The motivations to adopt eco-fashion products: were Chinese consumers underestimated?

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Background and Purpose: Fueled by increased affluence and modernization process, China is experiencing dramatic changes in its culture, social value, and consumption values. Xiao and Kim (2009) revealed that, for Chinese people, the satisfaction of functional needs have been taken place by social, emotional and experiential needs in apparel consumption. This transformation indicates that Chinese consumers' attitude and products selection are moving towards health, happiness, and self-satisfaction. In addition, due to higher educational level on average, more disposable income, as well as increasing social responsibility and environmental awareness, Chinese consumers are shaping up to promote sustainable consumption. Brodwin (2015) found that Chinese consumers have shown more willingness to buy environmentally friendly products compared to the U.S. consumers. In general, Chinese have a stronger financial incentive to live sustainably and they have more flexibility to change.

Consumer self-identity is a critical psychological variable that is related to socially responsible consumers. Consumers who identify themselves as "responsible consumers" feel more moral obligation to buy sustainable products (Hustvedt & Dickson, 2009). In addition, Gam (2011) found that environmental consciousness is a predictor and has a positive effect on eco-fashion consumption. Consumers who care about the environment are more likely to practice eco-friendly behavior purchase. Further, environmental apparel knowledge has been primarily used for assessing consumers' knowledge of environmental issues associated with clothing and textiles (Kim & Damhorst, 1998). Lacking of environmental apparel knowledge may become a barrier for endorsing sustainable apparel consumption (Connell & Kozar, 2014). Although a variety of studies have been done on sustainable consumption in developed countries (Zheng & Chi, 2014), understanding of Chinese consumers' sustainable consumption is lacking. To address the research gap in addition to delivering practical formation for sustainable development and consumption in the context of fashion business in China, the purpose of the study is to determine the factors that influence Chinese consumers on pursuing eco-fashion consumption.

Method: Data were collected in China. A convenience sampling strategy was utilized. An online survey was set up on a Chinese online market research website. Participants were recruited through email survey link and the social media app. Data cleaning yielded 401 usable responses. All items were measured utilizing a 5-point Likert scale. Demographic information were also collected, including gender (male=33.4%; female=66.6%); age (18-30=49.6%; 31-40=38.4%; 41-68=12.0%); income (<$12,000 =26.2%; $ 12,001-$ 16,000=20.7%; > $16,001= 53.1%; and education (Some college or lower=17.0%; College graduate=55.9%; Graduate school=27.2%). *Environmental consciousness* (α=.861) contained three items evaluating consumers' environmental concerns. *Environmental apparel knowledge* (α=.853) was measured by four items. *Self-identity* (α=.785) was measured by three items. The semantic differential scale containing four groups of semantic differential adjectives was applied to measure *attitude*

(α=.890). Finally, intention towards *eco-fashion consumption* (α=.801) was measured by three-item scale.

Results: The CFA results indicated a good model fit ($\chi 2_{(df=109)}$=167.95, p=.0002; RMSEA=.037; CFI=.983; TLI=.979; SRMR=.032). All factor loadings were statistically significant as p<.001, and in the .636-.918 range. Further, a structural equation model was conducted to examine the influence of environmental consciousness, environmental apparel knowledge, attitude, and self-identity on Chinese consumers' intention to buy eco-fashion products. The statistic results revealed an excellent model fit ($\chi 2_{(df=110)}$=179.90, p<.000; RMSEA=.04; CFI=.980; TLI=.975; SRMR=.042). The outputs demonstrated that environmental consciousness was positively associated with self-identity (β=.541, p<.000), environmental apparel knowledge (β=.507, p<.000), attitude (β=.223, p<.001), and eco-fashion consumption (β=.217, p<.001), which indicate that Chinese consumers with higher environment consciousness tend to have more environmental apparel knowledge, are more likely identify themselves as environmental consumers, feel positive towards purchasing, and are more likely to purchase eco-fashion products. In addition, both environment apparel knowledge (β=.256, p<.000) and self-identity (β=.199, p<.002) were found to positively related to attitude. Furthermore, significantly positive relationships were also exhibited between eco-fashion consumption and self-identity (β=.376, p<.000), environmental apparel knowledge (β=.152, p<.01) and attitude (β=.154, p<0.01).

Discussion: The results imply that environment concerns and sufficient environment apparel knowledge motivate Chinese consumers to purchase eco-fashion products. Additionally, Chinese consumers who identify themselves as social responsible consumers and have relatively positive attitude towards eco-fashion products are also more likely to purchase eco-fashion items. The transformation of consumers' consumption attitude, motivation, and consumption pattern offers eco-fashion businesses the greatest opportunity to grow in China. Providing more durable, organic, and environment harmless fashion items shall be a potential development direction to respond to the transformation of Chinese consumers' consumption value.

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