
Do Apparel Students Displaying Fashion Innovativeness and Fashion Mavenism Traits Engage in Environmentally Responsible Apparel Consumption Behavior?

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Background: Sustainability is a growing concern in the apparel industry (Sadachar, Feng, Karpova, & Manchiraju, 2016), and sustainable change within the fashion industry is suggested to come from the next generation of fashion leaders including apparel students (Baytar & Ashdown, 2014; Sadachar et al., 2016). Fashion innovators play a critical role in introducing fashion innovations in the apparel industry (Kim, Fiore, Kim, 2011). Similarly, market mavens may be considered as fashion change agents (Kim et al., 2011). Apparel students may display fashion innovativeness and fashion mavenism traits, which potentially can contribute to environmentally responsible apparel consumption behavior. Considering the critical role of the future fashion professionals, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationships of fashion innovativeness and fashion mavenism with fashion students' sustainable apparel consumption utilizing the Construal Level Theory (CLT) framework (Eyal, Liberman, & Trope, 2009). According to CLT used in the context of sustainable apparel consumption, sustainability is a temporal distal non-immediate gratification consumption decision. Therefore, individuals acting sustainably must be willing to exhibit high construal levels leading to self-control.

Literature Review: The Fashion Detox study (Ruppert-Stroescu, LeHew, Connell, & Armstrong, 2015) collected data concerning apparel consumption reduction from students enrolled in fashion related courses for ten weeks. The results from this Fashion Detox study indicated that apparel students discovered many innovative ways to be more sustainable (e.g., looking at Pinterest to restyle existing wardrobe, sewing to repair and redesign garments, and borrowing garments from others). This study showed that fashion students exhibit innovation while engaging in sustainable apparel practices. However, do these behaviors exist apart from an isolated event such as a fashion detox? Also, market mavens may help to spread a word about sustainable apparels, but do they practice the sustainable apparel consumption themselves? In order to investigate these issues, the present study proposed the following research questions.

- RQ1. Are fashion students fashion innovative?
- RQ2. Do fashion students display mavenism trait?
- RQ3. Is fashion innovativeness and fashion mavenism related?
- RQ4. Does fashion innovativeness relate to sustainable apparel consumption?
- RQ5. Does fashion mavenism relate to sustainable apparel consumption?

Methods: Data were collected through a paper based survey administered in fashion course offered in a Southeastern United States University. The paper based survey consisted of 7-point Likert-type scale measuring: fashion innovativeness (Manning, Bearden & Madden, 1995), fashion mavenism (Feick & Price, 1987), and environmentally responsible apparel consumption behavior (Kim & Damhorst, 1998). SPSS was used to perform descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation, and linear regression.

Results: A total of 56 useable responses were collected. The majority of the respondents (96%) were female. The Cronbach's α for three constructs ranged from .86 to .95 satisfying the required internal consistency. Descriptive statistics revealed that the mean scores on fashion

innovativeness, mavenism, and environmentally responsible apparel consumption were 5.3, 5.6, and 3.5 respectively. It indicated that respondents were inclined to display fashion innovativeness and mavenism, but not sustainable consumption behavior. The correlation between innovativeness and mavenism was significant ($r = .53, p < .001$) but correlation between these variables and environmentally responsible consumption was not significant ($r = -.061, p = .661; r = .157, p = .254$ respectively). Furthermore, the linear regression was conducted in which environmentally responsible consumption comprised the dependent variable and innovativeness and mavenism were treated as predictors. The results from the linear regression showed that fashion innovativeness and mavenism were not significant predictors of the sustainable consumption ($F_{2, 54} = 1.44, p = .246, R^2 = 5.2\%$). Therefore, RQ1-RQ3 were answered affirmatively but because of the lack of evidence, we could not say whether the fashion innovativeness (RQ4) and mavenism (RQ5) relate to environmentally responsible apparel consumption.

Conclusion: The results contribute to our understanding of apparel sustainability utilizing the CLT framework. Future fashion professionals exhibit characteristics of fashion innovativeness and mavenism, but do not seem to practice sustainable apparel consumption at present due to temporal distance consumption decisions. Therefore, fashion students may be acting in a low construal level (emotional) manner contradicting high construal level (self-controlled) sustainable decisions in favor of immediate gratification. Thus, the psychological distance of sustainable benefits is distal, which may account for such paradoxical behavior. In conclusion, these findings provide further insight into sustainable behavior using the CLT framework, but are limited to a small sample size from one fashion school, hence generalization of these results is cautioned against. Some other internal factors (e.g., apparel knowledge, personal values, motivation) and external factors (e.g., price, social and cultural norms) need to be explored in this context to develop intervention programs to promote sustainable apparel consumption.

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