



Who Read Socially Responsible Apparel Labels

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Socially responsible (SR) labeling has been developed to encourage consumers to make SR purchases based on ecological attributes of products and additional SR information listed on labels (D'Souza, 2004). Previous research studied the efficacy of SR labels and revealed that SR labels influenced consumers' purchasing decisions (Dickson, 2001; D'Souza et al., 2007). Despite the fact that SR issues in the apparel industry are significant considerations, practicing conscientious apparel consumption can be challenging for fashion consumers when surrounded by fast fashion and the desire for the latest fashion styles. In addition, empirical studies have found that consumers' interpretation of and responses to SR labels varied based on a consumers' characteristics. These characteristics had effects on the effectiveness of SR labels (Dickson, 2001; Kim, Lee & Hur, 2012). While consumer belief is the strongest indicator of consumer's purchasing intentions (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), studies focusing on fashion consumers would benefit from additional perspectives. Fashion orientation and shopping orientation have been utilized to understand fashionable green consumers (Gam, 2011). To better understand SR apparel label reading behavior, the purpose of this study is to characterize the consumer segment associated with SR apparel consumption and label reading behavior.

An online survey was conducted with a random sample of U.S. consumers through a company specialized in market research. The measurements consisted of items adapted from previous studies to capture fashion orientation and shopping orientation (Gutman & Mills, 1982), SR label reading behavior (D'souza et al., 2007), familiarity of SR label (Roehm & Sternthal, 2001) and SR consumption behavior (Francois-LeCompte & Roberts, 2006). Finally, scales for purchase intention of SR apparel were adapted from Biswas and Burton (1993). Cronbach's *alphas* for all research variables were highly acceptable (.88-.96) and factor analysis was performed to determine dimensionability of each scale.

With a response rate of 17%, a total of 762 responses were collected. The majority of participants were female (57%) and White or European American (80%), while the mean age was 44.6 years. Cluster analysis was conducted to segment participants based on their shopping and fashion orientations. Three fashion orientation factors (fashion leadership & interest, well-dressed, anti-fashion) and five shopping orientation factors (shopping enjoyment, traditionalism, cost conscious, planning, following) extracted from exploratory factor analysis were used to determine clusters, generating three consumer groups. ANOVA was used to compare their characteristics in regard to fashion and shopping orientations. Cluster 1, *fashionable shoppers*, was the smallest group (27.6%) but had the highest scores in fashion leadership & interest, well-dressed, shopping enjoyment, planning, and following. Cluster 2, *regular shoppers*, was the largest group (40.0%) and exhibited middle scores for all categories. Cluster 3, *uninvolved*

shoppers, accounted for approximately 32% and exhibited the highest score in anti-fashion and traditionalism.

Different label behaviors among three groups were examined. Results from ANOVA indicated that *fashionable shoppers* exhibited higher means than the other two groups in the following five areas: “Read & care SR label” [$F(2, 710) = 21.14, p=.00$], “Familiarity” [$F(2, 708) = 73.08, p=.00$], “Positive SR apparel consumption” [$F(2, 709) = 34.38, p=.00$], “Practical SR apparel consumption” [$F(2, 712) = 10.62, p=.00$] and “Purchase intention” [$F(2, 711) = 14.87, p=.00$].

Understanding SR apparel label behavior as one of environmental behaviors might be limited. This study approached SR apparel label reading behaviors within the context of fashion leadership and shopping enjoyment. Our findings concluded that consumers who were interested in fashion and shopping were more likely to be SR label readers and more familiar with SR labels. Furthermore, they practiced more SR apparel consumption and had higher intentions to purchase. The results suggest that emphasizing fashionability and shopping enjoyment should be considered in developing SR apparel labeling. Consumer profiles from this study also provide insights into developing marketing strategies customized for consumers with different characteristics. These findings can be used to design SR apparel labels to attract various consumers and provide appropriate information to encourage SR product consumption.

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