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Consumer Behavior and Eco-Friendly Fashion Apparel

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CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND ECO-FRIENDLY FASHION APPAREL

A Research Paper

Presented to the Graduate Faculty

Of the Department of STEM Education and Professional Studies

Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the

Master of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies

By

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APPROVAL PAGE

This research paper was prepared by Christine C. Montero under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Studies. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“The big joke in the organic advocacy world is that one day we’ll have a shirt we can eat,” says Rebecca Calahan-Klein, president of nonprofit group Organic Exchange (Jana, 2006, p.1). The fashion apparel industry is following the footsteps of the food industry in the efforts to produce products from certified organic materials, without the use of harmful chemicals. Regarding the clothing business, the main accomplishment has been pesticide-free cotton, otherwise known as organic cotton. Naturally, these products are intended to appeal to the same eco-friendly consumers already hooked on organic food. This is the target group of the eco-friendly fabric business.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to determine consumer behavior toward eco-friendly fashion lines in order to increase sales.

RESEARCH GOALS

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. Will consumers who currently purchase organic products be more likely to purchase from clothing brands that have an eco-friendly fashion line?
2. Will consumers be more likely to purchase clothing from an eco-friendly line if the apparel brand has marketed it as such before purchase?
3. Will consumers feel that eco-friendly fashion is trendy or not fashionable?
4. Will consumers be more likely to purchase eco-friendly fashion if their apparel brand of choice produces an eco-friendly line?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Apparel manufacturers facing the to-be-or-not-to-be-organic question have it easier than Whole Foods, a supermarket that specializes in high-end and organic foods, in that a large market of consumers willing to pay up for organic products is well established (Jana, 2006). Therefore, the big-brand clothing makers and sellers are veering toward this environmental trend more quickly than they did in the food market. Apparel accounts for the largest proportion of merchandise given out in incentive programs every year; fifty-five percent of companies reported offering eco-friendly apparel in the April issue of *Incentive Merchandise Facts Report* (Smith, 2007).

Perceptions of green can help drive business in all industries. For example, the Toyota Prius is the world's first mass-produced gas-electric hybrid vehicle to hit the one million mark in sales. And its popularity is going strong amid surging gas prices and growing concerns about the environment (Kageyama, 2008). The Prius makes the statement that one is more earth friendly, not necessarily about the mileage. But the real concern is that consumers lose sight of the fact is if one is better off having a Toyota Corolla that gets forty miles to the gallon on the highway than someone else who drives a one hundred-four thousand dollar Lexus hybrid, which is technically a hybrid, but gets approximately twenty-two miles per gallon.

Does going green work as a marketing tool? Will a green label help eco-friendly fashion companies sell apparel? Are the same consumers who are purchasing green products, purchasing the often more expensive eco-friendly

fashion? What helps to drive the eco-friendly purchase - the statement or the consumer demographics?

The relationship between the green marketing movement and consumer behavior is an important topic to a wide range of subject areas. The compilation of data from this research will add to the database of common factors that impacted the relationship between these two variables. It will assist in filling the gap of knowledge between the reasoning why consumers purchase, often more expensive, eco-friendly apparel lines. In the end, it is the consumers who dictate where the market will go. Consumer wants and needs create a cycle of consumer demand, industry catering to that demand, and finally, consumer acceptance with the purchase of merchandise in the retail market (Frings, 2008). The overview of this study could assist in marketing efforts by the eco-friendly fashion lines and their knowledge of consumer behavior. It could also assist fashion apparel companies in determining whether or not to produce an eco-friendly line.

LIMITATIONS

The following were limitations to this research study:

- The participants of this study were chosen from Dollar Tree Stores, Inc. employees within the Corporate Merchandising Department.
- The apparel brands named in this study were: H&M, Esprit, Wal-Mart, Gaiam, Nike, Patagonia, and Levi Strauss & Co.

ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions were made in this study:

- The participants were fashion conscious in their purchasing decisions.
- The participants consisted of both males and females.
- The participants were active consumers in today's society.
- The participants have been exposed to the positive go green campaign phenomena as it is vastly apparent at this particular economic time.

PROCEDURES

Information for this study was compiled through the review of literature. The literature provided a foundation for a questionnaire that was developed. The review of literature was conducted related to the research variables of eco-friendly fashion lines and their influence on the general public.

The researcher developed a survey that was used to generate findings in relation to the research goals. Survey questions were developed to determine if consumers had purchased eco-friendly fashion lines. Additional information would reveal why the consumers have or have not purchased products from eco-friendly lines.

