

## Why Collaborative Apparel Consumption is Gaining Popularity? An Empirical Study of U.S. Gen Z Consumers

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*Introduction and Literature Review.* Apparel rental, also known as collaborative consumption, has created an innovative business model, which provides consumers with the ability to focus on using their products instead of ownership, and is becoming popular in recent years (Lang et al., 2020). A recent CGS Survey (2019) reveals sustainability is driving demand and customer loyalty in the U.S. Among all generations, Gen Z adult consumers (born 1997 and 2002) led the way, with 68% reported as eco-friendly shoppers. To better understand the emerging popularity of apparel rental services among Gen Z adult consumers who are becoming a major driving force for retail growth and sustainability movement, this study aimed to identify the factors significantly influencing the U.S. Gen Z adult consumers' intention to use apparel rental services. Specifically, the objectives of this research were fourfold. First, a research model was proposed building on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Second, the psychometric properties of the proposed model were examined using the gathered survey data. Third, the effects of significant factors on U.S. Gen Z consumers' intention to use apparel rental services were determined. Finally, some implications were provided for academia and industrial practitioners. Figure 1 illustrates the developed model with the proposed hypotheses.

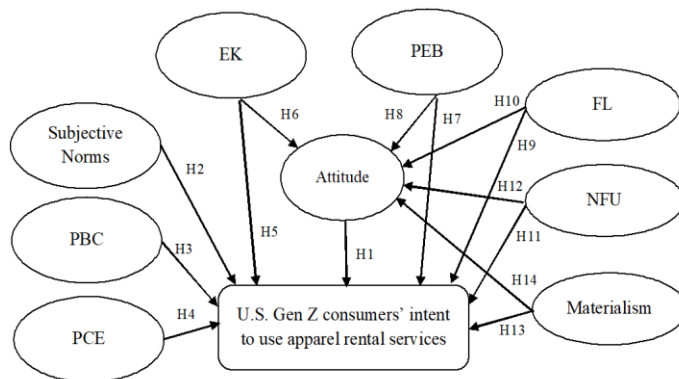


Figure 1. Proposed Model for Consumer Intention to Use Apparel Rental Services

Note: PBC = Perceived behavioral control; PCE = Perceived consumer effectiveness; PEB = Past environmental behavior; EK = environmental knowledge; FL = Fashion leadership; NFU = Need for uniqueness; M = Materialism.

*Methodology.* The scales for attitude (AT), subjective norms (SN), perceived behavioral control (PBC), perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE), and use intention (UI) were adapted from Zheng and Chi (2015). The scales for environmental knowledge (EK) was adapted from Barbarossa and Pelsmacker (2016). The scale for past environmental behavior (PEB) was adapted from Fraj and Martinez (2006). The scales for fashion leadership (FL), need for

uniqueness (NFU), and materialism (M) were adapted from Lang and Armstrong (2018). A five-point Likert scale was applied for all adapted scales. The demographic variables including gender, age, education level and income level were included as control factors. The primary data were collected by a Qualtrics survey of U.S. Gen Z adult consumers. The professional survey website used was Amazon MTurk, which enabled to reach a wide range of eligible consumers (Chi & Zheng, 2016; Goodman et al., 2012). 362 eligible responses were gathered for data analysis and hypothesis testing. Multiple regression method was applied for determining the proposed statistical relationships (hypotheses) using SPSS 26.

*Findings and Discussion.* Table 1 presents the testing results of all the hypotheses. eight of them (H1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 12) were statically significant at a  $p < 0.05$  level and H3, 5, 8, 11, 13 and 14 were insignificant. Attitude, subject norms (SN), perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE), past environmental behavior (PEB), and fashion leadership (FL) significantly affect U.S. Gen Z consumers' intent to use apparel rental services. There are no significant differences between ages, genders, education levels, and income levels in regard to their intent to use apparel rental services. Environmental knowledge (EK), fashion leadership (FL), and need for uniqueness (NFU) positively shape Gen Z consumers' attitude toward use of apparel rental services. The proposed research model exhibits a good explanatory power, accounting for 58.6% of variance in U.S. Gen Z consumers' intent to use apparel rental services.

Table 1. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hyp.	DV	IDV	Std. Coef. ( $\beta$ )	t-value	Sig. at $p < .05$	Control variable	Std. Coef. ( $\beta$ )	t-value	Sig. at $p < .05$	Total $R^2$	Sig. at $p < .05$
	UI	Constant	.713	.477		Age	.012	.325	.745		
H1	Y	AT	.267	5.033	.000	Gender	.039	1.078	.282	.586	<.000
H2	Y	SN	.170	2.995	.003	Education	.022	.522	.602		$F = 37.84$
H3	N	PBC	.002	.045	.964	Income	.053	1.369	.172		(13/348)
H4	Y	PCE	.174	3.644	.000						
H5	N	EK	.037	.779	.437						
H7	Y	PEB	.143	2.898	.004						
H9	Y	FL	.158	2.853	.005						
H11	N	NFU	.029	.615	.539						
H13	N	M	-.050	-1.032	.303						
	AT	Constant	1.591	.113		Age	.053	1.186	.237		
H6	Y	EK	.234	4.364	.000	Gender	.111	2.605	.010	.402	<.000
H8	N	PEB	.096	1.671	.096	Education	.083	1.635	.103		$F = 26.323$
H10	Y	FL	.237	3.810	.000	Income	.090	1.948	.052		(9/352)
H12	Y	NFU	.153	2.867	.004						
H14	N	M	-.011	-.189	.850						

Note: DV: Dependent variable. IDV: Independent variable.

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