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Jessica Padilla  
*California State Polytechnic University- Pomona*

Rialyn Espinosa  
*California State Polytechnic University- Pomona*

Sara Biernesser-Kuhn  
*California State Polytechnic University- Pomona*

Bryan Clark  
*California State Polytechnic University- Pomona*

Chitra Srivastava Dabas  
*California State Polytechnic University- Pomona, csdabas@cpp.edu*

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Millennial Purchase Intentions for USA Made Apparel

Jessica Padilla, Rialyn Espinosa, Sara Biernesser-Kuhn, Bryan Clark, Dr. Chitra S. Dabas
California State Polytechnic University- Pomona

Keywords: Made in US apparel, Empathy, Involvement, Awareness, Price perception

**Research background:** There has been much research related to the apparel purchase intentions of millennials in response to socially responsible marketing and labeling. According to data gathered from the Pew Research Center, 21% of millennials claim that helping others in need is a top priority in their lives (Kuhot et al., 2010). Millennials are world-minded, well informed and have greater awareness of sustainability issues (Jankovska et al., 2015). This 21% of the millennial population outweighs the other generations before them who also were asked to rate the value of helping others (Kuhot et al., 2010). Much research today has focused around the effects of socially responsible labeling, as it relates to sustainable fibers, current labor issues, and charitable causes, on the purchase intentions of millennials. For example, the study completed by Hyllegard et al. (2013) stated that 23% of Americans read the hangtags on apparel products. In addition, hangtags with socially responsible component received positive evaluations from college students (Hyllegard et al., 2013). Currently, approx., 90% of apparel purchased in the United States is sourced overseas (Jin & Farr, 2010). However, according to some apparel industry professionals, it is believed that apparel production will possibly grow within the United States (Halter et al., 2013). In addition, potential changes in import duties can increase the need for local sourcing for apparel brands. Little research exits on what leads American millennials to look for and purchase products labeled as made in the USA. By understanding the influential factors that entice millennials to actively search for and purchase USA made products, brands can judge the viability of marketing USA made apparel products to this cohort.

**Literature and Hypotheses:** Consumer involvement refers to the involvement in certain product category and relates to their knowledge of that product category. Millennials who are more involved in fashion products will have more knowledge about apparels in general and also about products made in US. With access to relevant information through the internet, Millennials consumers are empowered to make more socially conscious decisions (Lee & Hill, 2012). Socially conscious clothing, ethical clothing, or eco-fashion aware brands are looked at as brands that do not use sweatshops, specifically offshore sweatshops, and care about the way their products are made (Shen, Wang, Lo, & Shum, 2012). The more the individual knows about these issues, the more likely they are to purchase from these brands (Shen, et al., 2012). Product involvement and awareness will also influence their empathetic attitude towards the made in US product and their desire to support those. The buying behaviors and habits of millennial consumers differ from previous generations. Millennial consumers buy products that help define who they are, what is important to them, and what they value in life (Ordun, 2015). As conscious consumers, Millennials are thought to be financially savvy and looking for quality and value for their dollar (Bucic et al., 2012). They are more likely to justify the price of made in US products by its impact in society. They will perceive product prices and worth the cause. Socially responsible consumers empathize with the welfare of others when it comes to making purchase decisions with no intention of receiving something in return. The purchase of apparel produced...
in the United States will demonstrate the millennial consumers concern for protecting the environment, supporting social justice, and equality. Millennials meet their emotional needs through purchasing apparel products from socially responsible brands. Based on previous research, following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Millennials who are more involved apparel products, in general, will be (a) more aware of Made in US apparel products and (b) will empathize with the importance of USA made apparel

Hypothesis 2: Millennials who are aware of USA made apparel products are more likely to empathize with the importance of USA made apparel.

H3: Millennials who empathize with the importance of USA made apparel will actively seek Made in US apparels, (b) will have positive price perception for Made in US apparels and (c) will have positive purchase intentions towards Made in US apparels.

H4: Millennials who will have positive price perception towards Made in US apparels will actively seek Made in US apparels.

Method: For this research study, a structured questionnaire was administered using online survey. Valid and reliable measures from previous studies were used and adapted to fit the current context. Each item was measured on a five point Likert scale. College student population was used to collect data as they represented the millennial population of interest for this study. Total of 81 usable responses were collected and analyzed to test hypotheses. Scale reliability ranged between 0.67 and .91. The proposed model was tested using structural equation modeling in AMOS 24.0. The structural model exhibited an acceptable fit with the following indices: $\chi^2 = 10.468$ with df=8, $p = .234$, CFI = .981, TLI = .950, and RMSEA = .069.

Result and Discussion: All hypotheses were supported by the structural model. Prior research, related to the purchasing behavior of Millennials, suggested that the Millennial generation can be considered conscious consumers who tend to make prosocial purchasing decisions whenever possible. The supported hypotheses of the study justify the conclusions made by prior research which claim that Millennials choose to purchase goods connected to a prosocial cause, in this case purchasing apparel produced in the United States. By raising awareness among the Millennial population about brands who produce in the United States, brands can increase the amount of proactive seeking and purchase intentions for their USA made apparel. Results also indicate that higher prices of local production may not be a big issue with Millennials who are moving towards buying better and buying less. Those who empathize with the specific cause of US made apparels may find prices to be reasonable and seek those products. These results have major implications of local apparel producers in US.

References:


