

**Determining Effective Approaches to Promoting Consumption of Slow Fashion Apparel:
The Impact of Message Framing and Message Content on Consumer Responses to
Advertisements**

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Introduction The fast fashion business model produces poorly made apparel products, causing mistreatment of workers and degradation of our natural resources. Additionally, this fast fashion model, focusing on selling trendy, yet inexpensive clothing, has triggered overconsumption of apparel and led to excessive amounts of waste ending up in our landfills as those products are not made to last. However, there is evidence to suggest that many consumers are unaware of the impacts of their apparel consumption, and there is little to no research attempting to discover an effective way to inform consumers of those impacts. The purpose of the study was to determine which type of message framing and content in an advertising campaign can most effectively influence consumers' knowledge, attitudes, and purchase intentions toward slow fashion apparel as opposed to fast fashion.

Related Literature and Hypotheses This research was developed based on two advertisement variables: message framing and the elaboration likelihood model (ELM). *Message framing* refers to the way that an advertisement's message is presented. Specifically, message framing compares a positively framed message against a negatively framed message (White, 2011). A positively framed message focuses on the positive consequences that will occur when engaging in a certain behavior, while a negatively framed message focuses on the negative consequence of engaging in an opposing behavior (White, Macdonnell, & Dahl 2011). This framing method was used to create the two advertisement categories: the positive effects of slow fashion vs. the negative effects of fast fashion. In conjunction with message framing, *the ELM* was also utilized in creating the message content of the advertisements. ELM proposes two distinct processing modes of attitude formation or change: central processing vs. peripheral processing (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Elaboration is defined as the extent to which a consumer thinks carefully about the content of advertising messages (Oh & Jasper, 2006). For this research, the central approach includes textual information; the peripheral approach consists of image based information. Based on these two variables, the following hypotheses were developed for this study.

H1: Types of message framing and types of elaboration will influence consumers' knowledge formation regarding slow fashion.

H2: Types of message framing and types of elaboration will influence consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions toward slow fashion products.

Method University students at a large western university participated in a 2 (message frame: negative vs. positive) x 2 (peripheral processing/image vs. central processing/text) between-subjects experimental design. Participants were recruited through campus intercept approach and

snowball sampling to participate in the survey in which the experiment was embedded. Participants were asked to view an advertisement including messages about the negative (or positive) impact of fast fashion (or slow fashion) with a focus on image (or text). After viewing the advertisement, participants were asked to respond to items measuring knowledge, attitude and purchase intention, as well as demographic- and shopping behavior-related questions. Factor analyses were conducted on multi-item scales. Reliabilities for those variables ranged from 0.75 to 0.86. Manipulation checks were conducted ($p < 0.001$). To test the hypotheses, three sets of ANOVA were conducted with gender as a covariate.

Results Seventy-one university students participated in the study (47% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 20.00$). Approximately 73% of the participants were juniors and seniors; 90% of them were non-apparel-related majors. ANOVA results showed that both message framing and message content had effects on participants' purchase intention ($F = 4.21, p < 0.01$). Specifically, participants who viewed the advertisement with positive message regarding slow fashion reported stronger purchase intention than those who viewed the advertisement with negative message regarding fast fashion ($M_{\text{positive}} = 5.42$ vs. $M_{\text{negative}} = 4.87, F = 4.24, p < 0.05$). Similarly, participants who viewed the advertisement with image based information reported stronger purchase intention than those who viewed the advertisement with text based information ($M_{\text{image}} = 5.41$ vs. $M_{\text{text}} = 4.88, F = 3.84, p < 0.05$). There was no effect found on participants' knowledge and attitude change. Thus, H1 was not supported and H2 was partially supported.

Discussion and Future Research The purpose of this study was to investigate the effective approaches to promote slow fashion as opposed to fast fashion regarding its environmental and social impacts. This study expanded the literature related to message framing and elaboration likelihood model in the context of slow fashion. Findings suggested that the type of message framing and message content affected participants' future purchase intentions. The positively framed message, looking at the benefits of slow fashion increased future purchase intentions more so than the negatively framed message looking at the harmful effects of fast fashion. Additionally, the peripheral (image based) advertisement increased purchase intentions more so than the central (text based) advertisement. However, message framing and content did not influence participant's knowledge and attitudes after viewing the advertisements, which might be explained by the overall design of the advertisements. Limitations included the college student sample and the extensive amount of information across different scenarios in the advertisements regarding slow vs. fast fashion for control purposes. Future research could consider to collect data from a larger sample and to redesign the advertisements to further investigate the effects of the advertising messages on knowledge and attitude change.

References

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