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Mijeong Noh
Ohio University, noh@ohio.edu

Carmen Keist
Bradley University, ckeist@fsmail.bradley.edu

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INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP OF SUSTAINABILITY CONSCIOUSNESS TO CHOICE INTENTION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' FUTURE SUSTAINABLE HANDMADE WEDDING DRESS

Mijeong Noh, Ohio University, USA
Carmen Keist, Bradley University, USA

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Handcrafted, a synonym for handmade, are products made by hand in a skilled way opposed to mass-production often using machinery (Cobuild, 2003, Wikidiff, n.d.). Handmade apparel is not always sustainable and mass produced apparel can be sustainable, but handmade apparel often evokes emotional attachment resulting in long-term use (DeLong, Lee, Min, & Casto, 2013). In that case, the handmade apparel can be sustainable. Sustainable handmade apparel has an extended life cycle, reduced waste and energy saving, compared with mass produced apparel in fast fashion cycle (Hethorn, 2015). Consumers must be aware of effect of the sustainability practices on apparel acquisition because sustainable practices exert an influence on consumers. Despite several existing studies on apparel production and consumption related to sustainability, researchers have yet to address the question of whether sustainable practice consciousness impacts apparel acquisition of certain sustainable handmade wedding dress.

Lee and DeLong (2017) found that teenagers reported they used handcrafted items for an average of 2.35 years and felt that these items were more sustainable over purchased items. Based on current wedding trends of millennials, more women might choose a handmade wedding dress that can be worn for more than the wedding day and worn for additional occasions.

Hedonic (e.g., adventure) and utilitarian values (e.g., cost savings) motivate search and purchase intention in online shopping environment (To, Liao, & Lin, 2007). Given this finding, the researchers presume that consumers' hedonic/utilitarian values are likely to affect their choice intention of sustainable handmade wedding dress according to consumer decision-making process. The research aims were to determine: 1) What are college students' perception of handmade wedding dresses for the future? 2) Does college students' sustainability consciousness relate to their choice intention of sustainable handmade wedding dress for the future? and 3) Do hedonic/utilitarian attitudes mediate the relationship between college students' sustainability consciousness and their choice intention of sustainable handmade wedding dress for the future? Therefore, answering these research questions provides fashion educators with useful information as they discuss this sustainable apparel consumption behavior with their fashion students.

Method

Instruments and Data Collection

The researchers used 7 items (e.g., keeping it longer) to measure need for handmade wedding dress (DeLong et al., 2013) and 7 items (e.g., having garments made of recycled materials) to measure sustainability consciousness (Fulton & Lee, 2010). To measure hedonic/utilitarian

attitude toward choosing a sustainable handmade wedding dress, they employed 8 items (e.g., choosing a sustainable handmade wedding dress was truly a joy) (Scarpi, 2006). They used 2 items (e.g., how likely is it that you occasionally think about choosing a sustainable handmade wedding dress for your wedding?) and some expressions of the items were modified to reflect the research objective (Kim & Lennon, 2000). The items were based on 7-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The online survey was conducted with college students enrolled at Midwestern universities.

Participants

A total of 116 undergraduate and graduate students' responses were used to analyze data. Respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 50 years, ($m = 21$). Respondents were female (82.8%), Caucasian (78.4%), Asian (7.8%), African-American (3.4%), freshman (5.2%), sophomore (22.4%), junior (39.7%), senior (25%) and graduate students (2.6%). Their yearly taxable income was less than \$10,000 (73.3%). They will spend for sustainable handmade wedding dress, which will be between \$500 and \$599 (28.4%) or \$1,000 or more (37.9%).

Validity and Reliability

A principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to evaluate the measurement of each construct. The researchers deleted one item from sustainability consciousness measurement scale and one item from hedonic/utilitarian attitude measurement scale because of low factor loadings (below .60). Except for the deleted items, the factor loadings were above of .60, indicating acceptable convergent validity. Reliabilities with Cronbach's alphas for need for handmade wedding dress, sustainability consciousness, hedonic/utilitarian attitude, and sustainable handmade wedding dress choice intention construct were 0.80, 0.93, 0.89 and 0.78 respectively, exceeding the suggested level of .70. Next, the researchers performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for the measurement scales. The results showed an overall good fit ($\chi^2 = 185.717$; $df = 87$; $\chi^2/df = 2.135$; $p = .000$; CFI = .92; IFI = .92; RMSEA = .08). The average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct was greater than .50, confirming construct validity. The correlation coefficients (ranged from .33 to .72) between constructs were less than .8, indicating discriminant validity.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics (i.e., mean and standard deviation) were calculated for the measured items to figure out the reasons they need a handmade wedding dress for the future. The top three reasons scored high include emotional attachment ($m=5.84$, $SD = 1.45$), preference of unique design (stylish) ($m=5.84$, $SD = 1.33$), and feeling happy ($m=5.75$, $SD = 1.49$). Other reasons demonstrate the need for handmade wedding dress: Feeling comfortable ($m=5.73$, $SD = 1.53$), acquiring valuable things, which are important to me ($m=5.58$, $SD = 1.58$), keeping longer ($m=5.33$, $SD = 1.76$), and saving money because of one-time use ($m=5.20$, $SD = 1.81$). To compare the need for handmade wedding dress between female and male students, t-test was conducted. Only two reasons including keeping it longer (t-value= -2.53, $p < .05$) and emotional attachment (t-value = -2.82, $p < .01$) demonstrated the significant differences between two groups. Female college students need a handmade wedding dress for the future more because of long use and their positive emotional bond than male college students.

Hypothesis Testing

Single-group structural equation modeling (SEM) with the maximum likelihood estimation using Amos 19.0 was performed to evaluate the model fit and to test hypotheses H1 to H3 (figure1).

The proposed conceptual model had a significant chi-square statistic ($\chi^2 = 158.791$; $df = 85$; χ^2/df

= 1.868; $p = .000$; CFI = .94; IFI = .94; RMSEA = .08), indicating a good model fit. The significant structural relationship of sustainability consciousness to choice intention of sustainable handmade wedding dress (path coefficient = .28) was found, which supports H1. Sustainability consciousness was positively related to hedonic/utilitarian attitudes (path coefficient = .33), which supports H2. Also, hedonic/utilitarian attitudes were positively related to choice intention (path coefficient = .63), which supports H3. These results are consistent with To et al. (2007)'s study, which found the positive relationship of hedonic and utilitarian motivations to purchase intention. The findings indicated the full mediation effect for hedonic/utilitarian attitudes between sustainability consciousness and choice intention.

Implications and limitations

These findings can help both educators and college students understand the importance of sustainability consciousness to sustainable choice of handmade wedding dress because a large percentage of young consumers tend to buy wedding dress for the future and wedding dress might be discarded. The wedding dress purchase must be managed in a sustainable way. This study has a limitation that prevents us from generalizing the results to the young consumer population due to sample size to college students enrolled in major Midwestern universities.

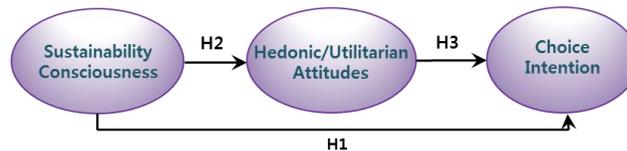


Figure 1

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