



Older female consumers' environmentally sustainable apparel consumption:  
The impact of time perspective and advertising appeals

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Background and objectives: Older consumers have recently grown in their collective purchasing power and are increasingly consuming more apparel (Kohlbacher & Herstatt, 2011); thus, for the purpose of sustainable development, it is important to examine their environmentally sustainable apparel (ESA) consumption. However, very little is known regarding the older adults' ESA consumption despite the growing purchasing power of the group. Built on socioemotional selectivity theory (SST) and the positivity effect (Carstensen, 1992; Carstensen et al., 1999; Mather & Carstensen, 2005), this study attempts to discover whether the time perspective, which is a person's perception of how much time is left in one's life (Carstensen, 1992), of elderly consumers explains their ESA consumption. Moreover, by comparing advertisement appeal types, this study further examines effective advertisement appeals in enhancing their purchase intentions toward environmentally sustainable apparel.

Theoretical background/Hypotheses: SST explains that time perspective (TP) – classified into limited versus expansive – creates or changes one's motivation and goal. People with an expansive TP believe that they have expansive time to live, so they are inclined to possess future-oriented and knowledge-related goals, whereas limited TP is related to presented-oriented and emotionally-meaningful goals (Carstensen, 1992). Thus, elderly consumers with an expansive TP would view ESA consumption more favorably because the sustainability involves concern for future generations (Adams, 2006; United Nations, 2005). This study built *H1: Older female consumers who have an expansive TP show higher levels of ESA consumption than those who have a limited TP.*

Meanwhile, consumers often express a weaker desire to purchase eco-friendly apparel when the items do not look fashionable (Gam, 2011). Elderly consumers with high fashion consciousness may be less likely to desire ESA consumption despite the fact that it is driven by their future-oriented goals. Therefore, fashion consciousness was expected to moderate the relationship between TP and ESA consumption. Thus, *H1a: The positive relationship between TP and ESA will be moderated by fashion consciousness such that the relationship will be stronger among elderly consumers with less fashion consciousness than those with high fashion consciousness.*

Given the literature that consumers' goals affect their responses to advertisements (Fung & Carstensen, 2003; Williams & Drolet, 2005), this study compared advertising appeals (i.e., emotional vs. rational and positive vs. negative emotional) with different environmental messages. Limited TP focuses on emotionally-meaningful goals (Carstensen, 1992; Carstensen et

al., 1999), thus, elderly consumers, who tend to have limited TP, were expected to show higher purchase intention toward ESA using emotional rather than rational and control appeals (i.e., no environmental messages). Additionally, rational appeals with messages about the product itself and its environmental benefits (Kim & Damhorst, 1999) will attract older consumers better than control appeals. Thus, Specific *H2: The emotional, rational, and control advertising appeals will impact purchase intentions toward ESA to varying degrees; Emotional appeals will have a greater impact than (a) rational appeals, and (b) control appeals, and (c) rational are more effective than control appeals.* Then, based on positivity effect, which explains that people prefer and concentrate on positive over negative stimuli in cognitive processing as aging (Mather & Carstensen, 2005), H3 was built. *H3: The positive emotional, negative emotional, and control advertising appeals will have different degrees of impact on purchase intentions toward ESA.* To be more specific, (a): *positive emotional appeals will impact better than negative emotional appeals and (b) control appeals.* Additionally, elderly consumers desire to avoid negative emotions (Gross, 1998), so (c) *negative emotional appeals with a message that consumers can avoid negative feelings by purchasing ESA will be more effective to encourage purchase*

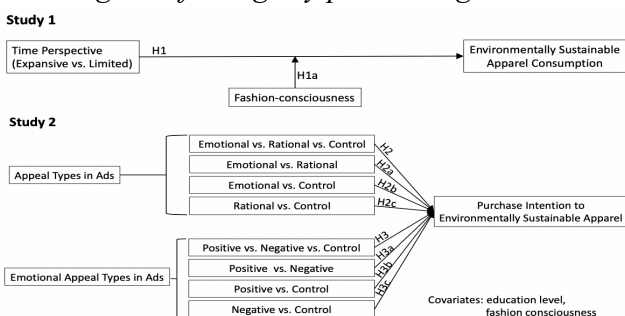


Figure 1. Research framework and hypotheses

Data were collected through a survey and experiments with U.S. female participants aged 65 years and older from members of organizations (e.g., churches, YMCAs, and senior centers) in Southeastern U.S. A total of 154 usable responses were analyzed. First, TP positively affected ESA consumption ( $F = 5.64, p < .05$ ) with their fashion consciousness moderating this relationship between them ( $F = 3.926, p < .01$ ) by supporting H1 and H1a. ANCOVA, controlled by fashion consciousness and education level, compared advertising appeals in purchase intention toward ESA and supported H2 ( $F_{(2,86)} = 5.06, p < .01$ ). However, emotional appeals did not have stronger effects on purchase intention than rational, or control appeals by rejecting H2a-b. H2c was accepted as the rational and control advertisements were significantly different ( $p < .01$ ). For emotional advertising appeals, H3 was supported ( $F_{(2,88)} = 6.04, p < .01$ ). Positive emotional messages were not more persuasive than negative emotional messages, rejecting H3a. H3b ( $p < .01$ ) and H3c ( $p < .05$ ) were accepted as either positive or negative emotional appeals work better than no environmental messages.

**Conclusion:** These results offer several implications. The time perspective of elderly women is shown to have considerable influence on their environmental behavior. Expansive time perspective is correlated with higher ESA consumption than limited time perspective, because

*intention than no environmental messages.* The research framework is shown in Figure 1.

**Method/Results:** Prior to the main survey, manipulation check was conducted, and five different advertising appeals (i.e., stimuli), were determined. Each stimulus consists of a shirt image and a different environmental message (i.e., emotional, rational, positive emotional, negative emotional, no message).

expansive time perspectives emphasize future-oriented goals, which align strongly with the concept of sustainability. Thus, apparel retailers are advised to consider one's time perspective along with chronological age when encouraging environmental consumption; furthermore, their clothing items would benefit from higher levels of fashion consciousness. Environmental messages containing rational information and eliciting either positive or negative emotions can encourage purchase intentions toward environmentally sustainable apparel among elderly consumers.

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