The survey was distributed at the Dollar Tree Stores, Inc. workplace by the researcher, who is an employee of the aforementioned company. The researcher distributed the surveys in the Dollar Tree Stores, Inc. workplace through the use of an inbox located on the participant's desk. The researcher

was not present when the surveys were administered. The survey packet included a cover letter, instructions, and a survey. The survey was returned via postal mail in a pre-addressed envelope to the researcher. The researcher then calculated the findings using statistical methods and made a conclusion.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definitions were important to this study.

Fashion: a style that is accepted and used by the majority of groups at any one time (Stone, 2007).

Line: assortment of new designs offered by manufacturers to their customers, usually on a seasonal basis (Stone, 2007).

Organic cotton: to be accredited as organic, cotton farmers must adhere to strict guidelines, eschewing pesticides and chemical fertilizers. On average, organic cotton farms use twenty-five percent less water than traditional ones (Smith, 2007).

Bamboo: fast-growing bamboo regenerates rapidly without the use of pesticides. Material made from bamboo fiber is appealingly soft to the touch and naturally anti-bacterial (Smith, 2007).

Soy: soy fabrics reuse a by-product of soy products (soy milk, soybean oil, and tofu) to create a material with a feel and look similar to silk (Smith, 2007).

Eco-friendly: environmentally friendly and nature friendly are synonyms used to refer to goods and services considered to inflict minimal or no harm on the environment.

Go green movement: an environmental social movement, which seeks to influence the political process by lobbying, activism, and education in order to protect natural resources and ecosystems.

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter I introduced the background and significance of eco-friendly fashion and organic fabrics, which involved following strict production guidelines and then influence on the consumer. The limitations were that participants were chosen within random corporate workplaces and could not be controlled. The assumptions of this study were that the participants were fashion conscience when making a purchasing decision, they were both male and female, and they have been exposed to any form of marketing from the go green movement in today's society. Definitions were also presented, which helped to determine their meaning in relation of this study.

In Chapter II, the researcher conducted a review of literature to further gain knowledge of eco-friendly influence on the fashion lines and consumer behavior. This chapter provided a deeper understanding of eco-friendly fabric influences on fashion production and consumer behavior.

In Chapter III, the researcher used the information gained through the literature to develop a survey that would determine if consumers purchased eco-friendly fashion lines. This chapter provided further details regarding the methods used to conduct the research.

In Chapter IV, the findings of the data collected were reported. The survey data helped to answer the research goals. Chapter V includes a

summary, conclusion, and recommendations, which were drawn from the research. Conclusions were drawn about the consumers who purchased a product from an eco-friendly fashion apparel line. Recommendations were made regarding the general findings within the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

When analyzing the relationship between eco-friendly fashion lines and consumers, it was important to review other research on these topics. This review was performed to provide a deeper understanding of eco-friendly designs and consumer behavior. Chapter II was divided into four sections where the following topics were discussed: 1) consumer behavior in fashion, 2) challenges of environmental fashion, 3) the greening of the fashion industry, and 4) why now?

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN FASHION

For this research, it is important to understand why people purchase fashion, a term used in this research to refer to clothing and accessories worn at a particular time by a group of people. Also, it is essential to recognize how consumers have purchased fashion thus far and what impact that has had on the environment.

Fashion is everywhere. It involves our outward, visible lives and is an expression of who we are. It has an impact on every stage of life. People began covering their bodies with clothes to keep warm and be modest. Pressure from peer groups and changes in lifestyle influence the type of adornment considered acceptable in a particular time for a particular group (Stone, 2007). However, the reasons people choose to dress have not changed, to keep warm or cool, but we are very much influenced by desire to dress. Because we are social animals, clothing is a social statement; it is forceful and highly visible medium of

communication. The information that is passed along to others by a single garment could be who a person is, who a person is not, and who a person would like to be.

Culturally, fashion impacts our architecture, music, and museums. Historically, dwellings and clothing have been essential to humanity's survival, both providing protection from the environment in different ways (Stone, 2007).

The key used to be status and wealth - fashion was only for the elite and 'trickled down' to the masses as described by Simmel (1972) at the start of the twentieth century in classic fashion theory. Much like today, fashion was aspirational and based on change. For consumers, being seen as 'up to date' and not 'out of fashion' was vital. Stimulated by the need for military uniforms, came mass-production at the start of the twentieth century. More practical and stylish clothing became readily available, by the rise of the ready-to-wear industry. Clothing factories produced garments at a high rate and fashion was within the reach of more and more working people. Thus, the consumer society began to emerge.

