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Factors Influencing Consumers' Purchase Intention of Green Activewear

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Sustainability has become a key managerial issue in our current society, and both researchers and practitioners are devoting increased attention to this topic as they face the challenge of achieving a balance among environmental, social, and economic needs. Consumers' changing lifestyle aligning with dynamic societal movements makes them become more aware of sustainability-related matters and increase the integration of activewear into their daily attire. This growing attention make apparel companies become more actively engaged into sustainable product design and development practices, which were often led by activewear brands (e.g., Nike, Patagonia). However, little research exists the impacts of consumers' perception (a form of a consumer's hypothesis) and expectation (a consumer's mental impression of a stimulus object) on their purchase intention of green activewear.

The purpose of this study was to examine key factors that influence consumers' purchase intention of green activewear using the modified theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Two specific research objectives were to examine: (1) the differences between consumers who had experience and no experience of purchasing green activewear and (2) the important predictors of purchase intention of green activewear. The hypotheses stated as perception, expectation, subjective norm, and perceived behavior control would positively influence consumers' attitude toward the use of green activewear. It was also hypothesized that perception, expectation, subjective norm, perceived behavior control, and attitude would positively influence consumers' purchase intention of green activewear (see Figure 1).

An online survey was conducted with a nationwide convenience sample of U.S. consumers purchased from one of reliable market service companies. All variables were measured by adapting existing, reliable measures from previous studies using a 7-point Likert-type scale, except for attitude using a 7-point semantic differential scale. The quantitative data

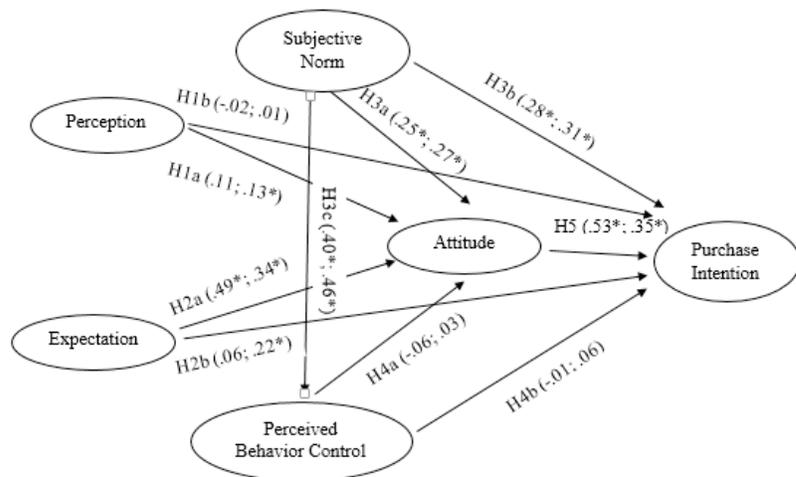


Figure 1. Conceptual framework (NG₁=134; NG₂=408).

Note. Path coefficients and its significance level is included in parenthesis. First and second values are for group 1 and group 2, respectively.

were analyzed using SPSS 21 and Mplus 7.0. A total of 542 usable data were categorized into two groups for the analysis: group 1 non-green product users ($N_{G1}=134$) and group 2 green product users ($N_{G2}=408$). The participant's ages ranged from 18 to 74 years with the mean age of 33. Approximately 53% of participants were females and 47% were males. The majority was White/European American (75.3%) followed by Black/African American (8.4%), Asian (6.7%), and others (9.7%). Ninety percent of the participants had at least college degree.

Exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed on all variables. All factors were extracted and accounted for 77% of the total variance. All measures displayed acceptable reliability of .80 or above. An overall confirmatory factor analysis was then conducted to verify convergent and discriminant validity. The measurement model for constructs revealed an acceptable model fit for both group 1 ($\chi^2=464.569$, $df=291$, $p=0.000$, CFI=.95, TLI=.93, RMSEA=.07) and group 2 ($\chi^2=516.206$, $df=291$, $p=0.000$, CFI=.98, TLI=.97, RMSEA=.04). Structural equation modeling (SEM) with a maximum-likelihood estimation procedure was used to test the hypotheses for each group, separately. The SEM test demonstrated an acceptable model fit for both group 1 ($\chi^2=471.272$, $df=296$, $p=0.000$, CFI=.95, TLI=.93, RMSEA=.07) and group 2 ($\chi^2=553.508$, $df=296$, $p=0.000$, CFI=.97, TLI=.97, RMSEA=.05).

For both groups, there were positive influences of expectation and subjective norm on attitude, and positive influences of subjective norm and attitude on purchase intention. No direct significant effects of expectation and perception on attitude and purchase intention were found for non-green activewear users; however, for green activewear users, there were significant direct effects of expectation and perception on attitude, and expectation on purchase intention. It may be because green activewear users have more awareness of eco- or green products since they have previously used green products. Subjective norm was the most important predictor for consumers' purchase intention of green activewear in a direct or indirect way. Although no significant effects of expectation and perception on purchase intention were found among non-green activewear users, the positive influence of subjective norm on purchase intention was found within this group, which indicates apparel (activewear) companies can disseminate their sustainable practices through enhancing social influence of important referents. Participants who have favorable attitudes toward purchasing green products would be likely to express stronger intents to purchase other green products such as green activewear in the future. For non-green product users, the companies can enhance their awareness of green products by providing more educational information about sustainability practices in design and development.

This study provides implications for apparel industry on the way to increase its sustainable activewear line by understanding various factors that influence to consumers' purchase intention. This study is unique in a way that perception and expectation were examined within the frame of consumer's planned behavior. The uneven number of sample size between two groups, particularly small sample size for non-green product users, is one of limitations for this study. Future study should amplify sample size and consider other factors (e.g., age, culture) that can influence consumers' purchase intention of green activewear.

Reference

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 50(2), 179-211.