the company” (Ingenbleek et al., 2015, p. 1430). This perspective proposes that apparel sustainability should be scrutinized by industry irresponsibility and consumer irresponsibility separately. Further, the slow fashion at the consumer –level may be hindered by a lack of active communication from the array of retailers whose operations support the sustainability mission (e.g., luxury, born-sustainable brands, secondhand marketplaces). Apparel industry and retailers should accept the paradigm shift to a more sustainable apparel system. While traditional marketing approaches fueled today’s consumption ideology with a push approach, marketing in the era of sustainability must adopt a more authentic, transparent, and legitimate approach to creating customer value (Armstrong-Soule & Reich, 2015; Kotler, 2011; McDonagh & Prothero, 2014).

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