In the last fifteen years, fashion has become faster and cheaper. Global communications and marketing, together with increased competition and the growth of offshore manufacturing, have fuelled demand and higher consumer expectations. This is an unsustainable position for fashion in both the medium and long term. As Katharine Hamnett reiterates: "How we consume shapes the future of the planet" (Black, 2008, p. 11). The current focus on fashion and sustainability is due to the convergence of

many environmental and commercial factors, together with changing cultural and social norms.

The clothing and textile sector is a significant economic player, employing over a billion people worldwide. Relative to income, clothes are now far cheaper than they were a few decades ago. Clothing sales have increased by sixty percent in the last ten years. We now consume one third more clothing than even four years ago and discard it after wearing just a few times or indeed, even once (University of Cambridge, 2006). Cheap fashion means disposable fashion, and encourages more consumption, creating a vicious circle. How can we change this to a more virtuous cycle (Black, 2008, p. 11)?

CHALLENGES OF ENVIRONMENTAL FASHION

With many companies introducing an array of eco-friendly garments with various fabrics, there comes a question of supply and demand. These eco-friendly fabrics do not come cheap. How much are fashion clothing companies willing to spend on producing their products if the consumer is hesitant on purchasing the more expensive alternative? Linda Lundstrom, one of Canada's top fashion designers has been pushing her strong environmental initiatives for the past two decades.

That's the moral dilemma, Lundstrom said. I can get fabric that's less money and looks the same. The earth-friendly dye process isn't without glitches. You can't get the same colors as with synthetic dyes, Lundstrom admitted. It's expensive to produce more environmentally friendly fabrics.

In her letter to suppliers, Lundstrom told them: “We believe that the heart and soul of a company is what they do for no commercial reason, with no guarantee of financial success, but simply because it’s the right thing to do (Seiberling, 2007, p. 1).

The demand for textile fiber worldwide is increasing with two fibers dominating the expanding market: cotton and polyester. Polyester has now overtaken cotton as the single most popular textile material, over the last fifteen years its demand has doubled. Surveys repeatedly show that there has been tremendous confusion over the sustainability impacts of producing textile materials (Fletcher, 2008). Synthetic fibers are commonly seen as ‘bad’ and natural fibers as ‘good’.

Taking the sector as a whole, the areas of greatest impact in the lifecycle phase of producing fibers with minimizing impact on the environment are as follows:

- Large quantities of water and pesticides required for growing cotton.
- Emissions to air and water arising from producing synthetic and cellulosic fibers.
- Adverse impacts on water linked to natural fiber production.
- Significant use of energy and non-renewable resources for synthetics (Fletcher, 2008, p. 7).

THE GREENING OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Given this background that fashion is a cultural, economic, or social

phenomenon, the concept of eco-fashion may seem a contradiction. Whether a garment is made from organic cotton, recycled fabrics or made for less waste, a new wave is changing the way sustainable and ethically sourced material is being perceived. Eco-fashion is becoming quite stylish.

This eco-fashion movement came to life in the mid-1970s, from the hippie revolution. Back then, it was considered more anti-fashion and characterized by alternative lifestyles from home made, ethnic, and hand-crafted fabrics as the norm. The second wave appeared more commercially in the nineties. Esprit, an eco-aware company based in San Francisco since the 1960s launched their Ecollection in 1994. Esprit's environmental charter was ambitious and wide reaching, including plans to:

- Maximize product life through classic design and durable construction.
- Eliminate or minimize the use of manmade fibers.
- Minimize load on landfills - use recycled and biodegradable materials.
- Encourage sustainable agriculture and farming.
- Work with businesses that share our ethical and environmental goals.
- Influence the fashion industry (Black, 2008, p. 12).

These plans serve as basic guidelines that most apparel companies, who have eco-friendly intentions, have progressed toward. In the last few years, more small, ethical, and ecologically motivated fashion companies have been established. The momentum and debate has grown exponentially. The major commercial impact will be from the difference that the large high street and

designer brand companies can make throughout their decision-making and value chains, due to their purchasing power and economic significance (Black, 2008).

H&M featured organic cotton in its babies' and children's lines of clothing and sold out a limited-edition organic cotton T-shirt by hip designer Stella McCartney in 2005 (Jana, 2006). After Wal-Mart announced its plans to double its organic food in March of 2006, it then debuted the George Baby line of infant clothes made with one hundred percent organic cotton. Both Nike and Patagonia have made public commitments to use renewable materials in their products. Nike has planned on integrating a minimum of five percent certified organically grown cotton into all cotton containing apparel, globally by 2010 (Jana, 2006).

Levi Strauss & Co. has introduced a line of organic cotton jeans, which feature natural dyes and a tag made of recycled paper and printed with environmentally friendly soy ink. This premium label, Capital E, jeans bear a hefty price tag of two hundred fifty dollars, largely because organic cotton is rare.

Apparel companies are not stopping at organic cotton; there are many other earth-friendly fabrics that are being used. In addition to its lines of organic cotton clothing, Gaiam is looking into using materials made from soy and bamboo (it already has an ActiveSoy collection that uses a blend of organic cotton and soybean oil) (Smith, 2007).

WHY NOW?

Today, consumers and designers are faced with terms such as 'sustainable', 'organic', 'green', 'fair trade', 'ethical', 'eco', 'bio', and 'environmental'. Terminology such as this needs to be understood so consumers

can make informed choices. Fashion purchasing decisions are based on desire more than need. The industry needs to achieve some balance so that clothes regain some of their long-term value and become less disposable. If consumers and designers are better informed they could be inspired to understand the complexities and how everyone can make their contribution.

It is up to both consumers and the emerging generation of new design thinkers to be the catalysts to energize and implement a range of new approaches (Black, 2008). Designer's roles inherently have ethical and ecological implications - responsibilities for choices in materials and production processes and changing to embrace sustainable technology.

Since fashion is both a verb and a noun (i.e., something that is created, expressed, and worn by people), fashion offers myriad opportunities for people to take sustainable actions (Hethorn & Ulasewicz, 2008). Many have asked the question, "why now?" It is important to recognize the following to identify the place our society lies within this new fashion frontier:

- The over consumption of clothing is based on an old model and is not fashionable.
- People have the power to support with their purchases the growth of sustainable practices of retailers and manufacturers.
- Sustainable fashion can enhance the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of people.
- People are the driving force behind sustainable choices in the fashion industry (Hethorn & Ulasewicz, 2008, p. 5).

The final question remains, can we resolve the fashion paradox of transience and sustainability? The issue lies within many facets of the fashion industry. This chapter has touched on the five principles of fashion, which are the foundations of this industry as outlined by Elaine Stone, 2007 in *The Dynamics of Fashion*. First, consumers establish fashions by accepting or rejecting the styles offered. Designers would not be successful without the acceptance of the consumer; therefore, the consumer is the driving force behind fashion purchasing power. Second, fashions are not based on price. Even though a style may be costly, it does not guarantee success. What one pays for an item is not an indication of the item being seen as fashionable. The designer's predicament is whether or not to spend the money on going green in his or her fashion line based on the high cost of the eco-friendly movement. Third, fashions are evolutionary in nature. The eco-fashion wave has begun and designers and apparel companies alike have accepted this change. Fourth, no amount of sales promotion can change the direction in which fashions are moving. Promotional efforts on consumers cannot dictate what they will buy, nor can they force people to buy what they do not want. The research survey conducted will help to determine some of the motives consumers have for purchasing or not purchasing into the greening movement of the fashion industry. The last principle may or may not have been realized by the greening movement. Principle five states that all fashions end in excess. As a consequence of disposable fashion, there is much waste in our environment. The greening

movement suggests reconciling the conflicting interests of disposable, fast fashion, and creating sustainable fashion.

SUMMARY

Chapter II explained the literature review on eco-friendly fashion and consumer behavior. This chapter studied consumer behavior in fashion, challenges of environmental fashion, the greening of the fashion industry, and why the fashion industry is evolving in this direction right now. The literature stated that in the last fifteen years, fashion has become faster and cheaper. This chapter also gave the areas of greatest impact in the lifecycle phase of producing fibers with minimizing impact on the environment. The challenges of environmental fashion and disposable fashion were explained as well as why consumers buy fashion. This chapter also explained the five principles of fashion and how they relate to the greening of the fashion industry. Chapter III discusses the methods and procedures practiced by the researcher to obtain the needed data for the study.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The problem of this study was to determine consumer behavior toward eco-friendly fashion lines. This chapter covers the methods and procedures utilized in this research study. The methods and procedures developed within this chapter were used to generate findings about consumer behavior patterns in relation to fashion apparel lines that are ecologically-friendly. The following sections were included in Chapter III: population, instrument design, methods of data collection, statistical analysis, and summary.

POPULATION

The population of this study was Dollar Tree Stores, Inc. employees. The population consisted of male and female participants ranging in age from 20 to 60 years of age. Dollar Tree Stores, Inc. employees who participated were in the Merchandise Department within the Corporate Headquarters located in Chesapeake, Virginia. There were approximately 100 employees in the Merchandise Department. The researcher surveyed the entire Merchandise department.

