

The roles of values, environment self-identity, and social norms on personal norms and eco-friendly apparel purchasing behavior

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The textile industry creates negative effects on the environment and human health. It produces various types of wastes, including wastewater, solid waste, and gas and heat emissions. Therefore, many apparel companies, non-profit organizations, and academia have focused on analyzing the influential factor on consumers' eco-friendly apparel purchasing behavior. To date, researchers have used either the full model or partial model of the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory to explain consumers' pro-environmental behaviors. However, there is limited research examining antecedent pro-environmental motives that stimulate an individual's pro-environmental behaviors in the textile and apparel domain using VBN theory. Therefore, this study used the extended VBN model combined with and injunctive norms, environmental self-identity and descriptive norms as a guide to explore consumers' eco-friendly apparel purchasing behavior.

Prior studies have revealed that consumers' self-transcendent values influenced personal norms, however the self-enhancement values negatively predicted personal norms (Lauper, Moser, Fischer, & Matthies, 2016). Values and environmental-self-identity are considered to be important predictors of personal norms and environmental behavior, but few studies have been studied empirically regarding relationships among values, identity, and personal norms. We hypothesized that bio-altruistic values are positively, but egoistic values are negatively related to environmental self-identity, and environmental self-identity is related to personal norms. In addition, we analyzed the roles of environmental self-identity as a mediator between values and personal norms. The theory of normative conduct distinguishes two types of social norms, descriptive and injunctive norms, that influence an individual's belief and behavior differently. (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990). In addition, the more deeply a social norm is integrated into personal value or self, the more that norm influences environmental behavior (Thøgersen, 2006). Thus, we hypothesized that descriptive norms and injunctive norms are positively related to consumers' eco-friendly apparel purchasing behavior.

To investigate hypotheses, we collected data via an online questionnaire among a sample of the USA population. Participants were members of the panel of Qualtrics, and received a small reimbursement for their participation. The total of 292 participants consisted of 40.8% of males ($n = 119$) and 59.2% of females ($n = 173$) filled in the questionnaire. About 35.6% ($n = 104$) of the respondents were between the ages of 19 and 30, 26.4% ($n = 77$) were between the ages of 31 and 40, 14.7% ($n = 43$) were 41 to 50, and 23.3% ($n = 68$) were between the ages of 51 to 65.

Regression analyses were used to investigate environmental self-identity mediates the effect of bio-altruistic values on personal norm. The results indicated that respondents who scored high on bio-altruistic values were more related to environmental self-identity ($\beta = .62, p < .001$) and personal norms ($\beta = .54, p < .001$). Surprisingly, the more US respondents subscribe to egoistic values, the stronger they perceive them as whom they are environmental self-identity ($\beta = .60, p < .001$) and feel obligation (personal norm) to purchase eco-friendly apparel ($\beta = .52, p < .001$). There was a significant indirect effect of bio-altruistic values on personal norms through environmental self-identity, $b = 0.471$, 95% BCa CI [0.345, 0.614]. The mediator could account for roughly 87 % of the total effect, $P_M = .865$. There was also a significant indirect effect of egoistic values on personal norms through environmental self-identity, $b = 0.455$, 95% BCa CI [0.335, 0.577]. The mediator could account for roughly 88.1 % of the total effect on personal norm. In the next multiple regression analysis, personal norm was regressed on environmental self-identity, descriptive norm, and injunctive norm. The results showed that the independent variables explained 76% of the total variance in consumers' personal norm in purchasing eco-friendly apparel. The personal norm was significantly influenced by environmental self-identity ($\beta = .70, p < .001$) and descriptive norms ($\beta = .16, p = .001$) but not significantly by injunctive norms. In the final regression analysis, eco-friendly apparel purchasing behavior was regressed on personal norm. Eco-friendly apparel purchasing behavior was significantly predicted by personal norm ($\beta = .62, p < .001$).

Results of three regression analyses showed that bio-altruistic values and egoistic values are related to environmental self-identity. Moreover, we found that the relationship between bio-altruistic values and personal norm and between egoistic values and personal norms were fully mediated by environmental self-identity. This suggests that values need to be linked to self in order to be influential in apparel choices made by US consumers. Also, descriptive norms influenced personal norm, which in turn influenced eco-friendly apparel purchasing behavior. From a public policy and marketers' perspective, the results of our study imply that consumers activate personal norm to purchase eco-friendly apparel when their self-identities and close relevant people' behavior match well with the apparel products that are offered on the market. Therefore, the promotional message should address consumers' environmental self-identity strengthened by their bio-altruistic or egoistic values and their close people's eco-friendly apparel purchasing behavior.

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