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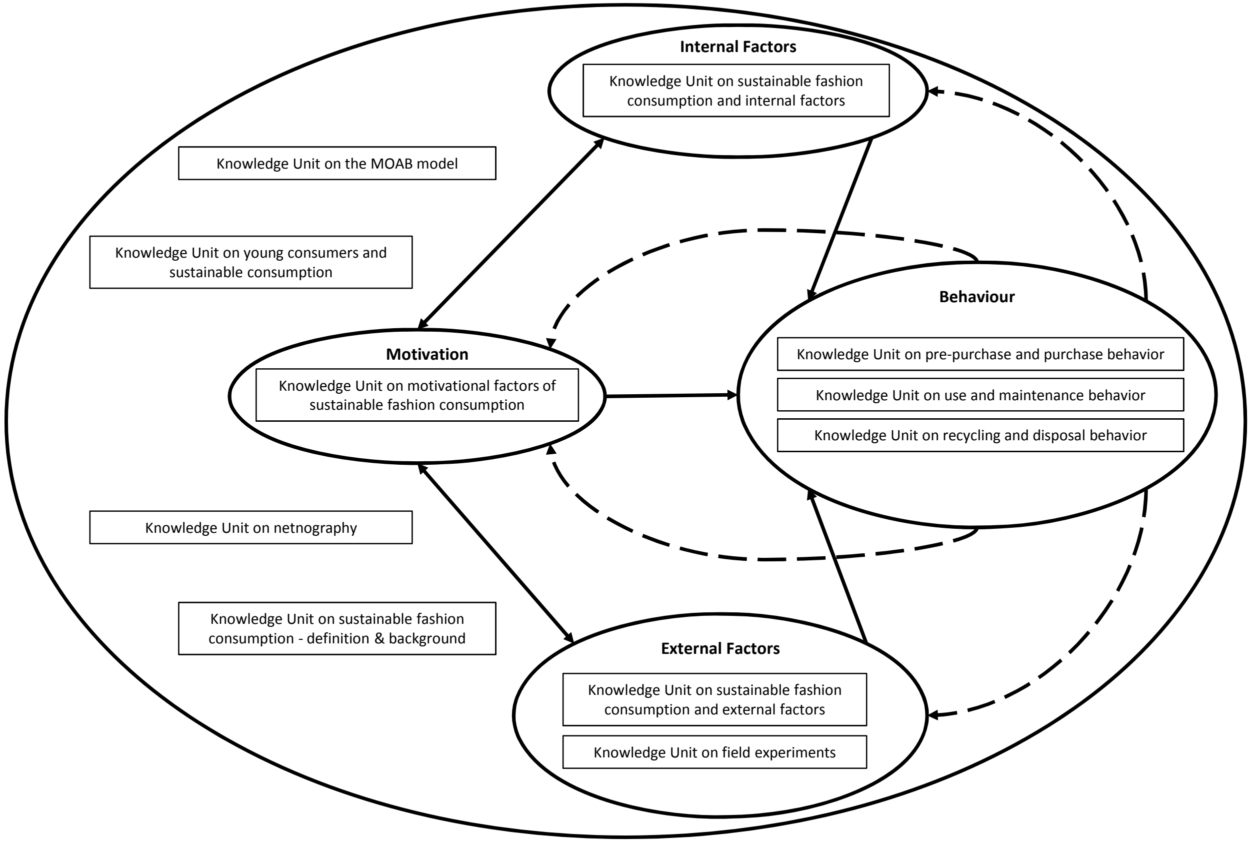
INDEX

Overview & Theoretical Framework

Sustainable Fashion Consumption & Consumer Behavior Knowledge Unit Topics



Studying Consumer Behavior: The MOAB Model

By CBS Research Group on Future Fashion, September 2011

Keywords: agency vs. structure, attitude-behavior gap, motivation, ability, opportunity

Abstract:

Different approaches to studying consumer behavior exist, of which most either follow the internalist or the externalist stream. The motivation-opportunity-ability-behavior model combines both perspectives. Acknowledging that consistency between attitudes and behaviors can only occur under volitional control, the integration of the concepts "ability" and "opportunity" into the model allows the study of internal and external factors facilitating or impeding sustainable behavior.

Background: Internalist vs. externalist approaches

Generally speaking, we can distinguish between two different groups of approaches to studying and understanding consumer behavior: The 'internalist' and the 'externalist' perspective; the former assessing consumer behavior "as a function of processes and characteristics [...] internal to the individual" (e.g. values, personal norms, attitudes, habits), the latter one focusing primarily on the external characteristics and processes (e.g. institutional constraints, social practices, fiscal incentives).

Besides the difference in focus on internal vs. external factors, both approaches differ in terms of the discretion ascribed to consumer decision-making. While the internalist perspective assumes consumer agency ("atomistic agents autonomous of social structure"), the externalist perspective views consumers to be constrained or heavily affected by structural factors ("external forces beyond their comprehension or control") (Jackson, 2005).

The MOAB Model

The relationship between agency and structure, internal factors of human action and external constraints, has not been researched in depth yet. Nonetheless, a number of approaches for studying consumer behavior have been developed that aim at bringing together the internalist and externalist perspective. Well-known in this regard is the Motivation-Opportunity-Ability-Behavior Model (MOAB), first introduced by Ölander and Thøgersen (1995), see Figure 1.

Motivation

Consumers can have a variety of different reasons or motives to act in a sustainable way. In addition to that, individuals might also vary in the strength of their motivation. According to Thøgersen (2010), several factors influence consumer motivation:

"Consumer motivation to act in a pro-environmental way depends on their individual value priorities, environmental concern, attitudes towards specific pro-environmental behavior and internalized norms and sometimes also on their self-efficacy with regard to the specific behavior in question." (Thøgersen, 2010)

While the intention to act is a necessary condition for sustainable behavior, motivation alone is not sufficient (Thøgersen, 2010). As highlighted by Devinney et al. (2010), a constant theme in research on consumer decision-making is the inconsistency or gap between what people intent or express they will do and how they actually behave.

In order to overcome this much cited "attitude-behavior-gap", research has recently started to concentrate on "ability" and "opportunities" as decisive intervening variable shaping consumption behavior, thus acknowledging that sustainable behavior both depends on individual as well as contextual factors (Thøgersen, 2010).

Ability – Internal barriers & drivers

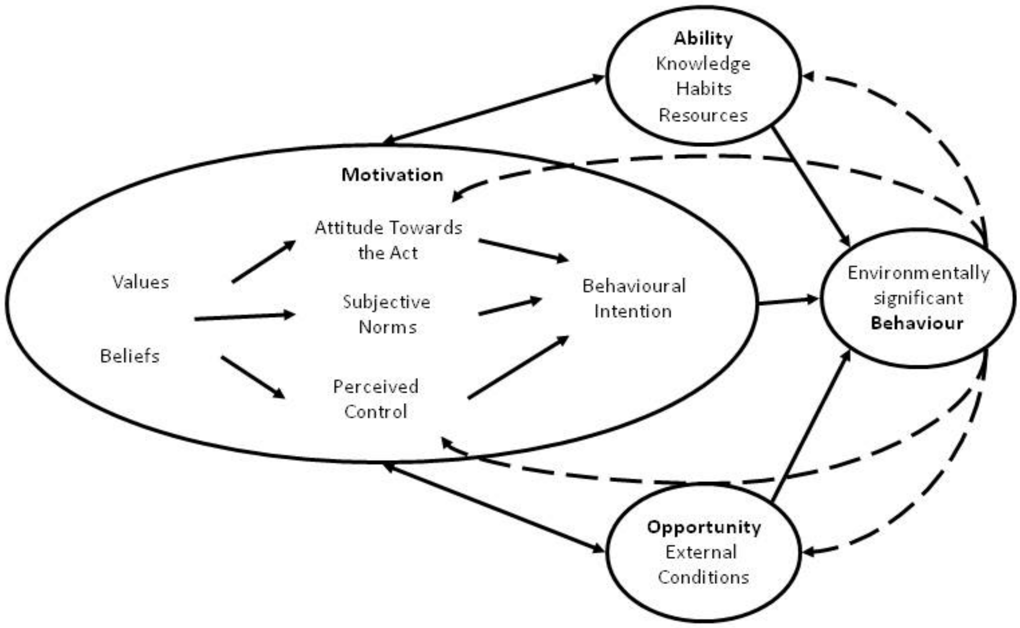
Strong habits or limited resources (e.g. time, money, cognitive capacity, and knowledge) constitute the personal characteristics that determine the ability of motivated consumers to act in a more sustainable manner. In everyday life, lots of consumption activities compete for the same limited resources, which in turn constraints the time and effort consumers will spend on achieving their goal (Thøgersen, 2010).

Opportunity – External barriers & drivers

In addition to these personal factors, a number of contextual factors and characteristics facilitate or impede behavior. Besides conditions determined by nature, consumers' decision-making might also be constrained by other external factors, such as infrastructure or the "triple A" (i.e. availability, affordability, and accessibility or choice context) (Thøgersen, 2010).

Summing up, it can be said that consumers possess limited cognitive ability and scarce time resources of processing information. This leads to heuristic-based decision-making, of which the outcome often might not be entirely rational and/or optimal. Thus, opportunities imply the provision of signals, reference points and other aggregated information such as labels to ease consumers' decision-making (Devinney, 2010).

Figure 1:



Source: Thøgersen (2010)

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GENERAL

Sustainable Fashion Consumption: A Definition

By CBS Research Group on Future Fashion, May 2012

Keywords: sustainable consumption, fashion consumption, confusion, terminology, NICE Consumer project

Abstract:

To date, there is no single definition of sustainable fashion consumption. A proliferation of terms, which are often used interchangeably and misused quite frequently, leaves consumers confused in the dark; with a feeling, more than actual information about what qualifies as sustainable fashion. Part of the problem is that no general agreed upon definition exists of what behavior qualifies as sustainable consumption. Likewise, fashion consumption in itself is a multifaceted phenomenon. A combination of the two concepts heightens the complexity. Recent efforts by the Danish Fashion Institute and BSR's NICE Consumer project, aimed at supporting the industry to take up the – so far mainly academic – sustainability discourse, resulted in the introduction of a definition of sustainable fashion consumption; a definition, highly appropriate, as it not only pays regard to the very nature of fashion consumption but also spans over the different phases of consumption and addresses the triple-bottom line impacts of these different phases.

Sustainable Consumption – A General Understanding

What behavior particularly constitutes sustainable consumption does not have a generally agreed on definition (Jackson, 2005). The Oslo Roundtable on Sustainable Production and Consumption (Norwegian Ministry of the Environment, 1994) defines sustainable consumption as: the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimizing the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations. Reisch (2003, p.228) denotes sustainable consumption as "seeking to provide adequate levels of goods and services - such as housing, water consumption, food, recreation - for all people in the world (*equity*), while minimizing the use of natural resources, energy and land use by dematerialization of production and consumption (*efficiency*), and accepting that there are absolute limits for end-use that should enter one's lifestyle (*sufficiency*)". One who consciously engages in sustainable consumption therefore, would purposefully take measures when consuming to avoid behavior that uses excess resources or has a negative social impact – in other words, making choices now that will hinder current or future generations.

Fashion Consumption - Defined

A term nebulous in its definition, we distinguish "fashion," from "clothing," in that fashion goes beyond providing protection or simply canvassing the body – it is an expression of self, a form of communication between the self and others and a way of expressing the lifestyle and values that one lives or aspires to. Niinimäki (2010, p. 153), referring to Kaiser (1990), distinguishes between clothes and fashion by saying, "fashion is a symbolic production. As a concept it differs from clothing, which is material production and something that fulfills our physical needs for protection and functionality. Fashion merges us with our emotional needs; it expresses our inner individual personality by external marks and symbols, brands and status items". Crane and Bovone (2006, p. 320) suggest that the term "fashion" has a variety of meanings for both academics and the general public but is "most frequently used to connote highly visible styles of clothing and less often, other types of material or immaterial culture that is highly valued at a particular moment in time." Solomon and Rabolt (2004, p. 6) simply state, "fashion refers to a style that is accepted by a large group of people at a given time". It acts as a symbolic innovation, a reflection of our society and a reflection how people define themselves.

Fashion consumption, therefore, is the use of clothing for purposes beyond utilitarian needs. It is a consumption activity that is part of one's identity-making process and provides symbolic, immaterial and hedonistic value to the consumer beyond the needs based benefits a simple garment might offer. Fashion consumption can be theorized as an ongoing process in which people engage in to consume an idea, a symbol, construct a lifestyle and identities, and achieve well-being (e.g. Dobers, 2005; Meyer, 2001; Peattie, 2001). While the consumption of products other than fashion might also fulfill functions beyond the physical need level, fashion takes a special role, as it provides a "second skin", an extension of the self that communicates to others (Belk, 1988, p.151). The stages of fashion consumption include everything from need reflection, pre-purchasing discovery and search, to purchase or other forms of procurement (e.g. self-made, swap, etc.), use, elimination and recycling of the garment.

Sustainable Fashion Consumption - Defined

There is, according to Thomas (2008, pp. 525-6) confusion in the sustainable fashion lexicon: "Environmental, ecological, green, sustainable, ethical, recycled, organic, and inclusive fashion and fashion design co-exist, cross-fertilize, and are readily confused." Thomas (ibid.) suggests that this confusion allows for sensational usage, misusage of terms and a break between what is communicated in scholarly discourse and newspapers and magazines. Ultimately, consumers are systematically left in the dark, confused by a smokescreen of ever new, trendy terms. For instance, "*Ecofashion* is a word that currently attracts the fashion industry, and the related areas of marketing, merchandising, and journalism" (Thomas, 2008, p. 531). Taking a closer look at what eco-fashion actually means, Niinimäki (2010, p. 152) offers the following definition: "Clothing that is designed for long lifetime use; it is produced in an ethical production system, perhaps even locally; it causes little or no environmental impact and makes use of eco-labeled or recycled materials". Hence, somebody who actively consumes "eco-fashion" would pay attention to the material usage, the environmental impact created by the garment throughout its lifecycle, and ethical issues regarding its manufacturing (Joergens, 2006).

This plethora of terms and their interchangeable use is not unproblematic. As Thomas (2008) argues, these terms are imprecise and lack reference. For instance with regard to eco-fashion, Thomas (ibid.) suggests the term to be regularly used because it is non-judgmental and a nonfactual approximation, providing consumers with a feeling without actual information about what aspect of the clothing is "eco."

