Older Women's Personal Values and Consumption of Fair Trade Apparel and Home Goods

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According to Fair Trade (FT) USA (2015), the number of FT certified apparel and home goods increased from 850 in 2009 to 558,947 in 2014. This dramatic growth in the FT market reflects the growing consumer demand for socially responsible products. Many consumers consider social and ethical criteria related to products, such as decent working conditions and fair wages of workers, in their purchasing decision process. As a critical predictor of consumption behavior, personal values have been proven to influence socially responsible consumption. Regarding FT product consumption, previous studies have found significant interactions between personal values and consumer purchasing behavior (e.g., Ladhari & Tchetgna, 2015). Personal values such as self-direction, security, stimulation, benevolence, and universalism play important roles in forming consumer behaviors toward socially responsible products (Doran, 2009; Ma & Lee, 2012). Even though FT consumers tend to be older and female (Littrell, Ma, & Halepete, 2005), very few studies have focused on this particular age group. Older people can be an important consumer group for FT products due to their strong moral responsibility (Carrigan, Szmigin, & Wright, 2004). This study purported to (1) explore older female consumers' characteristics for purchasing FT non-food products, (2) identify personal values that affect older female consumers' attitudes toward FT non-food products based on moral foundation theory (MFT), and (3) examine the differences in the impacts of personal values on attitudes between purchasers and non-purchasers of FT non-food products. MFT (Graham et al., 2013), explaining the underpinning linkage between values and attitudes related to social and moral aspects, works as the conceptual framework of this study.

Data were collected from a nationwide female sample through an independent marketing research company. Data from 238 respondents who were aged 65 and older were used for the data analysis. Their mean age was 69 years old, and most were white or European American (93.7%), married (50.8%), and retired (69.7%). A self-administered online survey included items assessing 10 types of personal values (Schwartz Value System, 1992), previous shopping experience with FT non-food products, and attitudes toward purchasing FT non-food products (Ajzen, 1991). Using SPSS 23.0, descriptive analysis, the Cronbach's *alpha* coefficient, a series of multiple regression analyses, and independent sample *t*-tests were adopted for further data analysis. To detect multi-collinearity problems in the multiple regression analysis, the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance statistics were checked as well. The Cronbach's *alpha* value for each value type and attitude was acceptable, ranging from .81 to .97 for the 10 value types and .92 for attitudes.

To identify personal values affecting older female consumers' attitudes toward FT non-food product consumption, the regression model for the relationships between each of the 10 values and consumer attitudes was tested for all 238 participants. The results revealed that three values

(conformity, benevolence, and universalism) played significant roles in forming consumer attitudes toward FT non-food products (R^2=.07, $F(10,227)$=2.64, p<.01; β=–.53, p<.01 for conformity, β=.36, p<.05 for benevolence, β=.30, p<.05 for universalism). With this result, a series of multiple regression analyses was conducted to predict consumer attitudes based on three personal values—conformity, benevolence, and universalism—for each of non-purchaser (n=180) and purchaser groups (n=58). For the non-purchaser group, a significant regression equation was found ($F(3,176)$=9.02, p<.001), with an R^2 of .12. The analysis showed that conformity significantly and negatively predicted attitudes toward purchasing FT non-food products (β=–.70, p<.001), while benevolence significantly and positively predicted participants' attitudes (β=.64, p<.001). These findings suggest that it is important to market FT products to older female non-purchasers as a potential FT consumer group by emphasizing the benevolence-related value in FT, such as being honest, responsible, and helpful. However, universalism did not significantly predict older female consumers' attitudes. For the purchaser group, none of the three personal values—conformity, benevolence, and universalism—significantly predicted attitudes. The results from independent t-tests revealed no significant mean difference in the three value types between non-purchasers and purchasers. Identifying values that play major roles in the relationship with consumer attitudes toward FT will expand our understanding of older consumers' motivations in the purchase of FT products. Supporting Carrigan et al.'s (2004) argument, the findings of this study can help develop marketing strategies that appeal to the strong sense of moral responsibility among older consumers.

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