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

The instrument used to generate findings was an anonymous survey. The instrument was structured using closed formed questions, in the form of a Likert scale, pertaining to participant's consumer behavior in relation to eco-friendly fashion lines. The questions contained fashion apparel brands and their eco-friendly fashion lines. There were five eco-friendly fashion lines named in the

survey. There were additional questions based on the consumer's behavior regarding organic foods and brands in relation to eco-friendly fashion lines. The participant was asked to read each question and answer based on the Likert scale model.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The Dollar Tree Stores, Inc. Merchandising Department employees were chosen to represent the corporate workforce population. The population was chosen as the participants involved, are consumer minded either from working within the merchandising field.

The survey packet included a cover letter, instructions, and a survey. The employees were instructed to read the cover letter, instructions, and then complete the survey. They had the option of not completing the survey or participating in the study. After completion, the employees returned the answered surveys into the survey packet envelope. The information was sent back to the researcher via postage paid and pre-addressed envelope. Data would not be able to be identified back to the individual.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

After the collection of surveys, the data regarding participants were tabulated and recorded. The mean was used to determine the average participant's consumer behavior in relation to purchasing eco-friendly fashion lines. The percentages were a means of answering the questions about data that existed in the form of frequencies.

SUMMARY

Chapter III explained the methods and procedures used to generate data to answer the research goal. The population of this study was Dollar Tree Stores, Inc. employees. The instrument used to generate findings was an anonymous survey. The instrument was structured using closed formed questions, in the form of a Likert scale, pertaining to participant's consumer behavior in relation to eco-friendly fashion lines and marketing. This chapter also included the methods of data collection and survey distribution procedures. The surveys collected would be used to determine the findings to the problem. The mean was used to determine participant's consumer behavior in relation to purchasing eco-friendly fashion lines. The percentages were a means of answering the questions about data that existed in the form of frequencies.

Chapter IV reports the findings from the conducted research. The findings will provide the participants' attitudes toward purchasing eco-friendly fashion apparel and marketing techniques.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter is a presentation of the findings gathered through this research. The statistical results of the findings are reported in this chapter. A consumer behavior survey was given to employees of a merchandising department of Dollar Tree Stores, Inc. to determine their attitudes toward eco-friendly fashion. The survey data are reported in terms of mean, and the fourteen question survey is discussed in terms of frequency of response on a percentile basis.

OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES

The sample size was one hundred employees in the merchandising department at Dollar Tree Stores, Inc. Eighty-one percent, which consisted of 81 of the employees, participate in the research. The participants were male and female employees, ranging in age from 18 to more than 50 years of age. The population included all positions within the merchandise department including: allocation and replenishment, buying, divisional merchandise managers, order processing, marketing, merchandise administration, merchandise planning, and merchandise replenishment. See Table I.

TABLE I

OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES

NUMBER OF SURVEYS	100
COMPLETED SURVEYS	81
RESPONSE RATE	81%

DATA ANALYSIS

Each survey question is discussed in this section. The survey consisted of fourteen questions. There were nine questions related to eco-friendly products and there were five questions based on consumer's gender and behavior in relation to organic food products. The participants had one response for each closed-ended question. See Table II.

Question 1, Please select the box which indicates your sex.

There was a 100% response rate to Question 1. Of the 81 respondents, 62 or 77% were female. Of the 81 respondents, 19 or 23% were male.

Question 2, Please select the box which indicates your yearly income.

There was a 96% response rate to Question 2, or 78 respondents. Of the 78 respondents, 44 or 56% answered \$26,000-\$50,000. Twenty-seven or 35% answered \$51,000-\$75,000. Seven or 9% answered \$76,000+.

Question 3, Please select the box which indicates your age.

There was a 100% response rate to Question 3. Of the 81 respondents, three or 4% were 18-25 years of age. Forty-eight or 59% were 26-33 years of age. Eighteen or 22% were 34-41 years of age. Ten or 12% were 42-49 years of age. Two or 2% were 50+ years of age.

Question 4, Have you ever purchased organic food products?

There was a 100% response rate to Question 4. Eighty or 99% have purchased organic food products. One or 1% has not purchased organic food products. Of the 80 who have purchased organic food, 62 or 78% were female

and 18 or 23% were male. The one respondent who has not purchased organic food products was male.

