

## Apparel Manufacturers' Influence on Consumers With Green Apparel and Eco-label

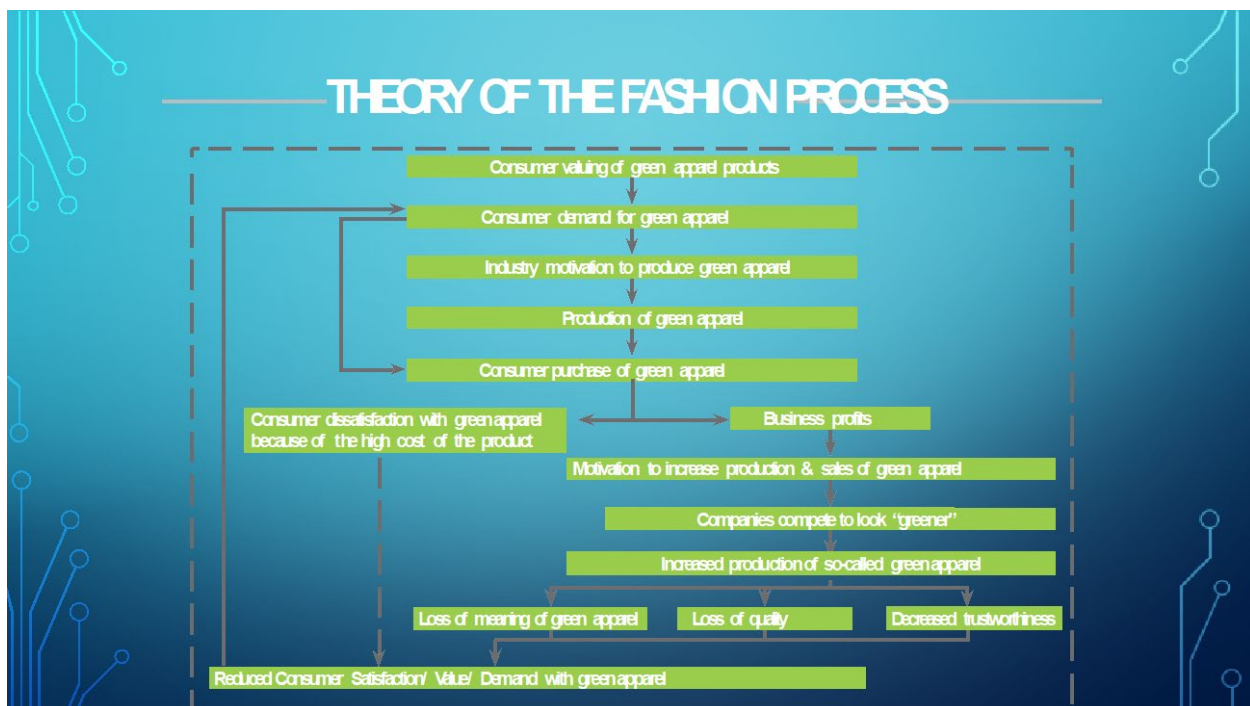
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In fashion, “organic”, “sustainable”, and “natural” are the latest buzzwords. However, these words are often interpreted differently by consumers and companies. According to Bloom (2008), the problem for consumers is not awareness so much as knowing which products and corporations they can trust. It is believed that there would be a backlash among consumers if marketing claims and company behavior are not consistent. Company initiatives are being driven by consumers who are not only growing more interested in organic products, but they are holding their favorite brands accountable for their environmental practices (Dolliver, 2008). Despite recent company efforts to target the green apparel consumer, academics and practitioners actually know very little about consumer knowledge, beliefs, norms, motivations, attitudes, and behavior surrounding this new market phenomenon.

The apparel industry has long been notorious for its detrimental impacts on the ecological environment and society (Kozlowski et al., 2012). According to Park & Kim (2016) many fast fashion companies, who are known for providing trendy fashion at low prices, have recently adopted environmentally friendly business strategies by offering clothes made of organic cotton. However, concerns arise that merely offering a limited number of ethical versions of products (e.g., organic cotton collections) is a fundamentally different approach from that taken by sustainable fashion companies that consider social and environmental performances as equally important as financial performance. Research demonstrates growing societal apprehension about the state of the natural environment. In 2007, the Green Gauge Report found that, of the 2000 American adults surveyed, 87% were concerned about the environment but 50% felt that environmental legislation did not sufficiently protect the environment (Connell, 2010). The introduction of an ecolabel allows markets to evaluate process trademark (credence good) and to reward producers of environment-friendly features. The label is the reason for increasing the cost of production by inflicting process standards on the production of the green apparel. Ecolabel is modelled as the information on a process attribute that becomes a search attribute with labeling. Additionally, using a model of vertical differentiation, the environmental attribute of textiles is characterized as a quality scalar. Conventional textile goods are considered at the lower bound on the quality attribute. On the other hand, eco-labeled goods meet some process standards that convey their higher environmental quality to consumers through the label (Nimon & Beghin, 1999). However, consumers find it challenging to engage in eco-conscious apparel acquisition on a constant basis because a number of barriers stand in the way. These barriers comprise knowledge and attitudes about environmentally preferable apparel, availability of environmentally friendly apparel, economic resources, retail environments, and social norms (Connell, 2010).

Green marketing has some challenges too. Changing marketing tactics is time-consuming and it needs the development of a new strategy, which typically translates into increased costs. While sustainable efforts and practices are designed to save money and a company puts effort into changing their brand to be more environment-friendly, those changes can have expensive upfront costs. To commercialize products as “green”, depending on the industry, it might have to go through a long and expensive process and obtain the environmental certifications. These certifications issued by governments, industry associations, professionals, and consumer rights groups certify the company certifications to meet industry environmental standards. This is especially true for companies operating in the fields of energy consumption and recycling waste management. Relying on these standards can be difficult and that is one of the main green marketing disadvantages because without these official standards, customers and industries will have no way of measuring the facts of green “claims”. As green marketing brings so many advantages to a business, a lot of big companies try to look “greener” and the majority of it is just greenwashing. Greenwashing is when a company produces something not sustainable looks green by putting all of the attention on a little detail. Disposable water companies are extremely harmful to the environment. Yet they say “Our packaging is 100% recyclable”, while the entire production process is so polluting that they are not a sustainable business”.

Due to all these reasons, customers are skeptical of seeing the word “green” stamped on products or services. The word “green” has been vastly overused and has practically lost all of its meaning. Moreover, some customers even see it as simply an excuse for a company to charge more for products with no environmental benefits (Lamoureux, 2017). Thereby, the literature review leads to the following model:



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