

Accumulative vs. Appreciative Materialism: Implications for Sustainable Apparel Consumption

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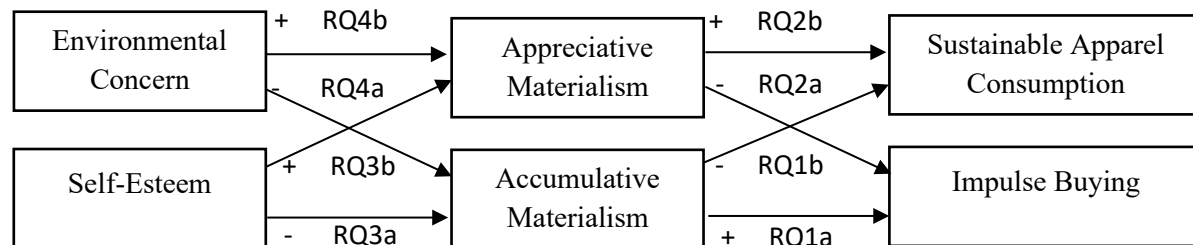
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Background. Apparel consumption continues to be at a global high (Beall, 2020) and environmental concerns about the apparel industry continue to rise (Rosmarin, 2020). Materialism, a critical determinant of overconsumption behavior (Fournier & Richins, 1991), refers to the importance that people place on physical possessions (Belk, 1985). Research has shown that materialistic consumers use apparel to symbolize their status (O’Cass & Siahtiri, 2013), to transform other’s perception of themselves (Richins, 1994), and/or to seek happiness (Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997). Kramarczyk and Oliver (2022) redefined materialism as a bi-dimensional construct including the dimensions of accumulative and appreciative materialism. As per these authors, accumulative materialism places greater emphasis on quantity of goods an individual possesses, whereas appreciative materialism suggests that individuals place value on the meaningfulness of the goods. Further, appreciative materialism allows individuals to obtain and value possessions in a more sustainable manner, by focusing on the symbolism of the possession rather than overconsumption. Despite the value of this new conceptualization of materialism, no previous work known to the authors has examined these dual concepts in relation to sustainable apparel consumption. The purpose of this exploratory study is to examine the linkages between accumulative and appreciative materialism and sustainable apparel consumption and impulse buying. Additionally, this study seeks to examine whether self-esteem and environmental concern predict accumulative and appreciative materialism.

Literature, Theory, and Hypotheses. Guided by Kramarczyk and Oliver’s (2022) new definitions of materialism, the present study proposes that appreciative and accumulative materialism have opposite relationships with sustainable apparel consumption and impulse buying. Specifically, we explore whether an individual’s level of accumulative materialism will have a) a negative influence on sustainable apparel consumption and b) a positive influence on impulse buying (**RQ1**). Conversely, we also examine whether an individual’s level of appreciative materialism will have a) a positive influence on sustainable apparel consumption and b) a negative influence on impulse buying (**RQ2**). The present study also uses the theoretical framework based on Wicklund and Gollwitzer’s (1981) symbolic self-completion theory, which serves as a basis for proposing the relationship between self-esteem and the dual materialism concepts. The theory states that an individual will continue to be motivated to work toward self-defining or identity goals until fulfillment is reached. Within this study, self-esteem (**RQ3**) can be seen as an indicator of self-incompleteness and therefore individuals with low self-esteem will attempt to find completeness through accumulative materialism, given that self-esteem and (accumulative)

materialism have been found to have a negative relationship (Zhao, 2019). On the other hand, individuals with high environmental concern (**RQ4**) may be more likely to have high appreciative materialism (Kim et al. 2017). Based on the proposals discussed above, we examine the following exploratory research model in the current study.

Figure 1. Proposed Exploratory Research Model



Method and Results. Data were collected through an online survey administered via Qualtrics to students at a Southeastern university, representing Gen X consumers. Participants responded to a set of scales, including the materialism value scale with added items for appreciative materialism (Richins & Dawson, 1992; Kramarczyk & Oliver, 2022), Rosenberg's (1965) self-esteem scale, environmental concern scale (Straughan & Roberts, 1999), sustainable apparel consumption behavior scale (Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013; Kang et al., 2013; Xu et al., 2014), and impulse buying scale (Jones & Beatty, 1998). Scale validity and reliability were assessed and through exploratory factor analysis, ambiguous items were deleted to confirm either a unidimensional or multi-dimensional factor structure for the variables in the study. Self-esteem, accumulative materialism (factor of materialism), intention to purchase sustainable apparel (factor of sustainable apparel consumption), collaborative consumption of apparel (factor of sustainable apparel consumption), impulse buying, and environmental concern are factors that loaded with a Cronbach $\alpha > 0.7$. Responsible disposal of apparel (factor of sustainable apparel consumption) and appreciative materialism (factor of materialism) loaded with a Cronbach $\alpha < 0.7$, but after expert review and high face validity, the scales deemed useable. Additionally, appreciative and accumulative materialism had a weak correlation ($r = .147, p = .031$).

From 249 completed surveys (response rate of 58.6%), 216 were deemed usable. Using SPSS descriptive statistics were taken. The sample consisted of 204 female (94.4%) and 12 male (5.6%) students with an average age of 20.67 ($SD = 1.35$) years. A majority of respondents were non-Hispanic White (83.8%). Multiple regression analyses was used to examine the relationships among appreciative and accumulative materialism as IVs and three factors of sustainable apparel consumption as DVs. Regarding **RQ2**, results revealed that appreciative materialism positively influences all three factors of sustainable apparel consumption, responsible disposal of apparel ($B = .547, t = 5.599, p = <.001$), intention to purchase sustainable apparel ($B = .652, t = 6.006, p = <.001$), and collaborative consumption of apparel ($B = .635, t = 5.036, p = <.001$), while accumulative materialism was found to negatively influence only responsible disposal of apparel

($B = -.240, t = -3.225, p = .001$) and intention to purchase sustainable apparel ($B = -.173, t = -2.094, p = .037$). With respect to **RQ1**, multiple regression analyses was used to examine the relationships among appreciative and accumulative materialism as IVs on impulse buying tendencies as DV. Results revealed that an individual's level of appreciative materialism has no influence on impulse buying ($B = -.119, t = -1.219, p = .224$), but accumulative materialism has a significant positive influence on impulse buying ($B = .641, t = 8.579, p < .001$). Examining **RQ3**, self-esteem had a significant negative influence on accumulative materialism ($B = -.257, t = -3.13, p = .002$), but the positive influence on appreciative materialism was only marginally significant ($B = .116, t = 1.845, p = .066$). Addressing **RQ4**, environmental concern was found to be a significant predictor of appreciative materialism ($B = .217, t = 4.257, p < .001$) but not accumulative materialism ($B = .081, t = 1.149, p = .252$).

Discussion and Implications. Aligned with Kramarczyk and Oliver (2022), the results reveal that accumulative and appreciative materialism are indeed distinct concepts with differing outcomes and antecedents, expanding the theoretical implications of materialism for sustainable apparel consumption and impulse buying. Appreciative materialism influences enhanced sustainable apparel consumption and is positively influenced by environmental concerns; whereas accumulative materialism influences greater impulse buying and is negatively influenced by self-esteem. Future research will benefit by examining these dual concepts of materialism with respect to consumer behavior. Social marketers can promote sustainable behaviors more effectively by understanding the distinct values of appreciative materialists.

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