The Effects of Brand Emotion and Action Desire on Sustainable Consumer Behavior: 
The Moderating Roles of Gender and Sustainability Motivation

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Introduction: In the competitive business world, a brand wants to have an intimate relationship with consumers which can lead the company to be ahead of its rivals by gaining consumer trust. To build and maintain this relationship, a positive emotional connection between a brand and consumers needs to be established (Aydın & Zehir, 2017). For example, consumers will have positive brand emotion toward the brand involved in sustainable practices toward ecological integrity and social justice. Furthermore, if consumers had a positive emotional attachment to a brand practicing sustainability, it may alter their perception about sustainability and move them toward acting in line with the brand they love. However, the literature is nearly silent on whether brand emotion can create the intention to buy a product from a company practicing sustainability in relation to action desire (Gummerus et al., 2012). Therefore, this study investigates the effects of brand emotion on buying intention through consumer action desire by applying the dual-process model. Also, this study examines the moderating effects of gender and sustainability motivation on relationships among brand emotion, action desire, and buying intention.

Literature Review: Gender is often associated with different characteristics of human behavior (Hwang & Choi, 2017). For example, women found to practice environmentally friendly behavior more than men (Kalamas et al., 2014). Similarly, sustainability motivation, a person’s desire to act sustainably when fulfilling their needs through purchasing, is another factor affecting sustainable behavior. For example, if an individual has sustainable purchase motivation, he/she will be more likely to feel positively towards the brand (Mothersbaugh, 2016). This positive consumer attitude may influence their purchase intention (Gummerus et al., 2012). Therefore, the moderating roles of gender and sustainability motivation are the key to understand sustainable consumer behavior.

Brand pleasure, one of brand emotion dimensions, including joy and enjoyment can be created when consumers like the brand (Aydın & Zehir, 2017). Brand pleasure can positively impact brand arousal which leads to a stronger brand attachment (Patwardhan & Balasubramanian, 2011). Therefore, \textit{H1: Brand pleasure will positively influence brand arousal.} Consumers have two action desires according to the dual-process model, i.e., automatic and deliberate. Automatic action is a quick process leveraging the previous experience and social influence, whereas deliberate action is a more intensive action utilizing logic and cognition in the purchase decision (Gawronski et al., 2013). Therefore, if consumers have a positive relationship with a brand, they will buy a product from that brand by using these action desires at the different levels of each. Thus, \textit{H2: brand arousal will positively affect consumer’s action desires.} Consumer intention to buy represents the attitude of consumers towards buying any specific product, and it can be influenced by individual characteristics and action desire of consumers (Zhang et al., 2020). Therefore, \textit{H3: Action desires will positively influence consumer’s buying intention.}
Methodology: A quantitative research method with the online survey was used for this study. The 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) was employed to measure all the constructs. In the beginning of the survey, we provided the story about a brand practicing sustainability actively. For the hypothesis testing, generalized structured component analysis (GSCA) was used to see the underlying relationships among latent variables and examine the moderating roles of gender and sustainability motivation (Hwang & Takane, 2014). The high and low sustainability motivation groups were defined by a median split method.

Results: A total of 321 respondents answered the survey questions. The demographics include the average age of 41, ranging from 18 to 76, and females representing 52.3%. The majority of participants are Caucasians (68%). The hypothesized model provided FIT (overall goodness of fit index in GSCA) values of .800 and .776 for the male and female groups, respectively, indicating that the model accounted for 80.0% and 77.6% of the total variance of the five constructs and their items. Also, the hypothesized model provided FIT values of .807 and .750 for the high and low sustainability motivation groups, respectively, indicating that the model accounted for 80.7% and 75.0% of the total variance. For the male group, all the path coefficients show statistically significant and positive relationships. For the female group, all the paths were significant, except the path of deliberate action desire to buying intention. For the group with high sustainability motivation, all the paths were significant, except the path of deliberate action desire to buying intention. For the group with high sustainability motivation, all the paths were statistically significant. The significant relationships were stronger for the male group than the female group, and for the high sustainability motivation group than the low sustainability motivation group.

Discussion: In this study, we develop a sustainable consumer behavior framework based on the dual-process model and brand emotion. Our results indicate that overall path coefficients and model fit are stronger and more positive for the male group, which contradicts the previous finding (Matthes et al., 2014). Male consumers might have more knowledge about sustainability than females, so that they might be able to convert their thoughts into action desire (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003). Furthermore, female consumers may look for more specific information about the brand/product when building the deliberative action desire. Also, results indicate that consumers with high sustainability motivation are more likely to act deliberately in their buying intention for a brand practicing sustainability. In fact, consumers with high sustainability motivation demonstrate increased model fit, path coefficients, more positive relationships among all variables than low sustainability motivated consumers. Surprisingly, deliberate action desire had no effect on buying intention for the group with low sustainability. They may have lack of knowledge about sustainability which can limit their logical action desire related to it (McNeill & Moore, 2015).

Implications and Future Research: For the practical implication, marketers should focus on their promotional efforts toward creating positive brand perception by emphasizing sustainability motivation. For the academic implication, the application of the dual-process model in this study suggests the broader implication of the model in different types of consumer behavior. Future research should explore the influence of additional factors such as price, quality, and product attributes on women’s decision-making process regarding sustainable products.
References:
Figure 1. The Moderating Effects of Gender

Figure 2. The Moderating Effects of Sustainability Motivation