Similarly, the use of the term "sustainability" is not a straightforward matter either. As Fletcher (2008), suggests, sustainability is often used in a casual manner when it could be the umbrella term to identify "proactive stances." Thomas (2008) suggests that in the fashion discourse "sustainability" has been used more by academic theorists than by the press or fashion industry. However, over the course of the last few years, press and industry have increasingly taken up the sustainability discourse. Most recently, the joint efforts by the Danish Fashion Institute and BSR's NICE Consumer project were presented. The NICE Consumer projects' (Eder-Hansen, 2012) working definition of sustainable fashion consumption takes its departure in the definition from the Oslo Roundtable on Sustainable Production and Consumption (see Sustainable Consumption – A General Understanding): Sustainable fashion consumption can be defined as "the use of clothing for purposes beyond utilitarian needs, including "identity making", which is achieved without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (Eder-Hansen, 2012, p. 11). Furthermore, "sustainable fashion consumption is a sub-set of the sustainable fashion system. It includes consumer attitudes and behaviors that lead to reductions in the triple-bottom line impacts of buying, wearing, caring for, repairing and recycling fashion goods. It includes demanding sustainable alternatives, caring for garments in less impact intensive ways (e.g. cold wash and line drying clothes) and responsible disposal or recycling of obsolete goods" (Eder-Hansen, 2012, p. 11).

The NICE definition of sustainable fashion consumption can be considered highly appropriate as it not only pays regard to the very nature of fashion consumption, i.e. it moves beyond the purely utilitarian aspects of consumption, but also spans over the different phases of consumption (purchase, use, disposal) and addresses the triple-bottom line impacts of these different phases.

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Young Consumers & Sustainable Fashion Consumption

By CBS Research Group on Future Fashion, September 2011

Keywords: agents of change, sustainable fashion consumption, motivation, ability factors, and opportunity factors

Abstract:

With higher levels of affluence and lower levels of responsibility, the purchasing power of young consumers (aged 16-34) significantly contributes to excessive consumption, which has to be considered one of the main contributors to society's unsustainable development, one example of this development being the rise of fast-fashion suppliers and growing throwaway fashion attitude, especially among young fashion-oriented consumers.

Although high interest in sustainable fashion products is expressed, these concerns of young consumers are rarely followed by corresponding actions. Different motivational, ability and opportunity factors can be identified that support or hinder these consumers to live up to their own intentions, thus might explain the so called intention behavior gap (e.g. lack of awareness & knowledge, limited availability of sustainable fashionable alternatives, affordability, social norms).

However, despite their social and environmental detrimental consumer behavior and number of hindering factors, this group of consumers has substantial potential of being change agents towards sustainable consumption patterns, due to their (1) high concerns for protecting the environment, (2) ability to create trends, and (3) skilled use of new media.

Young Consumers: Defined

According to the "Golden Age of Youth" study, conducted by Viacom Brand Solutions International (VBSI) with 25.000 respondents in 18 countries, aged 16-46, in 2008 (VIACOM Brand Solutions, 2012), consumers can be considered to stay younger for longer. As lifestyle choices and spending power have blurred the boundaries between traditional target groups, demarcations that focus on consumers' involvement and participation in youth culture might proof to be more fruitful than definitions solely based on consumers' demographic information. As VBSI suggests, "contemporary youth should now be defined as the absence of functional and/or emotional maturity, reflecting the fact that accepting traditional responsibilities such as mortgages, children and developing a strong sense of self-identity/perspective is occurring later and later in life”. Based on the findings of the study, three stages of youth were defined: (1) the “discovery” phase (16-19 year olds), (2) the “experimentation” phase (20-24 year olds), and (3) “golden” stage (25-34 year old).

Young Consumers: Key to the Development of Sustainable Consumption Patterns

With higher levels of affluence and lower levels of responsibility, the purchasing power of young consumers has increased considerably (e.g. Brusdal, 2001). Greater levels of personal and financial freedom significantly contribute to excessive consumption, which has to be considered to be one of the main contributors to social and environmental detriments (Hume, 2010).

However, despite the negative impacts of this consumer group’s behavior, young consumers have substantial potential of being key stakeholders for the development towards sustainable consumption patterns (Bentley, 2004; Fien, 2008; Hume, 2010). As Fien et al. (2008) suggest, young people constitute a distinct consumer group; on the one hand subject to the fast changes of contemporary consumer culture, on the other hand characterized by enormous potential to act as agents of change (Bentley, 2004). A number of factors can be identified that enable young consumers to promote sustainable development:

Firstly, they appear to be more open to change and get inspired by emerging ideas, which can to some extent be explained by a freedom from responsibility, due to longer education, later entry into the workforce, and postponement of starting a family (Brusdal, 2001; Fien, 2008). Secondly, with the traditional flow of learning being reversed, knowledge is no longer only passed on from the older to the younger generation. In some areas, the adult generation receives important input from the younger ones. Thus transferring ideas to and critically questioning the conduct of the older generation, young adults have the ability to influence (directly or indirectly) household consumption substantially. And thirdly, more importantly, the consumption patterns that people develop at an early stage will provide the basis for their consumer behavior in subsequent phases of their lives. Ultimately, it can be assumed that behavioral change of today’s young generation will set the stage for future generations (Fien, 2008).

Furthermore, based on the findings of a large study conducted with young people (age 18-25) in 24 countries in 2000 on behalf of UNEP and UNESCO, three socio-psychological factors were identified by Nyberg and Stø (2001) that form the basis for young people’s potential of being key agents in promoting a change towards sustainable consumption patterns: high concerns for protecting the environment, the ability to create trends, and the skilled use of new media.

Thus it can be concluded that despite their consumption style being to large extents influenced by identification with pop-culture, role models, peers, as well as mass media and marketing, at the same time, young people in developed countries have vast potential to bring about change (Fien, 2008). Nonetheless, the potential impact of young people on adopting more sustainable consumption patterns is often neglected, by researchers and policy-makers alike (Fien, 2008). Considering the fact that young people under the age of 25 comprise almost half of the world's population (World Population Foundation, 2011), with approximately 15 percent living in the </EndNote>(2011)┴ ¶ ‼ suggests, consumers frequently check the country-of-origin information nce.

Young Consumers Sustainable Fashion Consumption

With the rise of fast-fashion suppliers, shorter fashion life cycles and increased availability of low-priced clothing items, a throwaway fashion attitude is growing among consumers, with clothing items being discarded after rarely being worn (e.g. Birtwistle, 2007; Morgan, 2009). Especially young consumers, who are more fashion-oriented (e.g. R. E. Goldsmith, Heitmeyer, J. R., & Freiden, J. B., 1991; O'Cass, 2000) and purchase more fast-fashion items than other groups of consumers in order to keep up with the latest trends, are more prone to following this trend (Birtwistle, 2007) (→ KU Clothing Disposal & Recycling Behavior).

According to Kim and Damhorst (1998), young consumers who are environmentally conscious express an interest in and claim to be willing to pay more for environmentally friendly apparel. However, these concerns, while found to be high, rarely translate into environmentally responsible apparel consumption behavior (→ KU Motivational Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). Different internal and external as well as motivational factors can be identified that support or hinder consumers to live up to their own intentions, thus might explain the so called attitude behavior gap; these factors will be introduced in the following.

Motivational Factors (→ KU Motivational Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption)

As Kim and Damhorst (1998) put forth, fashion fulfills multiple goals for consumers. Hence, the purchase of fashion items is often driven by different, sometimes conflicting motives. For young consumers who strive to express themselves, follow a certain style or belong to a group, actively

including environmental concerns might add to the complexity of fashion purchasing decisions. As a consequence, environmental concerns might rank lower or are disregarded altogether. Similarly, Joergens (2006) ascertains that young consumers appear to be rather driven by personal or self-centered motives, such as price, quality, and style, while societal motives appear to rank lower. Interestingly, while health benefits are frequently found to constitute important personal drivers in the context of organic groceries, young consumers appear not to take these concerns into consideration in the context of fashion consumption (e.g. Joergens, 2006; H.-S. Kim, & Damhorst, M. L., 1998). A possible explanation for this might be a lack of knowledge or understanding of the impact of the use of hazardous substances in the clothing production process.
A general limited availability of sustainable clothes or limited availability of sustainable clothes fulfilling certain aesthetic requirements has been found to constitute an additional motivational barrier (e.g. Joergens, 2006; H.-S. Kim, & Damhorst, M. L., 1998). (→ Opportunity Factors)

According to Kim and Damhorst (1998), economic rewards might motivate young consumers to engage in pro-environmental clothing purchase behavior. Environmental fashion consumption was frequently conceptualized by respondents of their (ibid.) study as purchasing something that can be worn for a long time. Wearability in this context was for the most part not defined in functional terms but rather as a matter of aesthetics, i.e. whether the style was still considered suitable. While environmental concerns were frequently mentioned to be the underlying motive for this behavior, Kim and Damhorst (1998) suggest that limited financial resources likely constitute a dominant driver.

Thus it can be assumed that for consumers who are interested in constantly renewing their wardrobes, limiting ones consumption due to environmental considerations might not be a tempting idea. This assumption is supported by the findings of the study conducted by Koch and Domina (1997) on environmental attitudes and fashion opinion leadership. While young fashion opinion leaders were found to be active, self-confident and open to try new things and ideas, Koch and Domina's (ibid.) examination revealed that, unlike fashion followers or hobbyists, fashion opinion leaders were not significantly related to any developed environmental consumer segments. Thus their (ibid.) findings suggest that openness, in its ability to push fashion leaders to pick up new trends, might not be a contributing factor to adopting environmental friendly consumer behavior; in fact, it might actually prevent young fashion opinion leaders from becoming more sustainable in their consumption, if being sustainable means being limited in ones choices. These findings are supported by Goldsmith et al. (1991), who report that young female consumers, who are more likely to be fashion leaders than older women, are strongly driven by the social values fun, excitement and enjoyment in life; hedonic values that do not easily go hand in hand with restrictions.

Ability Factors (→ KU Ability Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption)

As Kim and Damhorst (1998) suggest, young consumers might be constrained by their lack of understanding or awareness of the impact of their own shopping on the environment. Similar findings were reported by Joergens (2006), who suggests that young women are often unaware of environmental and ethical issues of clothing production. However, a lack of knowledge or understanding appears not only to hinder young consumers to purchase clothes in a more sustainable manner but also when it comes to disposing of unwanted items. As Birtwistle and Moore (2007) report, young consumers appear to be even less aware of their environmental impact when disposing clothes, compared with the environmental and ethical considerations factored in in their purchase decision making. According to Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) this lack of knowledge becomes not only apparent in young women's general unawareness of the need for clothing recycling but also with regards to the more practical knowledge of the how and where of recycling (→ KU Clothing Disposal & Recycling Behavior).

As Joergens (2006) reports, consumers only infrequently turn to labels in their decision making, as they frequently feel that they are unable to make actual inferences; that is for example with regard to country of origin labels, young consumers are finding it difficult to assess which countries would stand for ethical production or are skeptical whether information about the country of origin would provide them with valid information about the ethicality of the production in question at all. (→ Opportunity Factors)

Limited financial resources constitute another important internal factor, which has an effect on young consumers' abilities to adopt more sustainable fashion consumption behavior. (→ Motivational Factors)

Opportunity Factors (→ KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption)

Limited availability of sustainable clothes fulfilling certain aesthetic demands has been found to constitute an important barrier (e.g. Joergens, 2006; H.-S. Kim, & Damhorst, M. L., 1998). The findings of the study conducted by Joergens (2006) suggest that this barrier frequently is a matter of perception. As Joergens (ibid.) puts forth, young women appear to be constrained by their own negative attitudes towards perceived product characteristics of environmental friendly apparel, i.e. cut backs in style, comfort, and fit or perceived higher product prices.

In addition to the limited availability of sustainable clothes, young consumers appear to be hindered in their attempts to adopt more sustainable consumption behavior by matters of affordability and social norms.

Although literature suggests that the impact of price decreases as income increases, the findings of the study conducted by Joergens (2006) reveal that this might not necessarily be the case in the context of fast, cheap fashion. As Joergens (ibid.) ascertains, young consumers are not automatically willing to pay more, even though their income might allow this, if the consequence would be that they would be able to purchase less items. (→ Motivational Factors)

While the issue of prices, or perceived higher prices and the interplay with young consumers financial resources has already been addressed, the influence of social norms has only been briefly brought up with regard to young consumers being frequently driven in their consumption to achieve group belonging (e.g. Spero, 2004). This desire to belong can be a powerful driver, supporting young consumers to adopt sustainable fashion consumption behavior. However, it might as well affect consumers the other way around. As Kim and Damhorst (1998) suggest, young consumers, who are motivated to actively manage their self-presentation and conform with group expectations might be discouraged by the anticipated social costs associated with opting out of latest fashion trends, adopting more sustainable fashion consumption practices that might not be mainstream yet.

Labels can be a powerful tool in their ability to assist consumers in the decision making, given that the label is known, understood and trusted. However, the potential influence of labels might be slightly overestimated, considering consumers infrequent use and skepticism toward the provided information (Joergens, 2006). (→ Ability Factors)

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Netnography: An Overview

By CBS Research Group on Future Fashion, September 2011

Keywords: netnography, ethnography, online communities

Background:

Netnography, or "ethnography on the internet," is defined by Kozinets (2002) as a "new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study cultures and communities that are emerging through computer mediated communications." By using the information that is available in public forums, consumer needs, trends behavior and its influences can be studied (Belz, Baumbach 2010). It is less obtrusive and allows for rich and detailed date, argues Kozinets (2002), than focus groups or interviews, but less time consuming than traditional ethnographic methods.

Netnography extends on the strengths of market-oriented ethnography by demonstrating how it can be used in online communities. It uses publicly available content in online forums to identify and understand needs and decision influences in online consumer groups (Kozinets, 2002). Similar to ethnography, netnography relies on participant observation however the physicality of the location changes – moving from the physical world the virtual worlds of online communities. Distinct differences between ethnographic and netnographic approaches include (Kozinets, 2010). The participation of the research changes – as they do not have to gain access into a community as most online communities are public. Also, while not recommended by Kozinets (ibid.), they do not actually have to participate in communities but can instead behave as "lurkers." Communication with participants changes in the sense that visible and audible nuances – such as voice changes, body language, eye contact and other non-written communication are impossible to detect on an online medium.

Definitions:

Virtual Community

"Virtual community," defined by Howard Rheingold (1993) is "social aggregations that emerge from the net when enough people carry on ...public discussions long enough with sufficient human feeling to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace." Rheingold (ibid.) suggests that in these online communities people "exchange pleasantries, argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, find friends and lose them, play games, flirt, create a little high art and a lot of idle talk,".

