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Comparison between Second-Hand Apparel Shoppers versus Non-Shoppers:  
The Role of Psychographics and Ethical Decision Making

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Keywords: Consumer ethics, ethical consumerism, second-hand apparel

**Justification and Purpose** Alternative consumption channels have received increased attention among researchers due to consumers' growing interest. Beyond its economic advantages, second-hand apparel has been a niche market for consumers in western countries by offering unique styles of clothing and recreational benefits of shopping. In accordance with the growing consumer concern for the environment, some conventional apparel companies have performed recycling marketing strategies and encouraged consumers to exchange used clothing in their stores. In spite of the importance of purchasing used apparel for the sake of the environment, there is little understanding about second-hand apparel shoppers in association with their ethical decision making. The purpose of this study is to examine how second-hand apparel shoppers differ from non-shoppers by focusing on psychographic characteristics of such shoppers and their purchase and post-purchase decision making.

**Literature Review and Hypothesis Development** Ethical consumerism and consumer ethics are two major research streams of ethical consumer behavior (Chatzidakis & Mitussis, 2007). While ethical consumerism refers to a consumer purchase practice in consideration of ethical issues that influence the environment and society (Uusitalo & Oksanen, 2004), consumer ethics focuses on consumer misbehavior during the purchase or post-purchase stage (Dodge, Edwards, & Fullerton, 1996). Second-hand apparel markets have been an important research topic among researchers in association with consumers' shopping motives, concerns about contamination, and environmental issues. Second-hand apparel is considered one particular type of socially responsible products because it preserves resources and reduces waste by extending the lifetime of a garment through the exchange process of product ownership (Farrant, Olsen, & Wang, 2010). In relation to environmental issues, researchers investigated if consumers acquire clothing through second-hand sources in an effort to conserve the environment (Connell, 2011). Altruism, ethical concern, and ethical obligation have been identified as important antecedents of ethical consumer behavior. The theory of value-attitude-behavior hierarchy (Homer & Kahle, 1988) explains the processes of ethical decision making. Based on the literature review, the three hypotheses were developed:

H1: Second-hand shoppers differ from non-shoppers regarding their altruism, ethical concern, and ethical obligation.

H2: Second-hand shoppers differ from non-shoppers regarding their attitudes toward social responsibility in the apparel and textiles industry.

H3: Second-hand shoppers differ from non-shoppers regarding their socially responsible apparel purchasing intention and ethical returning intention.

**Method** Data were collected through a store intercept survey from 302 consumers ( $M = 25.7$  years, female 60.3% and male 39.7%) who were shopping for apparel. Almost 60% of the participants ( $n = 166$ ) confirmed that they had purchased at second-hand apparel stores. Except for ethical concern (Factor 1: concern for environment and Factor 2: concern for production) and ethical obligation (Factor 1: personal contribution and Factor 2: self obligation), all constructs emerged as one factor. Factor analyses results informed that all multi-item scales have acceptable reliabilities ranging from .76 to .92.

**Findings** An independent samples  $t$  test was conducted to investigate differences between second-hand shoppers and non-shoppers on a range of ethical variables. Consumers who shopped for second-hand apparel were significantly higher from those who did not on concern for environment ( $M_{\text{shoppers}} = 5.73$  vs.  $M_{\text{non-shoppers}} = 5.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ), concern for production ( $M_{\text{shoppers}} = 4.72$  vs.  $M_{\text{non-shoppers}} = 4.33$ ,  $p < .01$ ), self obligation ( $M_{\text{shoppers}} = 4.46$  vs.  $M_{\text{non-shoppers}} = 4.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ), socially responsible attitudes ( $M_{\text{shoppers}} = 5.24$  vs.  $M_{\text{non-shoppers}} = 4.86$ ,  $p < .01$ ), socially responsible apparel purchasing intention ( $M_{\text{shoppers}} = 5.69$  vs.  $M_{\text{non-shoppers}} = 5.07$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and ethical post-purchase returning intention ( $M_{\text{shoppers}} = 6.24$  vs.  $M_{\text{non-shoppers}} = 5.86$ ,  $p < .01$ ). However, second-hand shoppers were not different from non-shoppers on altruism ( $M_{\text{shoppers}} = 5.72$  vs.  $M_{\text{non-shoppers}} = 5.48$ ,  $p = .067$ ) and personal contribution ( $M_{\text{shoppers}} = 4.88$  vs.  $M_{\text{non-shoppers}} = 4.62$ ,  $p = .079$ ).

**Conclusions and Implications** Findings revealed that second-hand apparel shoppers have concerns about the negative impact of apparel production processes on the environment, and feel obligation to solve the problems through their efforts. They also possess positive attitudes toward socially responsible business practices in the apparel industry. Further, second-hand shoppers were identified as ethical consumers who are more likely to purchase other types of socially responsible apparel (e.g., organic, recycled, sweatshop-free, or fair trade apparel), and to practice ethical returning behavior. Because second-hand shoppers are more conscious about the environment and show patronage intentions to support socially responsible apparel companies, marketers of second-hand retailers may use this information for sales performance through advertising campaigns. Conventional companies may hold events where second-hand goods are exchanged among consumers, or stage vintage fashion shows with used apparel for socially responsible campaigns. As ethical decision makers during the purchase and post-purchase stages, second-hand apparel shoppers are an important niche market for apparel companies.

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