

Are Cosmopolitan Consumers into Purchasing Sustainable Apparel?

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Introduction and Literature Review. Cosmopolitan literature has related cosmopolitans' cultural openness to connoisseurship (Bookman, 2013; Cleveland et al., 2009) and cosmopolitans' global awareness to global responsibility (Bookman, 2013; Grinstein & Riefler, 2015). Since cosmopolitan consumers emphasize universalism, benevolence, and egalitarianism (Cleveland et al., 2011), they tend to appreciate all people and regard the protection of the environment and equality as important (Schwartz, 2012). International marketing literature sustains that cosmopolitan consumer orientation (CCO) is a driver of consumer behavior (Grinstein & Riefler, 2015; Riefler, 2012; Riefler et al., 2012; Zeugner-Roth et al., 2015), but rarely delves into the global social effects CCO is likely to have on consumer behavior. With conscious consumerism on the rise, sustainable apparel is becoming an aspirational product category that is expected to attract cosmopolitan consumers.

In response to the rapid growth of the cosmopolitan consumer segment, the global nature of apparel products, and the worldwide acceptance of sustainable lifestyles, this study aims to link two major emerging trends in contemporary society: cosmopolitanism and sustainable consumer behavior. Specifically, this study's objective is to empirically investigate the impact of CCO on the consumption of sustainable apparel (SA), which entails the consumption of multi-origin aspirational products cultivating a more responsible contribution to the global community.

The theory of reasoned action (TRA), often used to explain the consumption of SA but seldom used in cosmopolitan literature, offers theoretical support for this study (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2009). Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model and the relevant hypotheses. Firstly, the TRA provides the theoretical backbone to explain the attitude formation process to predict sustainable apparel purchase intention (H1, H2, H4, H5). Secondly, it explains the impact of perceived social pressure antecedent by CCO on purchase intention of SA (H3, H6). In addition, the model also includes the direct effect of CCO on purchase intention (H7).

Research Method. A structured questionnaire was designed based on a careful review of the literature and the pretest. Upon IRB approval, a total of 612 US responses were collected using MTurk, and 469 were retained for analysis after careful data screening. Participants evaluated CCO, apparel sustainability knowledge, attitude towards purchasing SA, perceived norm, and SA purchase intention using measures from previous studies (e.g., Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; De Lenne & Vandenbosch, 2017; Fishbein et al., 2003; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2009; Putrevu & Lord, 1994; Shen et al., 2012). A two-step structural equation modeling approach was conducted using SPSS AMOS 26, including confirmatory factor analysis for assessing the measurement model and latent variable path analysis for testing the hypotheses. Additionally, a two-step cluster analysis using log-likelihood distance measure and Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC) was conducted to explore consumer profiles and past behavior using SPSS 27.

Results. The study sample is fairly balanced between male (45.6%) and female (53.3%) participants. Thirty-three percent of the respondents are 18-30 years old, and 42 percent are 31-50 years old. Fifty-one percent of the respondents are married. And the level of education is high, where 69% of the sample have bachelor's,

graduate, or professional degrees. Confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model shows that a reasonable fit was achieved: $\chi^2 / df = 2.98$; root-mean-squared-error-of-approximation (RMSEA) = .07; comparative-fit-index (CFI) = .94; and adjusted-goodness-of-fit-index (AGFI) = .85.

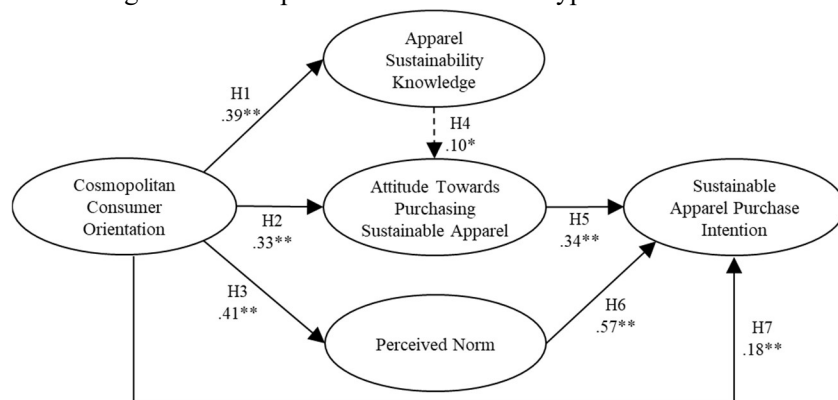
The results from the evaluation of the structural equation model are shown in Figure 1. With 99% confidence, the hypothesized relationships in H1, H2, H3, H5, H6, and H7 are supported by the structural equation model, except H4.

A two-cluster solution mainly driven by the past purchase of SA fits the data fairly and reveals significant differences between groups. Consumers in the “Mindful” cluster (i.e., consumers that declared to be aware of purchasing SA in the past three years; 41.1% of the sample) perceive that they know more about apparel sustainability, are more cosmopolitan, show a larger tendency to follow social norms, tend to live more in metropolitan areas, and tend to be younger than the consumers in the “Unengaged” cluster (i.e., consumers who admittedly have not purchased or are not aware of purchasing SA in the past three years; 51.8% of the sample).

Discussion and Implications. The study findings link cosmopolitanism and SA consumer behavior. Results indicate CCO is a relevant predictor of apparel sustainable behaviors and the TRA determinants play a role in explaining the behavior. CCO influences attitude towards purchasing SA, apparel sustainability knowledge, and perceived norm. Then, in turn, attitude and perceive norm influence purchase intention. Data suggests that perceived norm is the factor most influenced by CCO and that most affected the intention to purchase SA. The finding not only suggests that cosmopolitan consumers’ intentions to purchase SA are more susceptible to social influences than their attitudes, but also implies that SA allows cosmopolitan consumers to fit with social norms and show their affiliation with aspired social groups.

Although in recent years there seems to be a surge in SA options, this study sample reveals that there might be a sizable group of consumers that has not consciously participated in the sustainable apparel bandwagon. Thus, it is likely that SA ownership in the US is moderate. And consumers that have participated in the SA bandwagon are, on average, more cosmopolitan, more susceptible to social norms, more aware of apparel sustainability, and show a higher intention to purchase SA than those in the unengaged group. According to Rogers (2004), cosmopolitan consumers are early adopters of innovations and critical for marketplace success. Thus, our study findings support Rogers' (2004) argument about cosmopolitan consumers and imply a positive future outlook for the diffusion of SA.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model and SEM Hypotheses Results



Note. All results are reported in standardized form. * $p < .05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

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