

Are Cosmopolitan Consumers Also Sustainable Apparel Consumers? A Conceptual Framework of the Impact of Consumer's Cosmopolitan Orientation on Sustainable Apparel Consumption

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Introduction

Cosmopolitan consumers regard the world as their marketplace, and they consciously seek to consume products, places and experiences originating from cultures other than their own (Caldwell et al., 2006; Cannon & Yaprak, 2002). Marketing literature acknowledges that consumers' cosmopolitan orientation (CCO) is a driver of consumer behavior and a relevant variable for consumer segmentation (Grinstein & Riefler, 2015; Riefler et al., 2012). Furthermore, researchers sustain CCO is on the rise (Riefler et al., 2012), making this orientation critically dynamic and impactful in research. It has been argued that a cosmopolitan approach incorporates a more ethical citizenship perspective, thus makes a more responsible contribution in a global community that is not limited by country borders (Archibugi, 2008; Holton, 2009; Moosmayer & Davis, 2016). Unfortunately, research has neglected to study the relationship between CCO and sustainable apparel consumption. This study aims to fill this gap and reveal the significance of developing more research to identify agents of change that intensify the use and promotion of sustainable apparel.

Analysis and Synthesis of Literature

Cosmopolitan consumers aspire to acquire social and cultural capital as well as moral worthiness (Cleveland et al., 2009; Skrbis et al., 2004; Thompson & Tambyah, 1999). They tend to emotionally attach to brands high in ideal self-congruity (Fastoso & González-Jiménez, 2018). Thus, cosmopolitan consumers attach to brands that comply with their aspirational and idealized view of the self (Sirgy, 1982). In recent years aspirational products have expanded to domains such as environmentally friendly, organic, healthy, and intellectual.

Several traits of cosmopolitan consumers hint at the likelihood that CCO is related to favorable sustainable attitudes and sustainable consumption (Cleveland et al., 2011; Grinstein & Riefler, 2015; Lee et al., 2018; Riefler et al., 2012). Cleveland et al. (2011)'s study shows that consumers with strong cosmopolitan orientation score high on values related to universalism, benevolence, and egalitarianism. Characteristics of these values include tolerance and appreciation for all people, as well as importance placed on protection of the environment (Schwartz, 2012). With sustainability becoming a significant global trend, it is expected that the cosmopolitan consumer aspires to purchase sustainable apparel. Sustainable apparel refers to apparel that integrates one or more aspects of social or environmental sustainability, such as fair

trade principles under sweatshop-free labor conditions without harming workers or the ecosystem, using biodegradable materials and/or without the use of pesticides (Goworek et al., 2012; Joergens, 2006; Su et al., 2019). Previous literature argues that consumers who place great importance on values of ecological sustainability have shown to support fair trade businesses while satisfying their needs for apparel (Dickson & Littrell, 1996). Thus, it is expected that cosmopolitan consumers hold positive attitudes towards sustainable apparel.

Although cosmopolitan consumers tend to be independent and objective in their product evaluations (Cannon & Yaprak, 2002), they have been found to internalize information from their in-group as evidence of reality (Tae Lee et al., 2014). Khare (2004) suggests that cosmopolitan values do not prompt cosmopolitan consumers to break away from group conformance when adopting fashion apparel, on the contrary apparel would more likely be adopted if it implies good fit with social norms and group acceptability. Thus, it is expected that CCO positively affects consumer perception of social norms.

As per cosmopolitan profiling, cosmopolitan consumers have higher education levels, better financial status, a border-crossing lifestyle, and a predisposition to purchase new and different products from anywhere in the world (Grinstein & Riefler, 2015; Riefler et al., 2012). They are early adopters of technology and active users of communication devices and social media (Cleveland, Papadopoulos, et al., 2011); thus, cosmopolitan consumers would be less limited than their non-cosmopolitan counterparts by price and the imperfect availability of sustainable apparel. Obstacles to finding sustainable apparel information and purchasing sustainable apparel products are potentially minimized. Therefore, it is expected that CCO positively impacts consumer's perceived behavior control.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical foundation for the conceptual model derives from the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) within the Reasoned Action Approach (RAA) (Ajzen, 1985; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2009). Based on the above analysis and synthesis of literature, a model integrating CCO, attitude, perceived norm, and perceived behavioral control is proposed to investigate how CCO impacts consumer behavior towards sustainable apparel (Figure 1). The model posits that CCO impacts sustainable apparel purchase intention directly, and indirectly through impacting attitude towards sustainable apparel, perceived norm, and perceived behavior control first, which in turn impact sustainable apparel purchase intention.

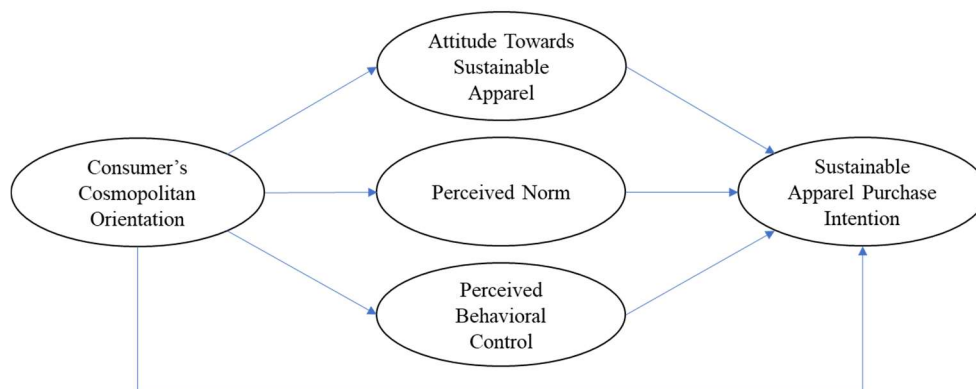


Figure 1. Proposed Framework

Discussion

This study links two major trends in society and industry, cosmopolitanism, and sustainable consumer behavior. On the one hand, the rise in cosmopolitan consumers implies openness to products in different markets and more responsible consumption; and on the other hand, the society and environment need the openness of conscious consumers to adopt products that promote sustainability. To the authors' knowledge, this is the first model that utilizes the TPB to study the effect of CCO on purchase intention of sustainable apparel. Theoretically, the model predicts predisposition to consume sustainable apparel and explains cosmopolitan consumers' attitudes, norms, and control factors regarding the consumption of sustainable apparel. In practice, firms, governments, and NGOs can use this study to identify and target consumers to foment the use of sustainable apparel. In the future it can be used cross nationally to compare countries, cultures, or homogenous consumer clusters.

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