A deconstruction of Rheingold's definition

In an effort to deconstruct what Rheingold's (1993) definition and pull apart what it really means to be an online or virtual community Kozinets (2010) offers the following:

> *Social Aggregations: The use of netnography is not an individualistic approach looking at personal postings or messages but on the collective. It examines groups, groupings gatherings or collections of people. The level of analysis is "meso," not micro level of individuals.*
>
> *Emerge from Net: Netnography examines individual interactions resulting from Internet connections or computer mediated communications*
>
> *Discussions or Communications: Studying "communication," is necessary. Communication is defined as "the exchange of meaningful symbols, and as Kozinets (2010) suggests - all human symbols are being digitized and shared through information networks.*
>
> *Enough People: A certain minimum of people must be involved in order for online group to feel like a community. Kozinets (2010) suggests at minimum 20, and a maximum between 150 and 200 persons.*
>
> *Public Discussions: Accessibility is important to online community formation and conduct of netnography.*
>
> *Long Enough: Netnography examines communities in an ongoing, continuous relationship – not one off meetings.*
>
> *Sufficient Human Feeling: Emotional content such as disclosure, honesty, trust, expressions of affiliation and intent to be social with one another should be present.*
>
> *Webs of Personal Relationships: The social entanglement between individual members creates as s sense of group. The relationships can – and often do- extend beyond the online context into other aspects of people's social lives (Kozinets, 2010).*

Culture - Online Versus Offline

Raymond Williams (1976) suggests that the word culture is "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language because of its historical development but also because it has come to be used for many important concepts in several distinct intellectual concepts." Clifford Geertz (1973) suggests that "culture is a public matter, because meaning and the systems of meaning by which we live are by their very nature the collective property of a group.. When we look at what members of another culture are doing are saying and saying we cannot understand them, we are acknowledging that it is our own lack of familiarity with the imaginative universe with which their acts are signs and have significance" (Kozinets, 2010).

Pierry Levy (2001) defined cyberculture as "the set of technologies (material and intellectual) practices, attitudes, modes of thought and values that developed along the growth of cyberspace" Kozinets (2010) points out however, the delineating between "cyberculture" and culture in general in not particularly productive stating that "culture exists and always has, in a continuous state of flux whose transformations have been driven by our inventions which we simultaneously shape and drive......if we accept that homo sapiens are by nature tool makers and innovators, then it makes no more sense for us to talk about cyberculture as distinct from other forms of human culture as it does to talk about "alphabet culture, or electricity culture."

Kozinets (2010) also points out that the past three decades of research have shown that online communities, or gatherings, follow many of the same basic principles and rules of those that occur in person. He cites both the formation of group norms and group identity as very similar in offline and online situations. For example, in a netnography of an online Lesbian bar, Correll (1995) suggested that the online community experience is "mediated by impressions of real world locations and unique contingencies of computer mediated relations." He did add that due to the special circumstances of anonymity and accessibility however, online communities do offer unique characteristics.

Netnography: Method

Like ethnography –Netnography it relies heavily "the acuity of the researcher instrument" (Turkle, 1995, p. 572), where the interpretation of the researcher and their ability to be reflexive are key components of the research's quality. The researcher's participation however, differs in netnography as they can select to participate with the community or not (though Kozinets (2010) heavily discourages non-participation and suggests it is a key distinguishing factor in actually performing a "netnography." As with ethnographic methods, Kozinets (2002) suggests that it is crucial that researchers follow a rigorous techniques and he puts forth a methodology which is adapted from ethnographic studies to fit with the unique settings of online communities. The methodological process includes: Making a cultural entrée, gathering and analyzing data, ensuring trustworthy interpretation, conducting ethical research and providing opportunities for culture member feedback.

Cultural Entree

When making a cultural "entrée" into an online community, Kozinets (2002, 2010) suggests it is important for the researcher to both know their research question and select online forums that are appropriate to the types of questions that are important to them. The type of online group is less important than that the researcher experiences the online interaction the way the participants do.

Once particular communities have been pinpointed, Kozinets (2002, 2010)suggests the following features should be considered when finalizing community selection. The community should: (1.) Have content that is relevant to the research question, (2.) Be active with regular and recent flow of communications, (3.) The community should have critical mass of communication and energetic feel (4.) The participants should be heterogeneous, (5.)The content should be data rich, offering detailed and descriptively rich data between-members interactions of the type required by the research question. All of these qualities may always be present however, and in fact tradeoffs may have to be made based on their importance to answering the research question. When looking at communities, the researcher should also take note of: who are active participants, what are the most popular topics, what is the history of the group, what other groups are members linked to, what are demographic characteristics; do they have any particular rituals?

Data Collection and Analysis

After appropriate community(ies) has been selected analysis and data collection can begin. In Kozinets (2010) view of netnography, the researcher must be involved in community. Not all aspects per say – but many. Kozinets (ibid.) even suggests the possibility of an "auto-netnography," where the researcher enters the community and studies their own experience. He (ibid.) cites a famous netnography done by Muniz and Schau (2003) about an online community devoted to the Newton – the researchers actually purchased them themselves in order to feel more natural in their setting.

Kozinets (2002, 2010) distinguishes between three types of data collections: archival data, or directly copied and pasted data from preexisting computer mediated conversations, elicited data – or data that has been co-created with culture members through personal and communal interaction and field notes - inscribed notes regarding observations from the research (not shared with community).

In opposition to ethnography, where data needs to be handwritten and recorded, netnography offers an easy transcription but it also requires the researcher to make important decisions about what which should and should not be included (Kozinets, 2002). Kozinets (ibid.) states, "dealing judiciously with instantaneous information overload is a much more important problem for netnographers than traditional ethnographers." It is suggested therefore, that the researcher focuses their efforts on the most informational and on-topic messages.

Interpretation

It is argued that in order to maintain a trustworthy interpretation, the researcher must follow strict procedures. Netnography involves an inductive approach to the analysis of qualitative data – meaning that individual observations are built up in order to make a generalized statement about a phenomenon. The raw data is collected via screen shots, notes, graphical representations, observations and then processed and refined by the researcher.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that there are generally common practices in analyzing qualitative data – including coding, noting, abstracting, checking and refinement, generalizing and theorizing. Other authors however, suggest a more holistic process. Spiggle (1994) states "in interpretation, the investigator does not engage in a set of operations, rather interpretation exists as a gestalt shift and represents a synthetic, holistic and illuminating grasp of meaning and in deciphering code." The hermeneutic circle, suggests Kozinets (2010) is another methodological process in interpreting data. The process is defined as, "an iterative one in which "part of the qualitative data or text is interpreted and reinterpreted in relation to developing a sense of the whole. These iterations are necessary because a holistic understanding is developed over time. Furthermore, initial understandings of the text are informed and often modified as later readings provided a more developed sense of the text's meaning as a whole" (Thompson, 1994).

The choice of whether to use computer assisted coding software or manual coding depends on variable such as size of research study, purpose of research, researcher's organizational abilities, researcher's concern with creativity and closeness to data (Kozinets, 2010).

Issue: Online-versus Offline Analysis

Due to the "textual" nature of netnographic data, some issues with context arise. Some critiques regarding the cultural understanding and nuances available in "face to face" interactions that lack in a netnographic research study have been noted, with many still regarding online interaction as "not real," (Kozinets, 2010). In rebuttal, Kozinets (ibid.) suggests that people on the other side of the computer screen are "no less real than those on the other end of a phone, those whose writings

we read, or those who write us letters," but he does admit that tonal shifts, pauses, eye shifts and other ways of communicating are lost in text messages.
Another special difference of a computer mediated setting is that because they are not physically present, informants may be more likely to present themselves in a cultivated and "idealized" way. Turkle (1995) suggests, "the uniquely mutable, dynamic and multiple online landscape mediates social representation and renders problematic the issue of informant identity." Research done by Schau and Gilly (2003) contradicted this concern however, saying that people's online representations were not a major concern – and that people online are not extravagant liars.

One way of overcoming these dilemmas, suggests Kozinets (2010) is a blended ethnographic-netnographic methodology (see below).

Research Ethics/Member Checks

There has been some debate regarding "ethics" in netnography with two concerns (1.) are online communities truly "public space," and (2.) what constitutes "informed consent" in cyberspace? There has not, according to Kozinets (2002) been a clear consensus but he proposes four ethical procedures for conducting computer mediated research (1.) The researcher should fully disclose his or her presence to the online community (2.) the researcher should ensure confidentially and anonymity to the informants (3.) the researcher should seek and incorporate feedback from members of the online community being researched and (4.) the researcher should take a cautious position of the private versus public medium (Kozinets, 2002).

Member Checks

To extend on ethical considerations as well as to have a more rigorous analysis of the data, many researchers suggest the use of Member Checks. Member Checks (Arnould, 1994; Guba, 1989) are a procedure by which all or some of the research findings are shared with the informants. They are valuable both because they allow researchers to gain additional insights into consumer meanings and extended relationships with consumer participants, and they eliminate some of the contentions regarding ethics. Kozinets (2002) suggests that member checks in a computer mediated setting are much easier than in ethnographic research in that the work can simply be posted to participating websites or sent in a virtual manner.

Blended Ethnography/Netnography

Ethnography is often favored by researchers for allowing the researcher a detailed and nuanced understanding of observed phenomena. The lived experience is able to be both witnessed and interpreted by the ethnographer. Unlike ethnography however, conducting ethnographic fieldwork is expensive and time consuming to manage. Netnography builds on the advantages of being a naturalistic and unobtrusive technique however, is much less time consuming and costly. Combining them however, may offer a preferable balance.

Kozinets (2010) states that "other techniques and approaches compliment and extend netnography, this is particularly true of in-person or face to face ethnography. In an effort to contextualize and deepen the understanding of those in the online communities studied, in-depth interview methods will be employed." These in depth interviews, he argues, help to offer important details – such as the informant's sense of meaning and perspective on a particular topic as well as their demographic, socio-cultural, gender and other important characteristics. "It also helps to understand how information in the online community relates to their lived experience." (Kozinets, 2010).

Determining Quality of Netnographic Data

Much like other qualitative data – the quality of netnographic research is harder to pin down than that of quantitative research methods. Admitting to many examples of "bad internet research" Kozinets (2010), puts some ideas on how to establish the rigor and results of the research are of a high quality.

In research done in 2006 on "exemplary works of netnographic research," Baym (2006) suggests that there are six interrelated strengths she witnessed amongst the works: "They are grounded in theory and data, they demonstrate rigor in data collection and analysis, they use multiple strategies to gather data, they take into account the perspective of the participants, they demonstrate awareness of and self-reflexivity regarding the research process, and they take into account the interconnections between the internet and the life world with which it is situated."

Building from positivist, post positivist, post-modern and post structural positions for evaluating qualitative research – Kozinets (2010) puts forth criteria for evaluating netnographic data's quality. He suggests that not all are possible to achieve –and some may actually occur as a contradiction to another.

> *-Coherence: Netnography is free from internal contradictions and presents a unified pattern.*

-Rigor: This evaluates the extent to which the text adheres to the standards of netnographic research – meaning the netnographer has "done his or her methodological homework." Data must be collected rigourly, not selectively. As with ethnography – quality evaluations must take place over prolonged periods of interaction, internalization, and awareness of difference.

-Literacy: The extent to which the netnographic text recognizes and is knowledgeable of literature and research approaches that are relevant to its inquiry

-Groundedness: Defined by the extent that the theory represented is supported by data, and the links between data and theory are clear and convincing. Quality netnographies should liberally quote from their informants, use their cultural members' language, and cite directly from online sources.

-Innovation: This is the extent to which the constructs, ideas, frameworks and narrative form of the netnography provide new and creative ways of understanding systems, structures, experiences or actions. A high quality of writing – with freshness and vividness is highly beneficial. Rich interpretations allow the reader to see the world anew – and experience it through the writing.

-Resonance: Netnography's should be written to understand each other, not stereotyping the "other." Netnographies should be sensitive to how their communities are portrayed- and provide a personalized and sensitizing connection to those they study.

-Verisimilitude: refers to the text's ability to reproduce, simulate or map "the real." It must evoke a sense of reality. Including conversations and direct dialogue can help to achieve this, as can the researcher co-creating (such as Wikis or auto-netnographies) with the respondents.

Reflexivity: the netnographer is part of the setting, and therefore they play a role in shaping it. It is important when interpreting the data, that the researcher takes their own involvement and positioning into consideration – and realize that the same scenario could be interpreted very differently without their involvement.

Praxis: The pursuit of praxis, or practical action aimed at social betterment, is part of the researcher's job in creating a quality netnography. Texts should be produced that "articulate an emancipative, participative perspective on the human condition and its betterment."

Intermix: The researcher should take into account the interconnection of various modes of social interaction – online and off- in culture members' daily lived experiences.

In Summary

In summary, netnography offers a way to research virtual communities existing in the online world. As the internet continues to grow and expand to encompass more aspects of the lived experience – it is likely to continue to grow as an important way of carrying out scientific research. There are some drawbacks, including the lack of a standardized body of work and rich heritage its newness precludes it from offering, as well as issues with the lack of face to face contact. Combining it with more traditional qualitative methodology such as ethnography is one way to overcome this limitation.

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MOTIVATION, ABILITY & OPPORTUNITY

Motivational Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption

By CBS Research Group on Future Fashion, March 2012

Keywords: motives, values, attitudes, beliefs, environmental concern, involvement, opinion leadership, self-concept, behavioral intention

Abstract:

For understanding consumers' motivation to act sustainably in the fashion context, it is important to distinguish between the different forms of sustainable fashion consumption. Consumers choosing to purchase second-hand clothes might be motivated by factors other than those consumers who acquire sustainable product alternatives first-hand. Similarly, consumers engaging in do-it-yourself practices might have a lot in common with consumers having a voluntary simplicity lifestyle, yet at the same time the obvious similarities might have a different underpinning. Demographics and psychographics can provide valuable insights and provide grounds for identifying different target groups; however, taken alone, these factors might not be sufficient predictors of sustainable consumer behavior.

Motives

As Kim and Damhorst (1998) highlight, fashion products are often purchased to fulfill multiple goals, e.g. self-expression, group association. Especially for young consumers, struggling with finding and defining themselves, incorporating environmental concerns adds another level of complexity to their purchase decisions, thus these concerns are often disregarded (→ KU Pre-Purchase & Purchase Behavior). According to Niinimäki (2010), ethical hardliners, which represent a small niche of the consumer market, are strongly driven by ethical values and their ethical commitment in their purchasing of sustainable clothes. While displaying one's own identity or aesthetic values is of high importance, it is even more important for this consumer group to show their personal ideology in their appearance.

