



## Materialism and Clothing Post-Purchase Behaviors

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In a material-oriented society, consumers value possessions of material things (e.g., clothing) and buy more than needed. Consumers use material goods to express social status (success). Such materialistic consumers use clothing as a means to symbolize social status, prestige, and success (Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997). They are highly involved with clothing, are fashion leaders, and purchase the newest styles and premium brands (Goldsmith, Fylnn, & Clark, 2012; Workman & Lee, 2010). Further, materialistic consumers tend to show compulsive buying behaviors (Yurchisin & Johnson, 2004). According to Ridgway, Kukar-Kinney, and Monroe (2008), compulsive buying refers to “a tendency to be preoccupied with buying that is revealed through repetitive buying and a lack of impulse control over buying” (p. 622). Compulsive buyers focus more on the acquisition process than use of the item purchased.

Although materialistic consumers are compulsive buyers and center on obtaining possessions, little is known about what happens after possession; what do they do with apparel that is no longer worn or wanted? Though almost 100% of textiles are recyclable, Americans threw away 13.1 million tons of textiles in 2010, of which more than 11 million tons were dumped in landfills (EPA, 2010). Because such discarding behavior adversely affects the environment, studies have examined consumers’ environmental attitude and its effect on disposal behaviors. Environmentally-conscious consumers have participated in recycling efforts such as donation, resale, and reuse (Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013; Shim 1995). In addition to discarding and participation in recycling, consumers hoard apparel in their closets, even though they do not use/wear the clothing. There is a lack of understanding about materialistic consumers’ environmental attitudes and post-purchase behaviors. The purpose of this study was to compare materialistic and non-materialistic consumers on apparel purchase, compulsiveness, environmental attitudes, and post-purchase behaviors including hoarding, disposing, and participation in recycling.

A survey questionnaire was developed to measure amount of annual apparel purchases (1 item), compulsiveness (6-items,  $\alpha=.86$ ) adopted from a compulsive buying index (Ridgway, et al., 2008), hoarding (7-items,  $\alpha=.84$ ), disposing (1 item), participation in recycling (6-items,  $\alpha=.63$ ), environmental attitudes (5-items,  $\alpha=.61$ ) adopted from Shim (1995), materialism (5-items,  $\alpha=.76$ ) adopted from a materialism scale (Richins, 1987), and demographic information. A total of 335 college students completed the survey in a classroom setting. The majority of the sample were female (79.3%), aged 19-22 years (81.8%), white (62.7%), unmarried (96.6%) undergraduate students (96.4%). A *k*-mean cluster analysis was conducted to divide the sample into groups based on the level of materialism. The results suggested a two-group solution and ANOVA found a significant difference in materialism between the clusters ( $F(1, 329) = 558.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The mean for high materialism (materialists) was 5.07 and the mean for low materialism (non-materialists) was 3.16 on a 7-point scale range.

Results of independent *t*-tests showed that materialists had significantly higher scores for apparel purchase, compulsiveness, hoarding, and disposing, and lower scores for environmental attitudes than did non-materialists (Table 1). An interesting note is that although no difference was found in participation in recycling, non-materialists had higher scores on environmental attitudes than did materialists. This implies that consumers' participation in recycling is not related to environment attitudes. Findings of this study suggest that consumer education may be necessary to inform materialistic consumers about both purchase and post-purchase behaviors. It should address effects of textile waste on the environment and encourage sustainable consumption behaviors (e.g., participation in recycling).

**Table 1. Independent samples *t*-tests between Materialists and Non-materialists**

	Materialists (n = 187) Mean (SD)	Non-materialists (n = 144) Mean (SD)	<i>t</i>
Apparel Purchase	5.88 (2.40)	4.58 (2.18)	-5.083***
Compulsiveness	3.33 (1.44)	2.49 (1.09)	-6.002***
Hoarding	3.25 ( .96)	2.85 (1.06)	-3.531***
Disposing	2.76 (1.94)	2.27 (1.48)	-2.569**
Participation in Recycling	2.35 ( .76)	2.41 ( .83)	0.686
Environmental Attitudes	3.51 ( .66)	3.67 ( .68)	2.118*

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*  $p < .01$ \*\*;  $p < .05$ \*

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