

## Who Buys Slow Fashion: A Study of Lifestyle Characteristics and Motivating Factors among Young Consumers

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Fashion clothing life cycle is associated with major environmental and social issues. (Ozdamar Ertekin and Atik 2015). Over the last thirty years, awareness of the impact of fashion production and consumption on both human being and the environment has grown significantly (Beard 2008). It has been realized that if fashion consumption keeps increasing at the current rate with accelerating product life cycles, the quality of life of current and future generations will be jeopardized (Cataldi, Dickson, and Grover 2010; Clark 2008; Fletcher 2007). Consequently, current fashion system has been questioned along with calls to re-design the unsustainability fashion system and practices. 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.

Slow fashion system has been praised as a facilitator to promote sustainability through creating an aware group of designers, retailers, and consumers who will consider impacts of products on workers, communities, and ecosystems. The apparel industry is gradually morphing with some new retailers such as Zady, encouraging their consumers to build smaller, simpler and longer-lasting wardrobes. However, the ultimate diffusion of the sustainable slow fashion system and practices depends on consumer acceptance. This current study identifies slow fashion consumers and profiled them by lifestyle characteristics and motivating factors. We focus on young consumer segment since it is critical to lead young consumers who are currently in the development stage of their lifelong beliefs and attitude to develop environmentally sustainable consumption styles.

Drawing on the extant literature on slow fashion and sustainable fashion (e.g., Barnes et al. 2013, Ozdamar Ertekin and Atik 2015), sustainability consciousness, and need for uniqueness were identified as the external and internal motivating factors for slow fashion acceptance respectively. A review of literature related to fashion sociopsychology and consumption (e.g., Huddleston, Ford, and Bickle 1993, Li, Li, and Kambele 2012, Kucukemiroglu 1999, Goldsmith, Moore, and Beaudoin 1999, Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001) identified a group of lifestyle characteristics which have been frequently used for profiling fashion consumers. These characteristics included self-expression, style confidence, brand orientation, price-quality orientation, and social media involvement.

An online survey was designed and administered in a fall season. Participants were introduced the concept of slow fashion, then were requested to provide general beliefs about slow fashion. A hypothetical slow fashion line was developed as an instrument to examine slow fashion acceptance. Participants were informed, "Recently, fast fashion brand, H&M launched an upgraded product line labeled as Conscious Collection using Eco-friendly, or locally produced prestigious materials, such as organic cotton, American wild alligator skin to produce high-quality fashion clothing and sell at a premium price."

After viewing the images of the slow fashion line (see Image 1), participants provided responses about their attitudes and purchase intentions. The second part of the survey includes questions to



Figure 1: H&M Conscious Collection Featuring American Wild Alligator Leather

assess individual motivating factors and lifestyle characters. Data was collected via an email invitation 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 Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA).

Forty three items assessing research constructs were subjected to exploratory factor analyses and a ten-dimension factor structure emerged as expected with explained variance of 76.98%. Item factor loading ranged from .652 to .864. All cronbach's alphas are higher than .80. Index variables were created by calculating scale means for all the constructs. Three index variables of general beliefs about slow fashion, attitudes toward the slow fashion and, and purchase intention were subjected to a k-mean cluster analysis and two clusters emerged with one ( $n_1 = 132$ ) identified as slow fashion adopters and the other cluster ( $n_2 = 86$ ) as non-adopters. MANOVA was conducted to compare motivating factors, and lifestyle characteristics across the two groups and found difference exists. Univariate tests showed differences are in need for uniqueness, brand orientation, quality-price orientation, and social media involvement, but not in sustainability consciousness, self-expression, or style confidence. These findings indicate that young slow fashion adopters have a higher need for uniqueness, prefer well-known fashion brands, and are willing to pay premium prices for the quality. Interestingly, slow fashion adopters tend to be highly involved with social media.

Research findings indicate slow fashion adopters care about individual needs, instead of being affected by external driving forces. Their care of sustainability may be reflected from caring quality more than price. They also value brands' socially responsible market actions which relevant to individual consumers' lives. Findings of this study support the current trends that are gradually shaping textile, apparel, and retailing industries in that consumers care about sustainability, but accept *sustainable products* not to show their environmental consciousness, instead, to meet their individual needs and to pursue maximum value. This is an important finding since it reinforces the importance of shifting from examining sustainability as a holistic concept, to examining "*inherent sustainability*" of the product (like products that directly help consumers live sustainable lives). Also, we found slow fashion adopters have higher degree of social media involvement indicating the web and mobile channels may be good platforms to promote slow fashion and sustainable consumption.

Table 1. Univariate Tests Across Slow Fashion Adopter and Non-Adopters

Dependent Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Sustainability Consciousness	Contrast	1.289	1	1.289	1.393	.239
	Error	199.888	216	.925		
Need for Uniqueness	Contrast	22.888	1	22.888	13.655	.000
	Error	362.047	216	1.676		
Self-expression	Contrast	3.740	1	3.740	2.869	.092
	Error	281.575	216	1.304		
Style Confidence	Contrast	.001	1	.001	.001	.981
	Error	419.385	216	1.942		
Brand Orientation	Contrast	10.753	1	10.753	5.509	.020
	Error	421.622	216	1.952		
Quality-Price Orientation	Contrast	15.328	1	15.328	11.440	.001
	Error	289.414	216	1.340		
Social Media Involvement	Contrast	13.018	1	13.018	7.469	.007
	Error	376.500	216	1.743		

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