



Using Theory of Planned Behavior to Explain Consumers' Intention to Purchase Slow Fashion Apparel

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Today, an increasing number of consumers are interested in social responsibility and sustainability which has evolved into attention and support for the more recent slow fashion movement. Slow fashion focuses on the entire supply chain with emphasis on quality workmanship, small production lines, and fair conditions (Fletcher, 2010). Social responsibility is business related with emphasis on the consumer and consumer perception rather than business practices throughout the supply chain. Social responsible actions by a company may be more philanthropic and unrelated to apparel development and production. This term tends to be consumer-centric with emphasis on ensuring that the consumer has a positive perception of the company through avoidance of negative behaviors (Dickson & Eckman, 2006). Sustainability has a less uniform definition in the literature. The examination of the term sustainability tends to be compartmentalized rather than holistic. Sustainability research tends to place focus on one dimension at a time, such as the environment, ethical behavior, or social issues (Connell & Kozar, 2012; Hill & Lee, 2012; Ritch & Schroder, 2012). Slow fashion is different from social responsibility and sustainability in that it is a framework that requires major change of the entire textile and apparel supply chain process (Fletcher, 2010).

Rationale of the Study

Retailers are reporting the rise of 'slow fashion' as consumers think harder about what they buy (Wood, 2009). Consumers are now slowly starting to invest not only in a piece that will look incredible for years, but the integrity of the process via the Slow Fashion route (Sayer, 2007). This concept is still in its nascence and needs further empirical investigation given that retail industry in its current state is one of the most unsustainable industries. The theoretical framework of this proposed study is the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). TPB provides a framework to study attitudes toward behaviors and predicts the occurrence of a specific behavior provided that the behavior is intentional.

Conceptual Framework and Methodology

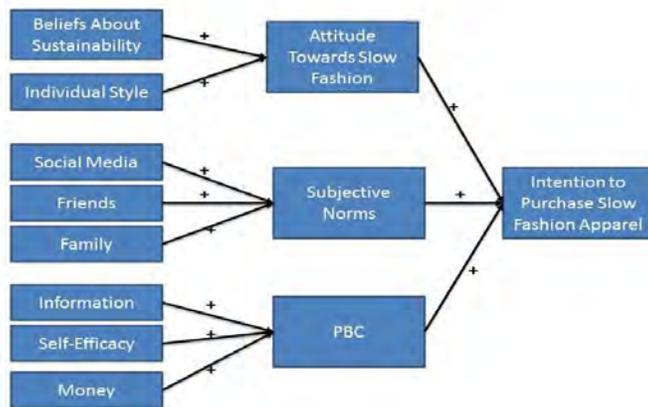
According to Francis et. al. (2004), construction of survey instruments based on TPB framework involves the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The construction of the survey to measure the variables in the TPB model requires elicitation study to elicit respondent's commonly held beliefs, attitude, and perceived behavioral control. For the purpose of this exploratory study focus groups were considered the best method for eliciting response with regard to slow fashion. Data for the interviews was collected via convenience sample from students of apparel and textiles programs at two Southwestern Universities, resulting in 50 participants. The students were appropriate for the purpose this study as young consumers will be the next generation of ethical consumers (Mirza, 2004). Each respondent answered open-ended questions to elicit their commonly held beliefs with respect to slow fashion apparel, their reference group, and finally factors that impacted confidence that they are capable of performing the target behavior. The interviews were transcribed and coded to generate themes that would be utilized to create the survey instrument. Based on the analysis the proposed research objectives and the research model (see Figure 1) are:

1. Examine the influence of behavioral beliefs of sustainability and individual style on attitude towards Slow Fashion.

2. Examine the influence of normative beliefs including friends, family and social media on purchasing Slow Fashion on subjective norms.
3. Examine the influence of self-efficacy, money for purchasing Slow Fashion and information about Slow Fashion on perceived behavioral control (PBC)
4. Examine the influence of attitude, subjective norms, PBC on intention to purchase Slow Fashion.

All the relationships will be hypothesized to have positive effect. The instrument for the study will be adapted from existing scales in the literature and will be pre-tested to validate the survey instrument. The data for the study will be collected using a consumer panel. The research model will be tested using Structural Equation Modeling. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha, factor loadings' significance, item-to-total correlation, average variance extracted and construct correlation will be estimated.

Figure 1. The Proposed Research Model



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