Iwanow et al. (2005) suggest that in the field of textile consumption consumers are rather driven by self-centered or personal motives than societal motives. While the majority of respondents of their (ibid.) study claimed to be aware of ethical issues in the manufacturing process (i.e. child labor), these high levels of awareness appear not to have a strong impact on the purchasing decision, with personal benefits such as price, quality, and style ranking higher. Similar findings were reported by Joergens (2006) and Dickson (2000). Personal motives do however not only relate to product aspects but also to concrete personal benefits. As Dickson (ibid.) suggests, while purchases of organic cotton clothes are also motivated by believed beneficial outcomes for the organic industry and the environment, concerns for one's health appear to play a more decisive role. This holds especially true for consumers who have previous experiences with sustainable clothes. As Dickson (ibid.) reports, consumers who have already purchased clothes that use organic cotton or organic cotton fiber blends are motivated by perceived beneficial outcomes for their health or the health of other family members.

However, while health benefits were found to constitute an important motivator in the context of organic grocery shopping, most research suggests that consumers appear not to be able to establish the link between environmental protection and personal health in the context of clothing yet (e.g. Cervellon, 2010; H. J. Gam, Cao, H., Farr, C., & Kang, M., 2010; Joergens, 2006; H.-S. Kim, & Damhorst, M. L., 1998), with Dickson's study (2000) constituting one of the few exceptions.

As highlighted above, personal benefits of clothes, such as price, quality and style, frequently outweigh environmental or ethical attributes of clothes for a number of reasons. Consumers, interested in fashion and constantly renewing their wardrobes are finding it difficult to do so in the context of perceived higher priced ethical clothes and the limited availability of fashionable alternatives (Joergens, 2006), which thus constitutes a motivational barrier for consumers to adopt more sustainable clothing purchasing practices. According to Meyer (2001) and Shaw et al. (2006) a lack in appeal of green or ethical clothes constitutes a major motivational barrier for consumers to purchase these products. This perceived lack in appeal or fashionability, mainly with regard to aesthetics, can primarily be traced back to a lack of awareness and knowledge about these product alternatives (→ KU Pre-Purchase & Purchase Behavior) as well as a lack of information (Meyer, 2001) (→ KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). Similar findings were reported by Hiller Connell (2010), who suggests that negative attitudes towards perceived product characteristics of eco-friendly apparel constitute a main barrier. In the same vein, Niinimäki (2010) suggests that the majority of consumers do not favor the aesthetics of clothes which are noticeably made from eco-materials, such as hemp. Conversely, Gam et al. (2010) found that quality and design aspects, especially fabric softness, constituted the most important reasons for mothers to select and purchase organic cotton clothes for their children.

Some consumers appear to be equally driven by societal and personal motives. According to Kim and Damhorst (1998), perceived economic rewards might motivate consumers to engage in pro-environmental clothing purchasing behavior, such as purchasing clothes that consumers can wear for a long time. Thus, this motive is closely linked to consumers' financial resources (→ KU Ability Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). Similarly, Hiller Connell (2011) suggests that economic motives and environmental concerns drive consumers to patronize certain sources of apparel acquisition that are perceived to be more environmental friendly, i.e. different forms of second-hand sources (→ KU Pre-Purchase & Purchase Behavior).

Besides matters of affordability and limited availability of fashionable, yet sustainable clothes, difficulties in access and information about sources of sustainable clothing acquisitions can prevent consumers from changing their consumption behaviour. As Cervellon et al. (2010) highlight, lack of trust in labeling schemes and company's CSR initiatives constitutes a motivational barrier, preventing consumers from engaging in sustainable purchasing practices. However, trust and confidence can also work as motivational drivers. As Hiller Connell (2011) suggests, information about the country of origin can assist consumers in their decision making process, when driven by environmental motives. Besides efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of product acquisitions, certain countries of origin appear to be preferred due to perceived stricter environmental regulations and standards (→ KU Pre-Purchase & Purchase Behavior; KU Ability Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). According to Shaw et al. (2006), difficulties in access to ethical retailers and ethical clothing constitutes a major motivational barrier for consumers to actively search for and select ethical clothes. Similar findings were reported by Meyer (2001), Niinimäki (2010) and Beard (2008), who suggest that inconvenience and discomfort of shopping might prevent consumers from pursuing more sustainable clothing alternatives (→ KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). While shops and mail-order catalogs have the potential to fill this void, environmental considerations might prevent consumers from patronizing these alternative retail channels. As Hiller Connell (2011) suggests, some consumers are reluctant to order eco-conscious clothing online or via mail-order catalogs due to the environmental impact of transportation and packaging, which might outweigh the positive impact of clothing that is produced in an environmental preferable manner (→ KU Pre-Purchase & Purchase Behavior). Thus for some consumers, environmental motives might actually constitute a barrier to purchasing environmentally preferable clothing.

Values

Dickson (2000) found that altruistic values, i.e. self-sacrificing acts that are solely intended to benefits others, regardless of the consequences for the actor, do not appear to be a significant predictor for consumers to intent or actually purchase clothes from socially responsible companies. First and foremost, they appear to be motivated by self-centered behavioral beliefs, i.e. improving their own health or the health of their families; believed beneficial outcomes for the organic industry or the environment rank lower to such self-centered values.
As Gam (2011) suggests, consumers who value the hedonic elements of shopping, are more inclined to purchase eco-friendly clothing for reasons of fun and wanting to try something new. However, this willingness to try something new is closely tied to aspects of financial resources and costs of sustainable alternatives (→ KU Ability Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption; KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

Attitudes

Support for the influence of consumers environmental attitudes on their clothing purchasing behavior have somewhat been mixed. As Beard (2008) highlights, consumers increasingly express an interest in environmental and social matters related to the production and consumption of fashion items. However, despite these growing concerns, most consumers appear to fall short of living up to their own expectations in the context of cheap, trendy fashion items that are easily accessible (Beard, 2008) (→ KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). This so called attitude-behavior gap, i.e. that positive attitudes towards the environment cannot consistently be translated into sustainable lifestyles (Devinney, 2010; Tanner, 2003), indicates the existence of barriers that impede consumers from acting on good intentions (Thøgersen, 2010).

As Butler and Francis (1997) report, general environmental attitudes have a positive effect on clothing-related environmental attitudes. Nevertheless, it appears that consumers who hold positive environmental attitudes rarely take environmental issues into account when making a purchase decision (→ KU Pre-Purchase & Purchase Behavior). Dickson (2000), on the other hand, found that consumers, who had previously purchased blended organic cotton apparel held positive attitudes toward sustainable and organic agriculture. Similarly, Hines and Swinker (1996) suggest that positive perceptions or attitudes towards clothes made from recycled fibers increases consumers' willingness to purchase recycled apparel products. In the same vein, Hiller Connell (2010) suggests that consumers, who hold negative attitudes towards perceived product characteristics of eco-apparel, i.e. perceived cut backs in style, comfort and fit as well as associations with counterculture, are frequently constrained by these perceptions. Similar findings were reported by Meyer (2001), Joergens (2006) and Shaw et al. (2006).

Environmental attitudes might not only have an effect on purchasing behavior but also on clothing disposal behavior. As Shim (1995) suggests, clothing donations and reuse are positively influenced by consumers' environmental attitudes (→ KU Clothing Disposal & Recycling Behavior). While demographic variables alone might not be a good predictor of pro-environmental behavior, Koch and Domina (1997) found that some gender differences might exist, not only with regard to consumers' general environmental attitudes but also their clothing recycling behavior. In line with Shim's findings (1995), Koch and Domina (ibid.) report that female respondents hold stronger environmental attitudes than their male counterparts. These high environmental attitudes were reflected in females' textile recycling behavior, with women being more likely to choose resell and donations, compared with men choosing discarding as a primary form of clothing disposal.

Beliefs/Environmental Concern

As Kim and Damhorst (1998) suggest, consumers who are environmentally conscious are interested in purchasing environmental friendly apparel and willing to pay more for these items. However, while general environmental concern was found to be high, these concerns did not translate into environmentally responsible apparel consumption behavior. Similarly, Butler and Francis (1997) found that protecting the environment appears to be of high importance, in the actual purchasing decision however, this criterion is not taken into consideration in favor of other criteria, such as price or style. Likewise, Dickson (2000) found that consumers appear to be concerned about social issues in the apparel industry; yet, these concerns are not taken into consideration or feed into the purchasing decision.

However, consumers, who have previously purchased clothing made from organic cotton, appear to be more concerned with the environmental impact of clothing production than consumers with no prior experiences with organic apparel alternatives (Dickson, 2000). Also, Hines and Swinker (1996) report that consumers who have high levels of ecological consciousness indicate to be more willing to purchase apparel products that are labeled to be made from recycled fibers. Similarly, Stephens (1985), suggests that consumers with higher levels of environmental awareness actively attempt to reduce their environmental impact in the purchasing and disposal phases, by patronizing second-hand acquisition sources, selecting items that are of classical style (→ KU Pre-

Purchase & Purchase Behavior), as well as reducing their waste production by engaging in clothing recycling practices (→ KU Clothing Disposal & Recycling Behavior).

Subjective Norms (OL & OS)

Opinion leadership

Fashion opinion leaders can be defined as consumers who display an above-average interest in fashion and whose advice and opinion is sought after by others in their fashion purchases (Koch and Domina (1997). While most attempts to describing fashion leaders are limited to distinguishing fashion leaders and fashion followers based on demographics, this discriminatory variable used alone does not constitute a significant predictor for socially responsible behavior (e.g. Domina, 1998; Huddleston, 1993).

According to Koch and Domina (1997), opinion leaders are predominantly found among the younger population that has higher levels of education, income and occupational status. Besides these demographics, this group of consumers generally tends to be more active, self-confident and open towards trying out new ideas.

In an attempt to profile different environmentally oriented groups of female apparel shoppers (based on textile recycling behavior, lifestyle activities, importance of product and store attributes as well as general environmental attitudes), Domina and Koch (1998) found that, unlike fashion followers and fashion hobbyists, fashion opinion leaders were not significantly related to any of the developed environmental consumer segments. This observation might be explained by the assumed tension between a strong focus on fashion and trends on the one hand and high environmental concerns on the other hand.

Involvement

According to Solomon and Rabolt (2004), involvement can be a fuzzy concept. In an attempt to unify several different concepts and definitions related to involvement into one causal network, Mittal and Lee (1989) suggest to distinguish involvement based on its forms, sources and effects. While form relates to product and brand-decision involvement, sources refer to three consumer goals, i.e. utilitarian, sign, and hedonic values. Combinations of these different forms and sources can cause different effects, i.e. different forms of consumer behavior, for instance extensive decision making, shopping enjoyment, brand commitment, or product usage.

While research acknowledges that fashion consumption is of high importance to consumers, there has to date been little research on fashion involvement (e.g. O'Cass, 2000). As O'Cass (2000) suggests, fashion involvement can be conceptualized as a consumer's perceived importance of fashion clothing.

Adopting the involvement scale developed by Mittal and Lee (1989), Goldsmith et al. (1996) suggest that consumers who are more involved with new fashions tend to classify as fashion leaders. Furthermore, these consumers do not only have more knowledge about new trends and fashion, they also tend to shop more frequently and spend more money on their shopping trips than their less innovative counterparts (→ KU Ability Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

Self-Concept

According to Solomon and Rabolt (2004, p. 142), self-concept can best be understood as consumers perceptions and attitudes about themselves as objects. These self-perceptions are important as they not only provide motivation but also give control and direction to behavior, in the sense that consumers frequently choose products that are either congruent with or have the potential to boost once ideal or actual self-concept (Malhotra, 1988).
As Goldsmith et al. (1996) highlight, fashion products can be used by consumers to reflect how they see themselves, thus studying the impact of self-image or self-concept on purchasing behavior might have the potential of providing stronger explanatory power than demographics. In a study of fashion leaders self-concept, Goldsmith et al. (ibid.) found that fashion leaders differ from fashion followers in the sense that they perceived themselves to be more excitable, indulgent, contemporary, formal, colorful, and vain. After discriminating the sample based on gender, Goldsmith et al. (ibid.) found that, while no additional differences were found between male fashion leaders and followers, female fashion leaders perceived themselves as being more dominant than female fashion followers.

In the context of organic cotton apparel purchases, Dickson (2000) found that consumers, who had previous experiences with buying clothes made from organic cotton or cotton blend identified themselves as socially responsible, organic or environmental consumers.

Function of Clothing/Body Image

Consumers' body sizes are closely linked to matters of perceived limited availability of acquisition sources. As Hiller Connell (2010) suggests, consumers interested in acquiring apparel from second-hand sources might shy away from doing so as they believe second-hand shops to only provide a limited range of clothing sizes which do not fit their personal needs (→ KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

Behavioral Intention

According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1977), behavioral intention measures the relative strength of a person's intentions to perform a certain behavior. It depends not only on the person's attitudes about this specific behavior but also on how that person thinks others will view and evaluate their behavior. Thus behavioral intention is a function of personal attitudes and subjective norms.

To the authors' knowledge, no research has been conducted on behavioral intention in the field of sustainable fashion consumption.

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Ability Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption

By CBS Research Group on Future Fashion, March 2012

Keywords: ability, knowledge, habits, cognitive capacities, individual resources

Abstract:

As Moisander suggests (2007, p. 405), 'people are not always motivated to do something for which they lack the necessary resources and opportunities'. Internal drivers and barriers that determine the ability of motivated consumers to act in a more sustainable manner include consumer knowledge, habits, cognitive capacities and other resources (e.g. time, money), shaped by consumer socialization and education as well as by everyday lifestyles and social norms. While traditional models of consumer choice assume that knowledge, attitudes and behaviour are closely interlinked, empirical consumer research shows that consumers' consumption activities compete for the same limited resources (income, time, cognitive energy) and are hence rather limited in nature. To explain – and change – consumer behaviour, it is important to take into account the fact that most consumer decisions are made based on heuristics and subject to biases. For instance, consumers prefer the status quo, resist switching, and heavily discount future outcomes of their decisions. As regards fashion, the environmental externalities (e.g. water use, cotton monocultures, toxics in the fabric) as well as social consequences (e.g. working conditions in sweatshops) of fashion consumption are both "far away" and in the future, and hence hardly tangible for the individual consumer. Health concerns (e.g. allergies to chemicals used in the fabrics) are not a common theme. After all, personal fashion choice is an integral part of the individual identity creation process of modern consumer culture.