TABLE II

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND ECO-FRIENDLY FASHION APPAREL SURVEY

MEAN AND PERCENTAVE OF RESPONSES FOR EACH QUESTIONS

Survey Questions	Likert Scale					Mean
	Always	Very Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Very Rarely	
5. If you answered yes to Question 4, how often do you purchase organic food products?	1	2	3	4	5	2.83
Percentage of responses	4%	27%	48%	19%	1%	
6. How often do you purchase eco-friendly fashion apparel, in terms of organic cotton?	1	2	3	4	5	3.96
Percentage of responses	0%	1%	32%	36%	31%	
7. How often do you purchase eco-friendly fashion apparel, in terms of soy?	1	2	3	4	5	4.35
Percentage of responses	0%	4%	5%	44%	47%	
8. How often do you purchase eco-friendly fashion apparel, in terms of bamboo?	1	2	3	4	5	4.35
Percentage of responses	0%	0%	12%	41%	47%	
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
9. The price of eco-friendly apparel is a factor in whether or not I purchase the garment.	1	2	3	4	5	2.56
Percentage of responses	19%	40%	12%	27%	2%	
10. If a product is marketed as using less waste, I am more likely purchase that product.	1	2	3	4	5	2.58
Percentage of responses	4%	58%	17%	19%	2%	
11. If a product is marketed as produced under free and fair trade, I am more likely to purchase that product.	1	2	3	4	5	2.62
Percentage of responses	6%	37%	47%	9%	1%	
12. In my opinion, eco-friendly apparel is trendy; it will be short lived and is only popular at the moment.	1	2	3	4	5	3.56

Percentage of responses	0%	14%	28%	47%	11%	
13. In my opinion, eco-friendly apparel is not fashionable.	1	2	3	4	5	3.32
Percentage of responses	0%	14%	46%	36%	5%	
14. If my apparel brand of choice produces an eco-friendly line, I would consider purchasing a garment from this line.	1	2	3	4	5	1.78
Percentage of responses	42%	43%	10%	5%	0%	

Question 5, If you answered yes to Question 4, how often do you purchase organic food products?

There was a 100% response rate to Question 5. Of the 80 respondents, three or 4% always purchase, 22 or 27% very frequently purchase, 39 or 48% occasionally purchase, 15 or 19% rarely purchase, and one or 1% very rarely purchase organic food products. The mean score for Question 5 was 2.83, indicating that the average response to this question was occasionally.

Question 6, How often do you purchase eco-friendly fashion apparel, in terms of organic cotton?

There was a 100% response rate to Question 6. Of the 81 respondents, one or 1% very frequently purchase, 26 or 32% occasionally purchase, 29 or 36% rarely purchase, and 25 or 31% never purchase organic cotton. The mean score for Question 6 was 3.96, indicating that the average response to this question was rarely.

Question 7, How often do you purchase eco-friendly fashion apparel, in terms of soy?

There was a 100% response rate to Question 7. Of the 81 respondents, three or 4% very frequently purchase, four or 5% occasionally purchase, 36 or 44% rarely purchase, and 38 or 47% never purchase soy. The mean score for Question 7 was 4.35, indicating that the average response to this question was rarely.

Question 8, How often do you purchase eco-friendly fashion apparel, in terms of bamboo?

There was a 100% response rate to Question 8. Of the 81 respondents, 10 or 12% occasionally purchase, 33 or 41% rarely purchase, and 38 or 47% never purchase bamboo. The mean score for Question 8 was 4.35, indicating that the average response to this question was rarely.

Question 9, The price of eco-friendly apparel is a factor in whether or not I purchase the garment.

There was a 100% response rate to Question 9. Of the 81 respondents, 15 or 19% strongly agreed, 32 or 40% agreed, 10 or 12% were undecided, 22 or 27% disagreed, and two or 2% strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean score for Question 9 was 2.56, indicating that the average response to this question was undecided.

Question 10, If a product is marketed as using less waste, I am more likely to purchase that product.

There was a 100% response rate to Question 10. Of the 81 respondents, three or 4% strongly agreed, 47 or 58% agreed, 14 or 17% were undecided, 15

or 19% disagreed, and two or 2% strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean score for Question 10 was 2.58, indicating that the average response to this question was undecided.

Question 11, If a product is marketed as produced under free and fair trade, I am more likely to purchase that product.

There was a 100% response rate to Question 11. Of the 81 respondents, five or 6% strongly agreed, 30 or 37% agreed, 38 or 47% were undecided, seven or 9% disagreed, and one or 1% strongly disagreed. The mean score for Question 11 was 2.62, indicating that the average response to this question was undecided.

Question 12, In my opinion, eco-friendly apparel is trendy; it will be short lived and is only popular at the moment.

There was a 100% response rate to Question 12. Of the 81 respondents, 11 or 14% agreed, 23 or 28% were undecided, 38 or 47% disagreed, and nine or 11% strongly disagreed. The mean score for Question 12 was 3.56, indicating that the average response to this question was disagree.

Question 13, In my opinion, eco-friendly apparel is not fashionable.

