

Using Theory of Reasoned Action to Explore “Slow Fashion” Consumer Behavior

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The apparel industry is morphing with a number of new retailers such as Zady, encouraging their consumers to build smaller, simpler and longer lasting wardrobes (Holmes, 2014). This is in line with the evolving consumer attitude, especially among Millennials who are increasingly expecting transparency from their clothing brands and are willing to pay more for clothes that last longer (Watch out, n.d.). Furthermore, there is growing evidence that US consumers are beginning to spend more and are graduating to a philosophy of quality not quantity with 41% of consumers responding that they are willing to pay more for products and services by companies that are socially and environmentally responsible (Cline, 2016). Slow Fashion concept, which is based on sustainability within the fashion industry and design incorporating high quality, small lines, regional productions, and fair labor conditions (Slow Fashion Award, 2010) is slowly gaining momentum. This current study explores consumer perceptions of the slow fashion movement using the theory of reasoned action.

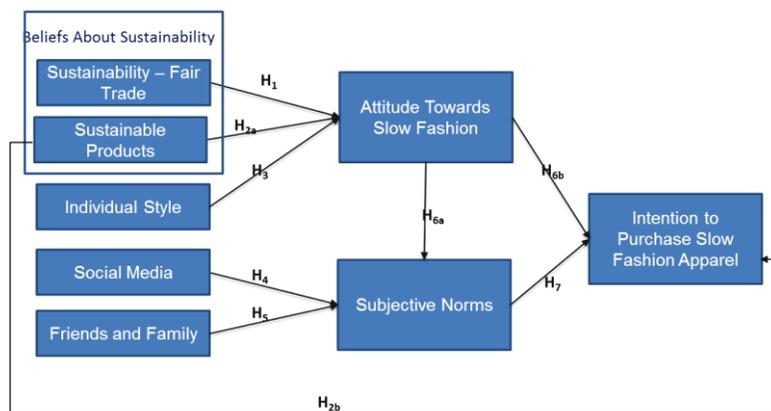
Rationale of the Study: Currently it is estimated that the global retail market will see steady growth over the next few years, and in 2018, worldwide retail sales will increase 5.5% to reach \$28.300 trillion (Retail Sales Worldwide, 2014). Due to the size of this industry which yields enormous economic clout, the people involved have the opportunity to have a positive impact on global society and the environment (Fashion Futures 2025, n.d.). Slow fashion as a concept has been gaining momentum in academia with studies exploring the supply chain (Henninger, Alevizou, Oates, & Cheng, 2015); identification of slow fashion dimensions and profiling of potential slow fashion consumers (Jung, & Jin, 2016). The purpose of the current study was to explore underlying dimensions of slow fashion as elicited from a survey of Millennials and its impact on slow fashion purchase intention based on adapted Theory of Reasoned Action (see Figure 1). Millennials were considered the appropriate population for this study as not only they are willing to pay more for sustainable products, they are also attracted to well-designed, stylish products that make them look good and feel good (McPherson, 2014; Mahler, 2015), in other words, slow fashion products.

Findings of the study: Data was collected via an online survey at two universities resulting in a sample size of 218. The students were appropriate for the purpose this study as the focus of the study were the millennial consumers. Data was analyzed using descriptive, factor analysis and Structural Equation Modeling. The model was tested using measurement and structural model in SEM. The fit indices of the overall structural model ($\chi^2 = 954.53$, $d.f. = 572$, $p = 0.00000$, RMSEA: 0.056, NFI: 0.93, NNFI: 0.97) supported the model fit. Based on the parameter estimate t value which stated that value greater than 2.00 is considered an indicator of statistical significance, two hypotheses were not supported, i.e. influence of Sustainably - Fairtrade on Attitude and the influence of Social Media on Subjective Norms.

Conclusions and Implications: The findings of this study support the current retailing trends that are impacting the industry whereby consumers want *sustainable products* and not just socially responsible companies which represents an important shift in consumer priorities (Mahler, 2015). This is an important finding both for retailers as well as academia as now the focus needs to shift from examining sustainability as a holistic concept, and instead examine “*inherent sustainability*” of the product (like products that directly help consumers live sustainable lives). Furthermore, the results indicates that Social Media does not influence

Subjective Norms. This is an interesting finding especially considering that the millennial consumer is a social media native. It can be inferred, when it comes to purchasing sustainable products millennials are drawn to the *value* that is passed on in a slow fashion product hence are more likely to be influenced by their friends and family. Additionally, the attitude towards slow fashion also influences subjective norms indicating that a positive attitude towards slow fashion will influence how millennials are motivated to comply with the intention to purchase slow fashion apparel. Finally, purchase intention is influenced by attitude, subjective norms and the beliefs towards the sustainable product, indicating not only the importance of attitude and subjective norms but also the belief system.

Figure 1: Research Model



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