Knowledge (Subjective/Objective)

Research suggests that consumers lack an understanding or awareness of the impact of their clothing purchases on the environment (e.g. K. Y. Hiller Connel, 2010; H.-S. Kim, & Damhorst, M. L., 1998; Stephens, 1985). Kim and Damhorst (1998) purport that this lack in knowledge constitutes an important internal barrier, which contributes to the attitude-behavior gap between consumers' intentions and their actual behavior. Supporting this assumption, Hustvedt and Dickson's (2009) findings indicate that for consumers who have knowledge about and understanding of the environmental impact of fashion products, the engagement in pro-environmental fashion acquisition behavior increases (→ KU Pre-Purchase & Purchase Behavior). As Hiller Connell (2010) suggests, consumers appear to have a limited understanding of the relationship between and environmental impact of clothing production and consumption in general, and more specifically a limited awareness or misunderstanding in terms of the environmental friendly nature of different fibers. This limited knowledge or awareness of environmentally friendly fibers thus has an impact on the perceived availability of more sustainable product alternatives (→ KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). Similarly, Cervellon et al. (2010) report that a lack of awareness of the existence of sustainable fashion alternatives constitutes a main barrier to sustainable fashion consumption practices. This lack of knowledge is closely linked with the "triple a" of sustainable fashion consumption (→ KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). Similar findings were reported by Gam et al. (2010). Likewise, Hines and Swinker (1996) suggest that familiarity with recycled fibers significantly increases consumers' willingness to select sweatshirts labeled as made from recycled fibers. According to Cervellon et al. (2010) the lack of understanding or lack of knowledge can to a large extent be explained by the proliferation of definitions and terms that are used interchangeably, by corporations and academics alike, which poses the risk that meaning gets lost, and merely boils down to becoming a marketing or academic exercise. Ultimately, this proliferation of terms bears the risk of increasing consumer confusion and skepticism. Similar conclusions are drawn by Beard (2008).

As Meyer (2001) highlights, consumers are often uncertain regarding the actual environmental impact or benefits of green fashion products, thus might be reluctant to buy into these greener alternative. According to Meyer (ibid.), this uncertainty is often rooted in a lack of information (→ KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). Similarly, Joergens (2006) found that most consumers are unaware of environmental or ethical issues regarding the clothing production process. Thus, these matters do not feed into the buying decision. As a result, a lack of awareness or knowledge about attractive sustainable fashion alternatives affects consumer motivation (→ KU Motivational Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

Fashion Knowledge

According to Vieira (2009), it needs to be distinguished between consumers' subjective and objective fashion knowledge. While subjective fashion knowledge can be conceptualized as how much a consumer perceives or thinks he/she knows about a fashion product, i.e. their subjective self-analysis, objective fashion knowledge refers to how much a consumer actually knows (Vieira, 2009). As Goldsmith et al. (1996) highlight, high levels of self-perceived fashion knowledge are closely tied with consumers' degree of fashion involvement and fashion leadership (→ KU Motivational Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

Label knowledge

Iwanow et al. (2005) suggest that knowledge about the country of origin of a product only affects few respondents on a regular basis in their purchasing decisions. Similar conclusions are drawn by Joergens (2006), who reports that consumer's feel that they are unable to make inferences from country of origin labels, as to which country represents which type of working and production conditions.

Skepticism

As Iwanow et al. (2005) report, consumers often meet voluntary labeling initiative and codes of conduct, implemented by corporations without external verification, with skepticism, perceiving these efforts as PR stunts or Marketing gimmicks, aimed at improving the brands image. This obstructive effect of suspicion and lack of trust, for the most part grounded in a lack of knowledge, was also reported by Cervellon et al. (2010). According to Beard (2008) and Cervellon et al. (2010), this skepticism might to a large extent be grounded in the proliferation and interchangeable use of terms, which fuel consumer confusion.

In addition to voluntary labeling schemes and codes of conduct, information about the country of origin of a product can be a source of skepticism or distrust and prompt consumers not to purchase as environmental standards and regulations are perceived to be stricter in some countries than in others (K. Y. Hiller Connel, 2011) (→ KU Pre-Purchase & Purchase Behavior; KU Motivational Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

Habits (e.g. label use)

Dickson (2000) suggests that only a small group of consumers would use social labels, which would guarantee that certain working conditions were met in the production process. In the same vein, Iwanow et al. (2005) report that only few consumers frequently look at labels in their purchasing decisions. One possible explanation for this might be the limited availability of such labeling schemes (→ KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

As Hiller Connell (2011) suggests, consumers frequently check the country-of-origin information on labels. However, as Iwanow et al. (2005) suggest, this information about the origin of a garment only infrequently affects few consumers. Similar findings were reported by Joergens (2006). According to Joergens (ibid.), consumers are finding it difficult to assess which countries would stand for ethical production or are skeptical whether information about the country of origin would provide them with valid information about the ethicality of the production in question at all.

Resources (financial and time)

According to Hiller Connell (2010), consumers frequently report that their economic resources constitute a major constraining factor, preventing them from acquiring environmental friendly apparel consistently. However, as Joergens (2006) suggests, consumers might not automatically be willing to pay more for ethically sound clothes, even though their financial resources would allow this. Contrary findings were reported by Iwanow et al. (2005), who put forth that while price constitutes a main influencing factor in general fashion purchasing decisions, its impact decreases as income increases.

Limited financial resources can affect consumers purchasing decisions in that consumers actively select items that can be worn for a long time. Wearability in this context mostly relates to matters of style (H.-S. Kim, & Damhorst, M. L., 1998) (→ KU Pre-Purchase & Purchase Behavior).

Financial resources also effects on shopping values (→ KU Motivational Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

Financial resources and time spent shopping is closely connected with consumers' involvement in fashion and degree of fashion leadership (R. E. Goldsmith, Flynn, L. R., & Moore, M. A., 1996) (→ KU Motivational Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). Limited time resources also affect consumers' likelihood of engaging in use and maintenance behaviors, e.g. repairs (→ KU Use & Maintenance Behavior).

Limited time resources can be another individual barrier to consumers' patronage of second-hand shops, due to the frequently experienced complex organization of store merchandise (K. Y. Hiller Connel, 2010) (→ KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

Self-Efficacy

While the above discussed abilities and resources constitute important prerequisites for motivated consumers to act, consumer's ability to successfully act according to their intentions is largely determined by their belief in their own abilities to do so (Bandura, 1977). As Thøgersen (2005) suggests, empowering consumers, reducing their subjectively felt restrictions, their perceived self-efficacy, is pivotal in order to enable them to adopt more sustainable lifestyles.

To the authors knowledge, self-efficacy has to date not been addressed in the context of sustainable fashion consumption yet.

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Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption

By CBS Research Group on Future Fashion, March 2012

Keywords: opportunity, affordability, accessibility, availability, cultural/social norms

Abstract:

A number of external contextual factors can be identified, which can facilitate or limit the opportunities for consumers to adopt more sustainable practices. Cultural meanings and norms determine consumption practices that are socially approved or desired. However, these aspects of culture can be at odds with sustainable consumer behavior (e.g. overconsumption as a consequence of consumer culture). Thus, consumers attempting to change their lifestyle are finding it difficult to do so in societies that do not support these efforts, i.e. brand them as counterculture, deviant from the norm. A second group of external constraints refers to the infrastructure and the supply of sustainable product alternatives (Thøgersen, 2005). Consumers, willing to purchase sustainable alternatives, might be confronted with limited options, i.e. desired products are not readily available, accessible, or can only be obtained with additional efforts. In addition to these factors, consumers' decision-making might also be constrained by the way in which relevant information on product related sustainable matters are communicated or withheld (Thøgersen, 2010; Ölander, 1995). Consumers, rather conceptualized as 'humans' than as 'econs' (Thaler, 2008), are subject to biases, as they possess limited cognitive ability and scarce time resources of processing information (→ KU Ability Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). This leads to heuristic-based decision-making, of which the outcome often might not be entirely optimal. Thus, opportunities imply the provision of signals, reference points and other aggregated information such as labels to ease consumer decision-making (Devinney, 2010).

Triple A

Considering the much cited attitude-behaviour gap, research has to a great extend neglected the possibility that external contextual factors might impede the most motivated consumer from changing their behaviour (K. Y. Hiller Connel, 2010). Current research suggests such factors to be affordability, accessibility, and availability; the 'triple a' (e.g. L. A. Reisch, & Gwozdz, W., 2011).

According to Hiller Connell (2011), availability of and access to shops selling environmentally preferable clothing constitutes a main barrier. Online shops and mail-order catalogs have the potential to fill that void, however environmental considerations related to transportation and packaging might prevent consumers from patronizing these alternative retail channels (→ KU Pre-Purchase & Purchase Behavior). As Niinimäki (2010) suggests, purchasing eco-clothes online or at flea markets and fairs do not constitute highly preferred points of purchase for consumers.

As Cervellon et al. (2010) suggest, the appeal or image of green fashion constitutes a main barrier for consumers to choose sustainable product alternatives. Similarly findings were reported by Gam (2011), who suggests that fashion leaders might shy away from eco-friendly clothing, as they do not favor the available designs or perceive them not to be innovative enough. As Niinimäki (2010) reports, consumers indicate to be interest in purchasing eco-fashion that is of high quality, durable and lasts long. However, matters of style, color, fit and quality appear to rank higher and are more decisive factors in the general clothing purchase decision-making than the ethical nature of clothes. Thus ethical and environmental aspects might only add value and tip the scale in cases of products that already fulfill the general requirements and aesthetic demands (→ KU Pre-Purchase & Purchase Behavior).

As Hiller Connell (2010) suggests, consumers are often not only constrained by the limited availability of acquisitions sources offering environmentally friendly clothes but also by the limited availability of products with desired attributes. Desired attributes in this sense not only relates to matters of aesthetics, style, size, and fit but also to overall product categories. Product categories that are perceived to be underrepresented with environmentally friendly product alternatives include business wear, footwear, formal wear, as well as intimate and outdoor apparel. Again, this perceived limited availability of products with desired attribute is closely linked to consumers' knowledge (→ KU Pre-Purchase & Purchase Behavior). Similar findings were reported by Shaw et al. (2006), Gam (2011) and Beard (2008). As Beard (ibid.) suggests, most producers of ethical or eco fashion tend to limit their product lines to casual basic clothes, which are suitable for everyday use but might not fulfill the requirements of more formal wear, e.g. work clothes. Likewise, luxurious, high-end fashion products appear to be of limited availability. Similarly, Shaw et al. (2006) suggest that for fashion oriented consumers, the limited availability of fashionable, yet ethically sound products poses a dilemma or potential trade-off situation in which they need to juggle their ethical and their fashion identity.

According to Meyer (2001), green apparel products are less appealing to consumers than their conventional alternatives for a number of reasons. Not only is green fashion perceived to provide fewer choices, which often do not fulfill the same aesthetic and functional demands, as highlighted in the foregoing section, but also that these choices are only available at higher costs. Meyer (ibid.) explains this reluctance with a lack of information about green fashion products and consumers' uncertainty or skepticism regarding the actual environmental impact of these green alternatives. Thus, insufficient information can affect consumers' motivation (→ KU Motivational Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

Perceived availability is closely linked to a lack of information and consumers' knowledge (→ KU Ability Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). As Hiller Connell (2010) suggests, consumers might be unaware that environmental friendly product alternative might be within reach, due to their lack of understanding of the ecological footprint of different fibers. Similar findings were reported by Gam et al. (2010).

According to Iwanow et al. (2005) the limited availability of national and international labeling schemes in the fashion context might constitute a major barrier for consumers to make informed purchasing decisions. However, considering that only few consumers might frequently look at labels in the purchasing decision (e.g. Dickson, 2000; Iwanow, 2005) (→ KU Ability Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption), the potential impact and effectiveness of labels might be questionable. In addition to the limited availability of labeling schemes, the voluntary nature of most labeling mechanisms and codes of conduct constitutes another barrier. As most of the initiatives are implemented by corporations themselves, thus lack verification of external impartial organizations, consumers often respond to these efforts with suspicion (Iwanow, 2005) (→ KU Ability Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption).
In absence of information about the carbon footprint or environmental impact of a product, consumers often turn to other heuristics, such as country of origin, in order to evaluate the environmental effect of a potential buy (K. Y. Hiller Connel, 2011). In their best intentions to reduce the carbon footprint of a product or to support production in countries that supposedly takes place under stricter environmental legislation, consumers thus run risk to fall in the trap of their own, ill-informed assumptions (→ KU Pre-Purchase & Purchase Behavior).

Other external barriers that might prevent consumers from purchasing sustainable clothes relate more concretely to the retail environment, organization of merchandise, or convenience of shopping. As Hiller Connell (2010) puts forth, lucidity and organization of merchandise in second-hand shops can prevent consumers from frequenting these acquisition sources on a more regular basis. This external barrier is closely related to consumers' time resources (→ KU Ability Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

Price/Costs

Hustvedt and Dickson (2009) report that price constitutes one of the main external barriers that consumers face who wish to adopt more sustainable clothing purchasing practices. Similar findings were reported by Hiller Connell (2011) and Gam et al. (2010). In a similar vein, Iwanow et al. (2005) suggest that price, followed by product quality and style, constitute the main influences in general fashion purchase decisions. For respondents with higher income, the influence of price decreases, while quality considerations rise in importance (→ KU Ability Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

Product prices constitute an important information cue to which consumers frequently turn to, especially if consumers are price-oriented, in the absence of other product cues or if consumers are unfamiliar with alternative information cues (Swinker, 1997). For consumers with other orientations, for example a strong focus on fiber content of clothes, price information might not be the most decisive product cue; instead information on fiber content might tip the scale in favor of purchasing clothes made from recycled fibers, as Hines and Swinker (1996) suggest. However, affiliation with one of the two orientation groups, i.e. price and fiber, is not static. Under conditions of comparable prices for virgin fiber and recycled fiber clothes, the majority of consumers will select clothes made from recycled fibers (Hines, 1996). Similar findings were reported by Grasso et al. (2000), who report that consumers are not willing to pay more for textile products made from recycled materials. While female consumers were found to be more willing than male consumers to purchase recycled products, it was also found that females were more likely to change their purchase behavior as prices changed.

According to Meyer (2001), one of the main barriers for consumers to purchase green clothes are the costs associated with the purchase. Costs in this sense do not only relate to higher product prices but also to higher search costs, which is linked to aspects of limited availability and access. Similarly, Gam et al. (2010) found that only few consumers were willing to pay significantly more for children's clothes made from organic cotton. Likewise, Niinimäki (2010) reports that, while all survey respondents indicated to be willing to pay more for eco-clothes, they expressed the wish that these clothes would not come at extra costs. Again, costs relate not only to the price of clothes but also to matters of convenience of access. As Beard (2008) suggests, consumer express increased interest in ethical or eco fashion. However, in the context of cheap and trendy clothes that are readily available and easy to access, matters of comfort of shopping might alleviate potential guilt associated with the disposability of these cheap fashion items.