There was a 100% response rate to Question 13. Of the 81 respondents, 11 or 14% agreed, 37 or 46% were undecided, 29 or 36% disagreed, and four or 5% strongly disagreed. The mean score for Question 13 was 3.32, indicating that the average response to this question was undecided.

Question 14, If my apparel brand of choice produces an eco-friendly line, I would consider purchasing a garment from this line.

There was a 100% response rate to Question 14. Of the 81 respondents, 34 or 42% strongly agreed, 35 or 43% agreed, eight or 10% were undecided, and four or 5% disagreed. The mean score for Question 14 was 1.78, indicating that the average response to this question was to agree.

SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings of consumers' gender, income, previous purchases, and attitudes toward eco-friendly products and fashion. This was accomplished through a confidential survey. In this chapter, the results of the survey were presented, reporting the frequency of responses to each question on a percentile basis. Responses were assigned numbers from one to five; the mean was then calculated and reported using the Likert Scale. The responses were interpreted and the findings will be used to determine the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize what has been accomplished in this research. Conclusions will be derived to answer the research goals established for this study. Recommendations will be drawn from findings.

SUMMARY

The problem of this study was to determine consumer behavior toward eco-friendly fashion lines in order to increase sales. To find the answer to this problem, research goals were established. They consisted of the following:

1. Will consumers who currently purchase organic products be more likely to purchase from clothing brands that have an eco-friendly fashion line?
2. Will consumers be more likely to purchase clothing from an eco-friendly line if the apparel brand has marketed it as such before purchase?
3. Will consumers feel that eco-friendly fashion is trendy or not fashionable?
4. Will consumers be more likely to purchase eco-friendly fashion if their apparel brand of choice produces an eco-friendly line?

CONCLUSIONS

Answering the research questions, the study revealed the following:

1. Will consumers who currently purchase organic products be more likely to purchase from clothing brands that have an eco-friendly fashion line?

Questions 4-8 addressed consumers' behavior toward organic food products. Eighty respondents confirmed that they have purchased or currently

purchase organic food. Even though 99% of respondents purchased organic food products, the mean for Questions 6-8 all indicated that the average response was rarely. Therefore, purchasing organic food products has no bearing on whether or not consumers will purchase fashion apparel in terms of organic cotton, soy, and bamboo.

In conclusion, respondents' attitudes were to rarely purchase eco-friendly fashion apparel. This could be attributed to the fact that organic food has an impact on health reasons, while fashion has no impact on an individual's internal and digestive health.

2. Will consumers be more likely to purchase clothing from an eco-friendly line if the apparel brand has marketed it as such before purchase?

Questions 10 and 11 addressed consumers' behavior toward purchasing a product if it were marketed as using less waste or produced under free and fair trade. Eighty-one respondents confirmed that the average answer was undecided. The most frequent answer for Question 10, with 58% of respondents answering, was to agree. Most respondents would purchase a product if it were marketed as using less waste. However, most respondents were undecided on purchasing a product if it is marketed as produced under free and fair trade.

In conclusion, respondents' attitudes were to purchase based on using less waste, but they were undecided based on free and fair trade. This could be because products being marketed as inflicting little or no harm on the environment are more common than products being marketed as using free and fair trade.

3. Will consumers feel that eco-friendly fashion is trendy or not fashionable?

Questions 12 and 13 addressed consumers' behavior toward eco-friendly apparel being trendy and/or not fashionable. The mean score for Question 12 was 3.56, indicating that the average response to this question was strongly disagree. The mean score for Question 13 was 3.32, indicating that the average response to this question was undecided.

In conclusion, the respondents felt that eco-friendly apparel was not trendy; it will not be short lived and only trendy at the moment. However, the respondents were undecided about whether or not eco-friendly fashion was fashionable or not. With 46% answering undecided, twenty-nine or 36% followed closely behind answering to disagree with the statement that eco-friendly fashion is not fashionable. This could be due to the fact that the respondents are not very frequent purchasers of eco-friendly fashion (Questions 6-8). They may not be familiar with the looks of fashion apparel being sold in the market today, which has no implication on if the garments are trendy or not.

4. Will consumers be more likely to purchase eco-friendly fashion if their apparel brand of choice produces an eco-friendly line?

Question 14 addressed consumers' behavior toward their apparel brand of choice, possibly producing an eco-friendly line. The mean score for Question 14 was 1.78; the respondents' agreed with the statement that if their favorite apparel brand produced a line, they would consider purchasing a garment from this line. Most respondents chose to agree with 43% marking this answer, following closely behind at 42% was to strongly agree.

