

## Does Cosmopolitan Consumer Orientation Predict Consumers' Sustainable Apparel Behavior Cross-culturally?

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**Introduction and Literature Review.** In the currently globalized world, individuals with a strong cosmopolitan consumer orientation (CCO) think of themselves beyond their city or country and consider the world their marketplace (Caldwell et al., 2006; Merton, 1968). Cosmopolitan consumers aspire to acquire social and cultural capital as well as moral worthiness (Cleveland et al., 2009). Despite the acknowledged relevance of CCO in international marketing and consumer behavior (Cleveland et al., 2011; Grinstein & Riefler, 2015; Riefler et al., 2012), seldom does academic research study the effect of CCO on sustainable behavior. No published research, to the best of our knowledge, has examined the relationship between CCO and consumer behavior of sustainable apparel (SA). Due to deterioration of the environment, the increased emphasis on the well-being of society globally, and the urgency to adhere to more sustainable lifestyles, this study addresses the literature gap and proposes that CCO drives consumers' intention to protect the world through the purchase of socially and environmentally responsible apparel. Specifically, the study's objective is to empirically investigate the impact of CCO on the consumption of SA cross-culturally, including the US, Ecuador, and India. The conceptual model, guided by the theory of planned behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2009), provides the theoretical backbone to explain how CCO, as well as emblematic determinants of purchase intention (attitude towards purchasing SA, perceived norm, and perceived behavioral control [PBC]) and apparel sustainability knowledge affect the intention to purchase SA. Figure 1 depicts the hypothesized relationships.

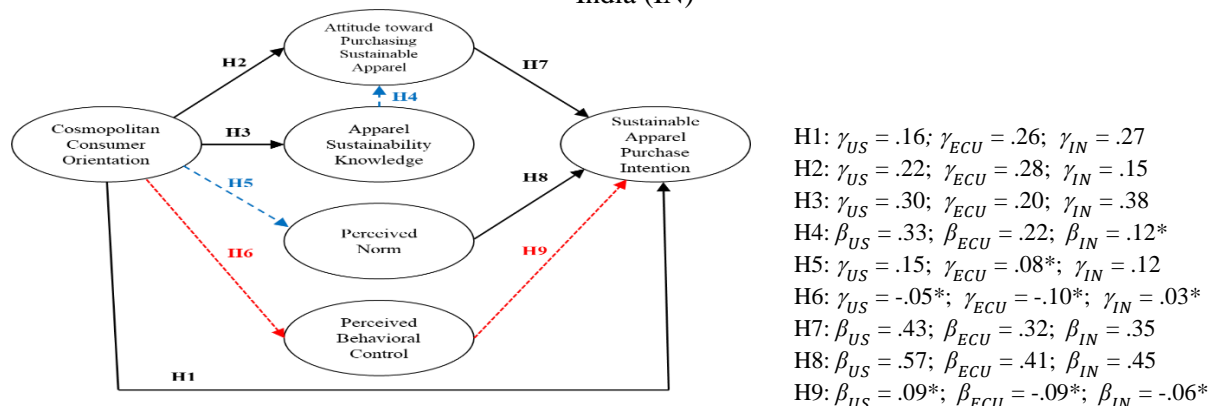
**Research Method.** The survey instrument was developed using Likert-type measurement scales of CCO, apparel sustainability knowledge, attitude towards purchasing SA, perceived norm, PBC, and SA purchase intention that were adapted from previous studies (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; De Lenne & Vandenbosch, 2017; Fishbein et al., 2003; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2009; Kang et al., 2013; Putrevu & Lord, 1994; Shen et al., 2012). The survey was adapted to Spanish using the collaborative and iterative translation process (Douglas & Craig, 2007). Upon IRB approval, data were collected from a convenience student sample in the metropolitan areas in the US, Ecuador, and India. After data screening, 965 valid responses were retained for hypothesis analysis (319 for the US, 294 for Ecuador, and 352 for India). To evaluate the possibility of common method bias in the dataset, the Harman's single factor test was performed (Fuller et al., 2015). Data was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling using SPSS AMOS 26. After confirming the six-factor structure and the satisfactory goodness of fit of the measurement model for each group, configural invariance and partial metric invariance were established in order to continue with structural model evaluations. A summary of the structural model hypothesis testing results is provided in Figure 1.

**Results.** The results showed that CCO, attitude towards purchasing SA, and perceived norm significantly impact the intention to purchase SA in the US, Ecuador, and India (H1, H7, H8 were supported). For all the three groups, PBC's effect on the intention to purchase SA was insignificant (H9 was not supported), which presages that the capability and/or ability to purchase SA does not seem to predict young consumer

intentions to purchase SA. The strong CCO of young metropolitan US, Ecuadorian, and Indian consumers influenced their attitude towards purchasing SA (H2 was supported) and their SA knowledge (H3 was supported); however, their CCO did not affect their perceived competence/adeptness to overcome barriers to carry out purchases of SA (H6 was not supported). Young consumers in the US and India perceived that CCO pressures them to comply to social norms in terms of purchasing SA (H5 was partially supported). In addition, the more knowledgeable the US and Ecuadorian consumers were regarding apparel sustainability, the stronger attitude towards SA they had, although in India the relationship was insignificant (H4 was partially supported). The structural model supported the expected effect of CCO as a driver of SA consumer behavior in each of the three countries. Young metropolitan consumers experienced similar influences independently of the economic standing of their nations.

**Discussion and Implications.** The results suggest that CCO uplifts young metropolitan consumers cross-culturally to be more receptive to apparel sustainability. The proposed model is instrumental not only because it explains the positive effect of CCO on consumers' purchase intention of SA, but also because it demonstrates that CCO reinforces apparel sustainability knowledge and attitudes towards purchasing SA while pressuring consumers to comply with social norms under certain circumstances. Interestingly, CCO is not likely to impact current perceptions of barriers affecting purchases of SA. This study provides a clear understanding of the homogeneity of young metropolitan cosmopolitan consumers in advanced and developing economies. Additionally, this research fills a gap in literature by studying an almost neglected country in cross-cultural CCO literature (i.e., Ecuador). The study findings provide managerial implications, such as the identification of a viable market segment of young metropolitan cosmopolitan consumers with a positive disposition towards purchasing SA. Furthermore, the results imply the importance of selecting appropriate SA marketing practices for young cosmopolitan consumers. Future studies are needed to determine cross-cultural differences for consumers when shopping for SA. Also, a future longitudinal study might evaluate the growth of the cosmopolitan consumer clusters and predict adoption growth rate of SA.

Figure 1. Research Model and SEM Hypothesis Testing Results for the US (US), Ecuador (ECU), and India (IN)



Note. The values in the figure correspond to standardized path coefficients. The solid black lines denote significant relationships between connected constructs for all the three groups (US, Ecuador, and India;  $p < .05$ ). The red dotted lines denote insignificant relationships between constructs for all three groups ( $p \geq .05$ ). The blue dashed lines denote mixed results (significant and insignificant) across the three groups.

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