While consumers frequently report to understand why environmental friendly clothing might come at higher prizes, these additional costs, in interaction with consumers' financial resources, constitute a significant barrier (K. Y. Hiller Connel, 2010) (→ KU Ability Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). Yet, as Joergens (2006) suggests, affordability and prices might not always be linked to consumers' financial resources. According to Joergens (ibid.), consumers might have the financial means but might still not be willing to pay a higher price, if this means that they would be limited in the quantity of clothes they could purchase otherwise, disregarding the ethicality of the products. Thus matters of price are closely linked to financial resources (→ KU Ability Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption) and consumers' wardrobe needs (→ KU Motivational Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

Cultural/Social Norms

As Hiller Connell (2010) suggests, social expectations regarding what qualifies as acceptable apparel in given contexts can function as a barrier to consumers choosing clothes made out of certain fibers or from second-hand sources. However, it remains unclear whether these expectations actually exist or whether this is rather a matter of perceived or assumed expectations. Whether real or not, social expectations might nonetheless prevent consumers from engaging in sustainable clothing purchase practices. As Kim and Damhorst (1998) suggest, young consumers, actively managing their self-presentation and aiming to conform to group expectations might be prevented by the expected social costs of opting out of the latest clothing trends and fashions (→ KU Young Consumers & Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

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In-Store Field Experiments

By CBS Research Group on Future Fashion, February 2012

Keywords: in-store field experiments, ambient factors, design factors, social factors

Abstract:

Shopping environments are complex settings, consisting of various factors that influence consumers in their behavior. In its ability to study these dynamic real-world settings and infer causal relationships, in-store field experiment can provide powerful insights into the factors influencing consumers' decision making and thus provide retailers with means to differentiate their stores and increase consumers' likelihood of purchase.

Background

Over the past few years, in-store field experiments have become a popular method for studying the influence of the shopping environment on consumer decision-making; for one, this research method allows the study of behavior in complex real-world settings. Furthermore, it enables researchers to infer causal relationships and explore the observed behavior in its context. It thus differs significantly from inferences and explanations that can be drawn from interviews, participant observation or laboratory experiments (e.g. Doyle, 1977; Paluck, 2010; Sigurdsson, 2009). A further advantage of field experiments over laboratory experiments relates to the study of behavior that occurs naturally. Participants are not aware of the fact that they are being studied, which minimizes potential biases or risks of experimenter demand (Ernest-Jones, 2011).

In recent years, experimental designs have especially gained momentum in the area of studying the influence of the retail environment design on consumers' shopping experiences and consumer behavior (A. d'Astous, 2000). In a highly competitive, globalized marketplace, retailers are finding it difficult to compete and differentiate their shops by simply relying on the classical marketing mix (product, price, promotion, and place (McCarthy, 1975, p. 75)). Thus, retailers increasingly focus on those elements of the retail environment that can generate a pleasant shopping experience and thus have the potential of increasing the likelihood of purchase (Baker, 1994; A. d'Astous, 2000). In-store field experiments can provide powerful insights into the dynamic factors that make up the retail environment.

Shopping Environment – A typology for field experiments

Different approaches to defining the shopping environment exist. Generally speaking, it can be defined as all the physical, tangible features of the sphere that surround the consumer ("me" vs. "not me") (Everett, 1994). However, identifying all elements in the consumers' surrounding is a mere impossible and cumbersome exercise, due to the sheer number of features (A. d'Astous, 2000).

In the following, one approach that has proven to be especially fruitful regarding classifying the features that make up consumers' environments will be briefly introduced.

Different to other approaches that focuses on the sensory elements, Baker (1994) developed a typology which focuses more on the physical features of the shopping environment. (1) *Ambient factors* encompass the nonvisual background features (i.e. music, scent, and lighting) that can subconsciously affect consumers' senses. (2) *Design factors* on the other hand are more visual and can thus be directly perceived by consumers. These features can be further divided into *functional* and *aesthetic factors*. While aesthetic factors entail for example such elements as architecture, color, style, and scale, functional factors refer, among other things, to the layout of a store, its organization of merchandise, and signage. Besides this stronger focus on the physical elements of the shopping environment, Bakers' approach also includes (3) *social factors* that make up the surrounding. Baker (ibid.) includes the influence that other customers and service personnel can exert through their number, appearance, and behavior on consumers' perceptions and behavior (Baker, 1994; Grewal, 1994).

Experiments will be presented in the following – they are organized along Baker's typology. Most of the presented experiments do not exclusively focus on either ambient, design, or social factors. The alternative treatments often combine the manipulation of different factors, which reflects the complex store environment influencing decision making.

In-store field experiments

Ambient Factors

Ambient factors such as music and light constitute factors that are of high importance for creating a pleasant shopping atmosphere in the clothing context. Some of these factors, such as music, are more easily controllable, i.e. volume, style, and tempo (Broekemier, 2008). Furthermore, music is not only relatively easy and inexpensive to change. Its appeal to different consumers (based on age or lifestyle) is thought to affect purchase intention or store patronage behavior (Yalch, 2000).

Experiment 1: Music dimensions and purchase intentions.

In a laboratory experiment by Broekemier et al. (2008), female consumers were exposed to videotapes of an unfamiliar women's clothing store under different music treatments (happy/sad, liked/disliked music). Questions regarding their purchase intention were asked. Happy/sad music was found to have a significant effect on shopping intentions, while liked/disliked music only produced marginally significant results. However, combining the two components (emotional & liking) revealed that consumers purchase intentions were highest when they were exposed to happy music they liked.

Experiment 2: Changing the light.

Only a few studies have addressed the effect that atmospheric factors have on consumers' patronage or purchase intentions (e.g. Areni, 1994; Babin, 2003). Supposedly, this can be explained by the difficulties regarding measurement respectively the inference of causation, as can be seen in the study conducted by Areni and Kim (1994) in the wine cellar of a restaurant. Over a two month period, the in-store lighting was varied, i.e. soft versus brighter illumination. The authors found that while brighter light had a positive influence on consumers to inspect and handle more merchandise, it did not influence the time spent in the wine cellar nor did it increase sales.

Babin et al. (2003) suggest that a possible explanation for this might be that consumers assess or rather take in a stores ambience in a more holistic manner than processing its atmospheric elements bit by bit. Similarly, Parsons (2011) suggests that store atmospherics are best studied as a package, rather than isolated factors, which do not reflect consumers' holistic cognitive experience in the retail place.

Experiment 3: Sensory stimuli in women's fashion store & repeated exposure

In a two-stage laboratory experiment by Parsons (2011), female consumers watched a video clip of a fashion store while being exposed to two sets of stimuli (industry standard vs. "ideal"), i.e. variations of music, temperature, lighting, and scent. The first experiment revealed that brighter light, faster music, and congruent scent increase affect, whereas temperature only increases affect when it is set at mid-level rather than at the hot or cold extremes. These findings were used to determine the "ideal" set of stimuli for the second experiment, repeated exposure to either industry standard or ideal set. The findings from this experiment suggest that if the stimulus set is less than ideal, the affect for the store significantly decreases, i.e. the consumer becomes bored.

Design Factors

Experiments that focus on design factors, especially functional design elements, are very relevant for the fashion context. Aesthetic factors, such as store architecture, style, or scale are not easy to change. Manipulation of functional elements on the other hand, in particular organization of merchandise and signage, appear to be feasible factors for experiments in fashion stores.

Besides feasibility reasons, changes in the set-up of the fashion store in the course of an experiment will not automatically viewed by customers as a source of irritation. With new products entering fast fashion stores at bi-weekly intervals, re-organization of merchandise and adjustment of store layout frequently takes place. Thus it might be hypothesized that consumers to some degree expect these changes to occur on a regular basis. Manipulation of functional design factors thus seems not only feasible but also highly relevant for the fast fashion context.

Experiment 1: Working conditions & willingness to pay.

In an in-store willingness-to-pay experiment, Kimeldorf et al. (2006) investigated consumers' willingness to pay more for sweatshop-free labeled white athletic socks. White athletic socks constitute an interesting product for such experiments for a number of reasons (inexpensive – generate enough sales in experiment period; at same time it is a product that is mass-produced, often in or associated with sweatshops). Two different experimental approaches were adopted. The first experiment, with two identical pairs of socks, in both men's and women's section, and an eye-catching sign above one rack (information about good working conditions), prices for the labeled socks incrementally increased. No results were reported. Consequently, the experiment design was adjusted, with two types of similar but not identical socks.

In order to exclude potential preferences for one brand or perceived style differences, the researchers constantly changed which brand displayed the label. Combining the results from the two experiments, it was found that after the first price increase (0 to 5% increase), sales of the labeled product declined significantly (50 – 37%). Nonetheless, after this first sales drop, the sales decline was less significant as further price increases were introduced, with 24.4% of the customers still being willing to pay more for the labeled product at a 50% price increase.

Experiment 2: Promotional Signs & Price Differentiation.

In a number of experiments conducted at a coffee shop, Arnot et al. (2006) studied consumers' responsiveness to relative price changes in conventional and fair trade brewed coffees. Over a period of five days, discounts for either the fair trade or non-fair trade coffee were provided. Additionally, signs were used to promote the discounts. The results suggest that regular conventional coffee purchasers would switch to cheaper types of coffee (fair trade), when the price of conventional coffee increases. Regular fair trade coffee purchasers on the other hand appear to be less prices responsive, with a near zero own-price elasticity. However, as results were not differentiated by experiments with vs. without use of additional signage, it remains speculative to assess which factor caused customers' price responsiveness.

Experiment 3: Shelf Labels, Information Costs & Information Content.

The findings from an experiment conducted by Kiesel and Villas-Boas (2010) with different nutritional shelf labels suggests that consumer responses to topics covered in labels are closely linked to the perceived benefits connected with the purchase of a product. In this experiment with microwave popcorn and five different labeling treatments (low calorie, low fat, low fat with FDA approval labels and a combination), the authors investigated whether reduced information costs might contribute to making healthier choices. In two of the five alternative treatments, the combination of labels increased information content but also information costs, i.e. required comparisons of products based on different nutrition information. The results suggest that consumer's purchase decisions are influenced by information costs. Low calorie and no trans-fat labels increased sales. Low fat labels on the other hand decreased sales. These results suggest that consumer decisions are also influenced by personal benefit perceptions, i.e. health vs. taste issues. Combining the different nutritional claims into one label did not affect sales significantly, which supports the hypotheses that increased information costs prevent consumers from making healthier decisions.

Experiment 4: Product Shelf-Placement & Extra-Line Up.

In an experiment with potato chips, Sigurdsson et al. (2009) studied the influence of merchandise organization, more specifically the effect of shelf placement (low, middle, high shelf), on relative sales. Prices, quantity, packaging, and promotion efforts for the target product and other products within the same category were kept - as far as possible - constant during the experiment period. Sales numbers after the different alternative treatments were compared with the number of units sold of the target product prior to the experiment. In addition to the shelf placement variations, an extra-line up of the target product was placed at the entrance of the shops after introducing the shelf placement experiment. It was found that positioning on the middle shelf was connected with the relative highest sales compared with other products within the product category. However, the variance between relative sales of the target product when placed on different shelf levels was small. The additional product line up at the entrance of the store was associated with further sales increases. However, it is difficult to assess to which degree the increase in sales can be explained by this additional feature alone.

Social Factors

Besides the more physical elements of the store environments presented above, social elements constitute another important source of influence on the shopping experience and consumer behavior. Social elements do not only relate to the store immanent factors, i.e. shop staff, but also to other customers.

Experiment 1: Social Validation.

Social validation describes the phenomenon by which people identify what is correct or acceptable to do. Instead of engaging in too much thinking, people judge the actions of relevant others as acceptable and engage in similar behavior (Cialdini, 1998).

d'Astous and Mathieu (2008) hypothesize that people are more likely to purchase fair-trade products when they are told by staff that relevant others have done the same. In an experiment in an on campus fair-trade shop different alternative treatments – popularity among peers question (yes/no), feedback by producer offered (yes/no) – were tested.

Shop visitors were asked whether they were aware that fair-trade products were popular among students of their own university. Following, participants were presented with a graph showing the sales numbers of the last year at six different local universities. In the control setting, no question was asked, no graph was presented. In the feedback treatment, participants were subsequent to the popularity question asked whether they were interested in receiving more information from the producer. The results indicate that triggering social validation influences not only the time they remained at the stand but also significantly increases the average amount of money spent. However, an overload of information and social validation triggers might have the opposite effect. The time and money spent increased only under the condition that participants were not asked whether they wished additional feedback from the producer of the product.

Experiment 2: Product unavailability.

Perceived perishability or scarcity is a basic principle of fast fashion retailing (Dutta, 2002). The perceived scarcity of a product creates a feeling of "now or never", thus provides consumers with an incentive to purchase immediately upon spotting the product as it might be gone by the next shop visit. However, the desirability of a product increases for the most part only in cases where the perceived scarcity is a result of limited supply (Byun, 2008).

In a laboratory experiment with four different forms of product availability (unlimited availability, limited availability due to popularity, limited availability due to limited supply, and accidental unavailability) Verhallen and Robben (1994) studied consumers' preferences for recipe books. Their findings suggest that, depending on the reason for limited availability, consumers' preferences for products are affected by its availability; an effect which is mediated through uniqueness and cost assessments. Having said this, books of limited availability due to limited supply and limited supply in combination with popularity were perceived as more preferable than recipe books under the three other market conditions (unlimited availability, limited availability due to popularity, or accidental unavailability).

Experiment 3: Eye Images & Cooperative Behavior.

Social factors might not only make an impact on consumer in the form of direct interaction with staff or reference to other customers but also in more subtle ways. In a field experiment conducted by Ernest-Jones et al. (2011) the effect of eye images on cooperative behavior (littering) in a public space (university cafeteria) was investigated. The findings suggest that participants were more likely to clean their tables and remove their litter under conditions were posters with eye images were in the participants proximity than under conditions were the posters featured flowers. Both versions of posters either displayed littering related or unrelated messages. The reduction of littering under the condition of eye image posters was independent of the form of message it displayed.

Summary

While experimental research has gained momentum, not all factors that make up the retail environment have received equal attention when it comes to studying the effect of retail environment design on consumers' shopping experiences and consumer behavior. There appears to be an especially high proportion of willingness-to-pay experiments, focusing on design factors, such as pricing, shelf-placement, signage and merchandise organization. In the context of sustainable consumer behavior research, most in-store experiments focus on consumers purchase intentions regarding organic or fair-traded food, beverages, or nutritional aspects. It appears that clothing or fashion is a product category that has to date not received as much attention in experimental studies on sustainable consumer behavior yet.

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BEHAVIOR

Sustainable Fashion Consumption: Pre-Purchase & Purchase Behavior

By CBS Research Group on Future Fashion, March 2012

Keywords: product attributes, store patronage, limiting consumption, intention, impact

Abstract:

Research suggests that only few consumers actually take environmental concerns into account when shopping for clothes. For these consumers, environmental fashion consumption can be understood in many ways. The most frequent forms are attribute-focused acquisitions, patronage of certain types of shops, or limiting the amount of clothes acquired. While each of these consumption forms is not without any troubles, consumers are often – unknowingly – confronted with the fundamental problem of intention vs. impact; i.e. the mismatch between individuals' intentions of protecting the environment and the actual impact of their actions.

Background

Consumer behaviour research can be defined as the study of the processes taking place when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences, in order to satisfy needs and wishes (M. Solomon, Bamossy, G., & Askegaard, S., 2001). This knowledge unit covers the early stages of the consumption process, namely the pre-purchase and purchase phase of sustainable fashion consumption. As research on sustainable fashion consumption is relatively scarce, this knowledge unit draws primarily on literature focusing on environmental aspects of fashion consumption.

Research focusing on environmentally-conscious fashion acquisition suggests that only few consumers actually take environmental concerns into account when shopping for clothes, despite their proclaimed pro-environmental attitudes (e.g. Butler, 1997; H.-S. Kim, & Damhorst, M. L., 1998). According to Kim and Damhorst (1998) this attitude-behavior gap in young consumers fashion consumption can be attributed to the limited availability of attractive sustainable alternatives (→ KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption) as well as to the multiple goals fashion fulfills. Focusing or including environmental concerns into the purchasing decision adds to the complexity and might be lower ranking than matters of style, group acceptance or self-expression (→ KU Motivational Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). Similarly, Butler and Francis (1997) suggest that product attributes such as style, fit, or price might outweigh environmental aspects (→ KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption)).

Similar findings were reported by Niinimäki (2010), who suggests that ethical and environmental aspects of clothes only add value and might tip the scale in favor of the sustainable alternative in the clothing purchase decision-making process in cases where the product in question already fulfills all general requirements, i.e. style, color, fit, and quality (→ KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). Nonetheless, with higher levels of knowledge and understanding of the environmental impact of fashion products, consumers' engagement in pro-environmental clothing purchasing increases (e.g. Hustvedt, 2009; Stephens, 1985).

For those consumers who do in fact take environmental considerations into account in their purchasing behavior, environmental fashion consumption can be understood in many ways. The most frequent forms identified by research are attribute-focused acquisitions, patronage of certain types of shops, or limiting the amount of clothes acquired. In the following, these three different forms of environmental fashion consumption will be introduced. Challenges related to each behavior will be addressed.

Attribute-Focused Acquisitions

With regards to attribute-focused acquisitions, Kim and Damhorst (1998) suggest, purchasing items that can be worn for a long time is conceptualized by many young consumers as an environmental friendly practice. Whether or not an item is deemed wearable is based on its style. Similar findings were reported by Stephens (1985) and Hiller Connell (2011), suggesting that classical styles are often preferred over new, trendy items that will go out of fashion soon. This form of attribute-focused acquisition is frequently claimed to be motivated by environmental or economic reasons (e.g. K. Y. Hiller Connel, 2011; H.-S. Kim, & Damhorst, M. L., 1998) (→ Knowledge Unit Motivation Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

However, it needs to be considered that young consumers might not be so stable in their sense of their personal style yet. Likewise, disembarking from the fast-fashion train might be associated with unforeseeable costs for young consumers. As Kim and Damhorst (1998) suggest, young consumers, who are motivated to actively manage their self-presentation and conform with group expectations might be discouraged by the anticipated social costs associated with opting out of latest fashion trends, adopting more sustainable fashion consumption practices that might not be mainstream yet.

Another form of attribute-focused acquisition is concerned with the origin of fibers. Hustvedt and Dickson (2009) report that in their survey with health and natural food consumers, 38 percent of the sample consider the organic origin of the cotton fibers in their clothes, when making a purchase decision. Similarly, Hiller Connell (2011) suggests that consumers often intend to base their clothing purchase decisions on fiber content, which they perceive to be environmentally preferable. More specifically, consumers often appear to prefer natural or recycled fibers and avoid apparel made from manufactured fibers. However, for the most part, consumers appear to engage inconsistently in this behavior, mainly due to matters of affordability and limited availability (→ KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption).

Assessing and comparing the environmental impact of different fiber types is a complex task, especially for consumer who lack the knowledge, access to information or ability to comprehend this technical information in the purchasing situation. Consumers' preference for natural fibers, such as cotton, is not surprising, considering the positive connotation of the term "natural". While the manufacturing of man-made fibers is often infamous, e.g. due to the use of large amounts of crude oil, trade-offs of cotton cultivation, e.g. extensive water and pesticide use, are topics that are often unheard of (Ingram, 2002).

Store Patronage

Purchasing clothes second-hand constitutes one form of patronage of environmentally friendly acquisition sources. Environmental considerations, such as reducing one's own footprint and waste going to landfills, are closely linked with this acquisition source (e.g. K. Y. Hiller Connel, 2011). Nonetheless, patronizing second-hand shops is also frequently motived by other factors, for example economic reasons or the quality of products (e.g. O'Reilly, Rucker, Hughes, Gorang, & Hand, 1984). Other factors, such as the thrill of the hunt, i.e. the hedonic elements of the unforeseeable shopping experience, and the possibilities of individualizing ones style also play a decisive role for some consumers (e.g. F. Bardhi, 2003; F. Bardhi, & Arnould, E. J., 2005).

However, purchasing second-hand clothes can be a challenging task. Not only can this form of clothing acquisition be quite time consuming, especially in the case of need-based acquisitions, where the appropriate clothes are sought for a special occasion, it can also be relatively overwhelming for inexperienced second-hand shoppers (Pears, 2006). Other barriers to this acquisition form pertain to social expectations and norms, for instance stigmatization, with second-hand clothes being perceived as a sign of poverty (C. C. Williams, 2002).

Companies that have a positive, environmental friendly image and sell supposedly environmental friendly products tend to be preferred by many eco-conscious consumers. However, due to the limited availability of traditional shops selling eco-conscious clothes, mail order and online shopping often constitute the only form for consumers to get access to their preferred companies (K. Y. Hiller Connel, 2011) (→ KU Opportunity Factors of Sustainable Fashion Consumption). While online retailers have the potential of filling a void, i.e. improving access, purchasing clothing online is often connected with a number of additional barriers (Hansen, 2009). For instance, with regard to the touch-and-feel character of clothing, online purchase permits the sensory and physically evaluation of items, or requires additional expenses on the part of the consumer (E. Y. Kim, & Kim, Y.-K. , 2004). In addition to these general barriers to online clothing purchases, some consumers might also be reluctant to order apparel online or through mail due to environmental considerations related to the carbon footprint of transportation and the environmental impact of the packaging involved (K. Y. Hiller Connel, 2011).

Besides patronizing second-hand shops or online retailers, some consumers favor purchasing clothes from local, independently-owned shops. As Hiller Connell (2011) suggests, reasoning behind this store patronage behavior are consumers' perceptions that supporting local businesses constitutes an environmentally friendly form of clothing acquisition. Shaw & Moraes study of voluntary simplifiers suggested the preference for smaller retailers and producers to be strongly linked to distrust for profit motives of large multinational companies, as well as the desire for consumers to limit market complexity. The skepticism of the authenticity of large retailers' intentions was also found in Thomspon and Arsel's (2004) study of anti-Starbucks consumers.

Limiting Clothing Acquisitions

As Hiller Connell (2011) suggests, limiting the amount of clothes acquired constitutes one of the most frequent – and most consequent and effective - forms of perceived environmental friendly apparel acquisition behaviors. Limiting personal acquisitions in this sense can take two primary forms, i.e. (1) limiting purchases to needs-based acquisitions or (2) actively extending apparel lifetime. Regarding the first strategy, consumers go through a conscious need reflection and planning process before they acquire new clothes. This is for example done by making a list of available items that reveals how much stuff one already has, or by replacing only worn out items and/or purchasing new clothes for special events for which their wardrobe cannot provide the appropriate outfit. The second strategy, extending the lifetime of clothing items, applies more to clothes that are already in the household, thus falls into the realm of the maintenance and use phase of clothing consumption (→ KU Use & Maintenance Behavior).

It can be assumed that both strategies – postponement of purchase and extension of lifetime – are both quite demanding for consumers. While the former will depend on consumers' ability to resist temptations of impulse purchases, i.e. consumers' self-control, the latter requires time, skills and creativity.

Limiting ones acquisition of clothes can also take other forms than postponement of purchase or extension of lifetime, for instance do-it-yourself (DIY) activities. As Hiller Connell (2011) suggests, sewing one's own clothes is perceived by some consumers to constitute an eco-conscious form of apparel acquisition. As in the case of extension of lifetime of clothes, this behavior requires time, skills and abilities. It can be assumed that handcrafted clothes are considered more sustainable than ready-made items, as the DIY consumer develops a more intensive relationship with these self-made items. Considering the time, thought, and effort that will go into the design and crafting of these self-made clothes, it can be hypothesized that these items will be kept for longer and discarded less quickly. Nonetheless, the environmental friendly nature of this activity might be overrated, i.e. in terms of the manufacturing and transportation of the materials going into the self-made clothes.

Intention vs. Impact

"The road to hell is paved with good intentions" - When studying sustainable consumer behavior, it is of high importance to differentiate between consumers intentions and the actual impact of their actions, i.e. while consumers intend to do good, the consequences of their behavior might be highly detrimental. Pertaining to this, Stern (2000) suggests that eco-conscious behavior can either be defined based on the actual impact on the environment or based on individuals' intention of protecting the environment. According to Hiller Connell (2011), such disparities between consumers intentions or perceptions of which apparel acquisition behaviors qualify as environmentally friendly and the actual impact of their actions are not uncommon. As outlined in the foregoing sections, mismatches frequently surface regarding consumers' preferences for certain fibers, patronage of certain shops or acquisition sources, or home sewing.

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Sustainable Fashion Consumption: Use & Maintenance Behavior

By CBS Research Group on Future Fashion, March 2012

Keywords: habits, knowledge, infrastructure, time resources, product durability, triple bottom line

Background

While most of the research investigating sustainability dimensions of fashion consumption either circles around consumers' considerations of environmental and social issues in the pre-purchase, purchase, or disposal phase of consumption, the direct impacts of consumers fashion use and maintenance behaviors on the triple bottom line are only infrequently addressed. Of main interest in this phase of consumption are actions taken by consumers that concern maintenance of product quality and durability, as well as the environmental, social, and economic consequences/impacts of these actions.

Many of the behaviors occurring in this phase of consumption are routinized or habitual. While this is functional, in the sense that it spares the individual the time and effort to constantly consciously reflect upon how to solve regularly occurring issues, results might also be suboptimal (Fischer, 2008).

Examples of habitual behavior in the use and maintenance phase of consumption:

- using the dryer after washing clothes (Fischer, 2008)
- over and under dosing of washing detergents (Bain, 2009)

Maintaining product quality and durability, i.e. extending the aesthetic and technical lifetime of clothes, is primarily accomplished by taking good care and repairing or refashioning ones clothes (Hiller Connell 2011). Taking good care of ones clothes is related to consumers washing, drying and ironing behavior. Examples of relevant topics in this regard are frequency of use of washing machine, dry cleaning, and tumble dryer, temperature and size of wash loads, use of detergents and fabric softeners (Defra, 2011). These activities have a direct impact on the triple bottom line and are frequently interlinked.

For instance, the environmental consequence of toxic waste water being discharged is closely linked to social consequences, for example health. Toxic water ultimately finds its way back into the food chain, thus will eventually impact the health of consumers (Roesner, 2006). Likewise, the use of washing detergents and fabric softeners might directly impact the health of the wearer. In times of an increasing proportion of the world population suffering from allergies, allergic skin reactions to perfumes, enzymes and other additives used in washing detergents can affect the health of consumers (Dallas, 1992; Rowe, 2006).
Similar to the link between environmental and social impacts of clothing care, environmental impacts might also be closely interlinked with economic consequences. More specifically, environmental impacts, such as increased water and energy use, might have direct economic consequences for the consumer. According to Laitala and Klepp (2011), limited use of tumble driers and washing machines appears to be more closely linked to economic motives than to environmental considerations. They (ibid.) report that that many consumers claim to avoid using tumble driers for economic reasons, i.e. save electricity, or to avoid wear and tear of clothes. Similarly, many consumers express to avoid running washing machines with half full loads due to economic considerations. In addition to economic considerations, some consumers are also prevented in using a dryer as they lack the necessary resources, i.e. they do not own a dryer.
Similarly, financial saving potentials might be utilized by using the right dosage of detergents (Eder-Hansen, 2012).

However, wrong application of cleaning agents might not only have negative effects on consumers' budgets, their health, or the environment. The incorrect use of fabric softener, for instance for caring for functional wear, might have adverse effects on the durability of the product, in that it destroys functional ability of the clothes (e.g. smell preventing in sportswear) (Wood, 2009). Thus incorrect treatment of clothes frequently results in premature disposal. Laitala and Klepp (2011) suggest that technical problems, which occur in the use and maintenance phase of consumption, constitute two of the most important reasons for clothing disposal.

While habits, knowledge, infrastructure, and time resources constitute important individual factors influencing consumers clothing care behavior, maintenance behavior, e.g. repair, altering, or refashioning, also largely depends on consumers skills and abilities. As Hiller Connell (2011) suggests, extending the aesthetic as well as technical lifetime of clothes is primarily accomplished by taking good care of ones clothes, making repair, alterations, and refashioning garments. As activities of re-use and repairs often require certain abilities, engaging into these behaviors is only possible for consumers who possess the necessary skills and resources, i.e. time.

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Sustainable Fashion Consumption: Clothing Disposal & Recycling Behavior

By CBS Research Group on Future Fashion, February 2012

Keywords: disposal behavior, channels, motivation, barriers & drivers

Abstract:

Clothing disposal behavior has to date not received as much attention as other elements of clothing consumption yet. Understanding this aspect of consumer behavior is a complex task; not only are the reasons for disposal manifold but so are the channels that consumers can choose from. As a function of consumers' motives, abilities, and existing opportunities for disposal, consumers wishing to part with unwanted clothes are facing different barriers, preventing them from engaging in disposal practices. Commonly identified barriers relate to issues of inconvenience and access to recycling schemes as well as limited knowledge about the problem, potential solution and a lack of skills or task specific abilities.

Background

With the rise of fast fashion retailers, offering trendy garments at low prices, a throwaway consumer culture has emerged, with garments being discarded after few time wear (Birtwistle, 2007). Being the main target group of fast fashion retailers, gaining an understanding of young consumers' disposal habits appears to be of utmost importance. With high involvement in fashion products (R. E. Goldsmith, Heitmeyer, J. R., & Freiden, J. B., 1991; O'Cass, 2000), reflected in their high purchasing and disposal frequency of fashion items, young consumers significantly contribute to the increasing amount of textiles in landfills each year (Birtwistle, 2007) (→ KU Young Consumers & Sustainable Fashion Consumption). To give an example, Poulter (2008) reports that the amount of textile waste collected at council refuse points in the U.K. increased by 23% by weight (7-30%) from 2003 to 2008, which suggests that larger quantities of textiles are discarded. However, these statistics need to be handled with some sort of skepticism or caution, as textile waste not only refers to clothing but also factors in carpets or other textile products.

However, excessive fashion consumption and the herewith linked clothing disposal are not only linked to intensifying the landfill problems but increased donations also pose challenges for charity shops. As Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) report, most of the shops have reached their saturation point. Furthermore, increased textile exports to third world countries should not simply be understood as altruistic acts but also as handing on the responsibility of waste management. The burning of excess-stock of donated clothes by the Danish charity organization Kirkens Korshær (Schelde, 2012) can be seen as a recent example of overstrained charity shops that appear helpless in the face of ever increasing clothing donations.

While sustainable fashion consumption is a topic that only recently has gained more attention in the scientific discourse on sustainability (K. Y. Hiller Connel, & Sontag, S. M., 2008; Markkula, 2007), the disposal aspect of consumer behavior has to date not received as much attention yet. In a similar vein, consumers appear to be less aware of their environmental impact when disposing large quantities of textile waste, in comparison with the thought put into the purchase decision making and the factoring in of environmental and ethical questions (Birtwistle, 2007).

Disposal Behavior

So far, most of the studies concerned with clothing disposal behavior have been conducted in the UK and in the US (e.g. Birtwistle, 2007; Domina, 1997; Domina, 2002; Ha-Brookshire, 2009; Morgan, 2009). Example of studies carried out in the Scandinavian context are, to the authors knowledge, limited to Norway (e.g. Klepp, 2001; Laitala, 2011).

Deciding which clothes to dispose of is not always a straight-forward task; a task that is not always voluntarily initiated but brought on the consumer by external circumstances. Triggers for going through ones wardrobe are often seasonal, or, if not life-changing, than at least incisive events, like spring and autumn cleaning, moving in with one's partner, moving into a smaller apartment, or altogether emigrating with two suitcases in your hands (e.g. Laitala, 2011; Paden, 2005). As Laitala and Klepp (2011) report, most participants throw away clothes twice a year in connection with the bi-annual rotation of clothes that is part of the spring and autumn cleaning, with women disposing of clothing more frequently than men.

According to Ha-Brookshire and Hodges (2009), the disposal decision consists of a several-step process: In a first step, the items to be kept are separated from the ones that should be given away. This step is followed by a subjective evaluation of what is still wearable and what not. Those items that are deemed wearable but should leave the closet are further assessed based on the degree of sentimental value attached to them. Pertaining to this, Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) found that "wearability" largely determines how long items of clothing remain in a wardrobe. Their (ibid.) findings suggest that young female fast fashion consumers were not aware of how long they would keep items time wise, with the majority of respondents stating that they would keep items as long as they were considered wearable. However, as the findings reported by Laitala and Klepp (2011) suggest, "unwearable" can not only be understood in terms of items that are worn out but can also cover items that have never or only few times been used. Most of the items that fall into this category have not been tried on before purchase, were acquired in sales or were passed on by family or friends. In these situations, the receiver has frequently limited or no control over the items that are handed down. Thus the responsibility of disposal is passed on with the unwanted garment.

Although wearable, some items of clothing might not be considered for donations if they are considered too intimate, e.g. underwear (Ha-Brookshire, 2009). Similarly, Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) found that consumers would not discard clothing that was considered personally significant. These findings stand in vast contrast to the findings of Domina and Koch (1997) who discovered that personal attachment and investment in clothing might positively contribute to engaging in textile recycling.

The (economic or sentimental) value of clothing does not only determine whether items should be disposed of but also through which channels. As Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) found, cheap fashion items were mainly disposed when the quality would cease, new fashion trends would become available or in cases where the items were bought for a single event. While cheap, low quality garments were simply discarded once they were considered unwearable, more expensive, higher quality items were primarily donated to charity organizations. Charity shops and hand-me-down to family and friends constituted the primary disposal options chosen by respondents, with only few choosing reselling outlets (e.g. eBay, second-hand shops) or swapping events. Engaging in swapping events appears to be especially appealing for those, who are only interested in wearing fashionable items a few times. Similar findings were reported by Ha-Brookshire and Hodges (2009). They (ibid.) report that most participants preferred to give their unwanted items to family members and friends. It can be hypothesized that the choice of disposal site also depends on the degree of sentimental value attached to the clothing items in question.

However, the choice of disposal channel is not only a matter of value. According to Paden and Stell (2005), the choice of redistribution, or rather disposal channel, largely depends on four factor: (1) the consumers knowledge about and experience with redistribution channels, (2) the availability and access of redistribution channels, (3) the perceived costs and benefits associated with redistribution, as well as the (4) influence of social norms and referents. Especially availability and access appear to be factors of high importance, judging by the findings of various studies (e.g. Birtwistle, 2007; Domina, 2002; Ha-Brookshire, 2009; Morgan, 2009). According to Ha-Brookshire and Hodges (2009) the selection of a donation site is primarily based on the convenience of disposal, with consumers expressing little interest in what the donated clothing items would be used for. Factor relating to convenience are location, opening hours, parking facilities, and availability of employees who would accept ones donations. Official donation sites constitute however subordinate outlets for most consumers.

Pertaining to the above, convenience and access do not only determine the choice of disposal channel but can also have a significant impact on the frequency, quantity, and variety of materials recycled (Domina, 2002).

Differences in disposal behavior in terms of demographics factors have, so far, failed to be successful predicators of recycling or disposal behavior (Domina, 1999). As Laitala and Klepp (2011) highlight, most studies on clothing disposal behavior and fashion consumption are gender biased, in the sense that they are either exclusively conducted with female respondents or display a female overrepresentation. Thus results are often gender biased, assuming that female consumers are more concerned. The gender differences found might consequently be highly over exaggerated. According to Laitala and Klepp (2011), only few studies have systematically compared differences in clothing consumption and disposal based on gender. In their attempt to systematically clothing disposal behavior in Norway, Laitala and Klepp (ibid.) found that behavior for both genders can in fact rather be considered to be very similar. The main difference in terms of gender relate to the reasons for clothing disposal. Whereas issues of fit and sizes were more dominant for women than men, men appeared to be more concerned with functional aspects of clothing.

While some findings need to be regarded with some degree of suspicion due to a gender bias in the study design, others need to be handled with care due to the applied antiquated or rather outdated reasoning or interpretation of results. To give an example, Shim (1995) reported that female consumers are more likely to engage in environmentally friendly disposal behavior than males. Male students participating in this survey were more likely to simply discard unwanted items. The authors' explanation for this phenomenon is rooted in traditions, in the sense that taking care of clothing historically speaking falls into the female domain of tasks in the household. Pertaining to this, females are believed to be more knowledgeable when it comes to handling clothes.

However, it is highly questionable whether this gender based distinction can still be considered valid. For certain generations, who were schooled in home economics, this might have been the case. With these classes vanishing from school curricula, it can be assumed that the task-specific knowledge and skills disappeared. It can thus be hypothesized that within today's generation girls are as clueless as boys when it comes to sewing on a button.

Disposal Channels

According to Paden and Stell (2005), disposal decisions can be classified into two groups, depending on whether some sort of redistribution is intended or not. Disposal without redistribution intent thus refers to throwing away unwanted garments, which go directly to the landfill. Alternatively, unwanted garments can also enter different redistribution channels, which can be of direct or indirect nature, with or without remuneration. Direct redistribution without remuneration refers to hand-me-downs, the passing on of unwanted items to individuals. The indirect redistribution without remuneration on the other hand refers to any form of charity that takes over the task of passing the item further on without gaining a profit, or using a potential profit for charitable acts. Garage sales, flea markets, or classified ads constitute examples of direct channels of redistribution with remuneration. Indirect channels that fall into this category cover secondhand retailers, auctions, consignment shops, pawn shops and the like.

Motivation for Clothing Disposal

Different reasons might drive or force consumers to part with some of their clothes. Based on the findings of her 2001 study, Klepp suggests the following typology of disposal reasons: (1) technical or quality related reasons, (2) psychological reasons, (3) situational reasons, (4) "never worn" phenomenon, (5) functional, and (6) sentimental reasons. Technical, psychological, and situational reasons for disposal were found to constitute the most common grounds for disposal.

Although one might expect that one of the primary motives for consumer to engage in clothing donations might be acts of altruism to help society, Ha-Brookshire and Hodges (2009) found that consumers appear to be rather driven by self-oriented motives, namely the wish to create more space in their wardrobes for new things. In that sense clothing disposal is closely related to clothing acquisition. Even though the closet cleaning appears to be connected to feelings of guilt - guilt over (repeated) purchase mistakes, overconsumption, or simply for not wearing an item enough - this guilt does not seem to stop consumers from looking forward to filling their closets up again with new items. The sorting through or identification process of potential disposal items is however not only connected with feeling of guilt over own consumption behavior but also with feelings of

anxiety whether they are making the right choice to keep or to give away items. Feelings of anxiety or guilt disappeared once the participants donated their unwanted items. Cleaning up ones closet thus resulted in the satisfaction of both utilitarian (achieving goal of cleaning up closet) and hedonic values (feeling better by reducing guilt and anxiety).
Similarly, Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) found that young consumers were especially plagued by feelings of guilt in case of expensive, higher quality clothing items that they had seldom or never worn. Donating these items to charity organizations made them feel better, thus provided a source of relief. Intrinsic rewards from helping needy people were also reported by Domina and Koch (1997) to be the major motives for those respondents who prefer to donate their unwanted items to charity organizations. Reuse or reselling via consignment shops or garage sales on the other hand were the most frequently used disposal options for respondents driven by economic or environmental reasons for garments that were still perceived as valuable.
According to Shim (1995), it can be distinguished between seven different disposal patterns, which differ not only in the disposal method (donation, reuse, discarding) chosen but also in their underlying motivation (charity-, environmentally-, convenience-, or economically-motivated act).

The study of consumers' motives for disposing of unwanted clothes is not without methodological challenges, as clothing disposal – especially garbage disposal- can be considered a sensitive topic. This is particularly of interest for qualitative studies, which apply focus group or face-to-face interviews. As Laitala and Klepp (2011) report, only very few respondents admitted to throw their old clothes into the garbage. In the same vein, only very few female respondents admitted that fashion aspects (e.g. out of style, bored with garment) were reasons for disposal. These findings are contrary to findings reported by others (e.g. Birtwistle, 2007; Morgan, 2009).

Barriers and Drivers

Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) found that a general unawareness of the need for and lack of knowledge of the how and where of clothing recycling and its environmental impact constitute main barriers for young female fashion consumers to engage in textile recycling practices. Disliking the idea that someone they know could be seen in their old clothes constitutes another reason for not participating in swapping events or handing down unwanted garments to family or friends.

The frequency of disposal and method chosen can to a large extent be explained by the degree of time and effort required and the familiarity of the disposer with the available clothing disposal options (Domina, 1997). The popularity of the most frequently used methods, i.e. donations to charity, hand-me-downs to family and friends, and use as rags, can according to Domina and Koch (ibid.) to a large extent be explained by the ease of use and the limited degree of planning and preparation required. Similar to time and effort, limited knowledge and product-specific abilities constitute other factors that currently hinder consumers from attempts to modify or reuse their unwanted garments (Domina, 1997).

Tearing down Barriers

As highlighted in the foregoing sections, convenience or ease of access to recycling programs constitutes one of the main drivers that encourage consumers to engage in clothing recycling practices (Birtwistle, 2007; Domina, 1997, 2002; Ha-Brookshire, 2009; Morgan, 2009). The most commonly identified barriers to engaging in clothing recycling related to issues inconvenience and access to such schemes as well as limited knowledge about the problem, potential solution and a lack of skills or task specific abilities. As Thøgersen (2005) highlights, if consumer policy is to empower consumers to change their lifestyles, these efforts should not be limited to reducing individual constraints, e.g. by means of educational programs, but also address external constraints. Applied to the context of textile recycling, this could mean providing consumers with the knowledge about the impact and consequences of the different forms of clothing disposal, how these can be alleviated, and easing access to recycling schemes.

In recent years, some retailers have started to conduct in-store collections as part of their efforts to reduce the environmental impact associated with the industries activities. According to Morley et al. (2009), most of these efforts are small scale, made on a campaign basis. This might explain why volumes are low. In the following, some examples of in-store collections initiated by retailers will be briefly presented.

In order to reduce the amount of textile waste going to landfills each year and support Oxfam in the fight against poverty, British fashion retailer Marks & Spencer and Oxfam have joined forces in 2008. For each bag of unwanted clothing from Marks & Spencer donated at one of Oxfam's charity shops, donators receive a 5£ voucher to be used at Marks & Spencer shops (Marks and Spencer, 2012).

A different waste reduction approach has been adopted by the Japanese casual wear retailer Uniqlo. After introducing a campaign based fleece-only recycling program in Japan in 2001 as part of their CSR efforts, activities were broadened to all clothing items in 2006 when the retailer introduced the All-Product-Recycling-Initiative. As most items collected in-store were still wearable, the initial focus on recycling for industry use shifted to reuse in the form of charitable donations (Environmental Leader LLC., 2011). In partnering with the UN Refugee Agency amongst other organizations, Uniqlo donates clothes to the needy, which are collected in every store in Japan, South Korea, France, U.K. and the US (UNIQLO Co., 2012).

Other examples of waste reduction schemes can be found in the outdoor clothing & gear industry. California-based high-end outdoor clothing company Patagonia launched its Common Thread Program in 2005, which builds on the four pillars reduce, repair, reuse, recycle (Patagonia, 2012). Similar activities are undertaken by the Canadian outdoor recreation gear and clothing consumer cooperative Mountain Equipment Co-op. Amongst other things, the retailer has been running a free of charge outdoor gear online swap for its members since 1997 (Mountain Equipment Co-op, 2012).

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