In conclusion, the population surveyed would be willing to try an eco-friendly garment. The respondents are not completely opposed to purchasing eco-friendly fashion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. Fashion apparel companies who produce eco-friendly lines should market them as such, using less waste. Consumers would be likely to purchase apparel if garments were labeled as inflicting minimal waste on the environment.
2. Fashion apparel companies with strong consumer loyalty and following should take the leap toward producing eco-friendly lines. Consumers would strongly consider purchasing items from their favorite fashion apparel companies if the companies were to introduce an eco-friendly line.
3. Consumers do not believe that eco-friendly apparel is trendy and short lived. Because consumers are willing to consider purchasing eco-friendly fashion and do not believe that it is trendy, fashion apparel companies should not be intimidated with the high cost of producing at least one line to introduce their eco-friendly ideas to consumers. As long as the item style fits within their same look and is along the same brand position, consumers would still shop their line.

4. The researcher recommends surveying participants from other companies and populations. If all the participants were not in the merchandising department then the outcome may be different because they tended to be more conscious about purchasing fashion.

5. The researcher recommends surveying people from different age groups and socio-economic backgrounds to determine their attitudes to eco-friendly clothing purchases.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A- Cover Letter

Dear Consumer:

I am inviting you to participate in a research project of consumers to determine if you have purchased products from eco-friendly fashion lines. This research will be used to determine if consumers are purchasing eco-friendly fashion lines, and if so, why they are purchasing eco-friendly products. This research will also help determine if there are consumers not purchasing eco-friendly fashion lines, and if so, why they chose not to buy eco-friendly products.

I have attached a survey including different eco-friendly products. I am asking you to review the survey and, if you choose to do so, complete it and send it back via pre-addressed envelope attached. You do have the option not to participate in the study and will you not be penalized if you choose not to participate. Your completion and return of this survey indicates that you've been informed of the purpose of the study and your role, and that you consent to participate and allow me to use your responses in my study. It should take you about five (5) minutes to complete.

There are no known risks for participating in this survey, and I guarantee that your responses will be kept confidential. You should not put your name on the survey when you fill it out, and I promise that I will respect your privacy.

The results of this project will be used for my graduate research paper at Old Dominion University. Through your participation I hope to understand the reasoning of consumer behavior in relation to eco-friendly fashion lines. I hope you will take the time to complete this questionnaire and return it. Your participation is voluntary and the completion of this research cannot be executed without your willingness. To receive a summary of my study results, email me at cmont007@odu.edu.

If you have any questions about the survey, or about being in this study, you may contact me at cmont007@odu.edu. The Human Subjects Review Committee at Old Dominion University has approved this study. If you have any concerns about your rights as a participant in this study you may read about human subjects' participation at the Office of Research website at <http://www.odu.edu/ao/research/>.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Christine Montero

APPENDIX B- Survey

Consumer Behavior and Eco-Friendly Fashion

Purpose: The purpose of this survey is to determine if consumers purchased eco-friendly fashion lines based on the way the product was developed or if the consumers genuinely liked the fashion lines and based purchases on this fact. The survey is anonymous. You will not be asked to identify yourself in any way.

Instructions: The following questions refer to fashion apparel companies and their eco-friendly lines. You are to read each question and answer if you have or have not purchased a product from fashion apparel companies and their eco-friendly lines.

Questions:

1. Please select the box which indicates your sex. Female Male

2. Please select the box which indicates your yearly income.

\$0-\$25,000 \$26,000-\$50,000 \$51,000-\$75,000 \$76,000+

3. Please select the box which indicates your age.

18-25 26-33 34-41 42-49 50+

4. Have you ever purchased organic food products?

Yes No

5. If you answered yes to Question 4, how often do you purchase organic food products?
Please circle one answer.

Always Very Frequently Occasionally Rarely Very Rarely

Please note: The term “eco-friendly”, for use of this survey, is defined as: goods and services considered to inflict minimal or no harm on the environment.

Please circle one answer.

6. How often do you purchase eco-friendly fashion apparel, in terms of organic cotton?

Always Very Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

7. How often do you purchase eco-friendly fashion apparel, in terms of soy?

Always Very Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

8. How often do you purchase eco-friendly fashion apparel, in terms of bamboo?

Always Very Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

9. The price of eco-friendly apparel is a factor in whether or not I purchase the garment.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. If a product is marketed as using less waste, I am more likely to purchase that product.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. If a product is marketed as produced under free and fair trade, I am more likely to purchase that product.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. In my opinion, eco-friendly apparel is trendy; it will be short lived and is only popular at the moment.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

13. In my opinion, eco-friendly apparel is not fashionable.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. If my apparel brand of choice produces an eco-friendly line, I would consider purchasing a garment from this line.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree