

Media Strategies Impacting Millennials' Sustainable Apparel Purchase Intention

Lauren (Reiter) Copeland

Kent State University
lcopela6@kent.edu

Abstract: With apparel and textile production finding itself a leader in social and environmental responsibility issues, the call to action to influence purchase intention for sustainable and responsible apparel is necessary to both the environment and humankind. Literature supports the connection between consumer knowledge of social issues within the apparel and textile industry and purchase behavior. Cowan and Kinley (2014) identify attitudes as the strongest predictor for purchasing environmentally sustainable apparel. This study looks at the interjection of a type of popular and accepted medium, film, as a possible catalyst to knowledge and attitude change in millennial consumers regarding responsible apparel. This is an exploratory quantitative research study to explore possible future directions of how to impact sustainable purchase intentions of millennials in a consumer driven society. A total of 128 participants from a large Midwest university took part in the study during spring and fall 2016. This study found that millennial consumers had significant change in their purchasing behavior regarding responsible apparel. They also considered themselves more knowledgeable regarding the topic. However, their change in attitudes was not towards being more concerned with what was happening in the industry nor their willingness to sacrifice price and style for responsible apparel.

Keywords: *The True Cost*, Media, Apparel, Socially Responsible, Environment, Purchase Behavior

Dr. Copeland is an Assistant Professor in The Fashion School at Kent State University. Her scholarship focus' on knowledge of apparel issues among consumers and strategies for increasing the environmental sustainability of the apparel and textiles supply chain, as well as social networking site use and perception. She has written book chapters pertaining to fashion education and articles that deal with apparel sustainability, constructivist based classroom learning, big data analytics, and social media usage.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

With apparel and textile production finding itself a leader in social and environmental responsibility issues, the call to action to influence purchase intention for sustainable and responsible apparel is necessary to both the environment and humankind. Supplying a base of knowledge to consumers is crucial to enable them to understand the consequences the apparel and textile industry has on the environment. This knowledge can potentially lead to a change of attitude and change in purchase intention. However, reaching the populous and changing consumer knowledge of and attitudes towards sustainable apparel is challenging.

Globally there are over 7.125 billion people and they are all consuming increasing amounts of resources (de Blas, 2010). Over the last 50 years, global resource demands increased 50%. However, during that same period, resource efficiency only increased by 30% (de Blas, 2010). According to the Global Footprint Network (2014), the world's population is currently consuming one and a half of the planet's natural resources, with the prediction that we will be using the equivalent of two planets by 2030. According to Challa (2012), the apparel and Textile (AT) industry is considered a highly polluting industry compared to other manufacturing industries. Although the global apparel industry is valued at \$3 trillion, apparel production finds itself the second leading industrial cause of environmental pollution, thus taking a vast toll on the planet (Fashion United, 2019). The AT industry is worth over \$70 billion in the US alone (Reichard, 2013), and requires more than 10 times the energy to produce one ton of textiles than it does one ton of glass (Draper, Murray, & Weissbrod, 2007). AT production is the second leading industrial cause of environmental pollution, thus making a considerable footprint on the planet (Black, 2008).

Aside from environmental issues within the apparel and textile industry, there are a number of social issues that plague the industry as well. For example, "forced labor, low wages, excessive hours of work, discrimination, health and safety hazards, psychological and physical abuse, lack of awareness of worker's rights, and lack of worker representation for negotiations with management" are all of concern (Dickson, Eckman, and Loker, 2009, p.6). According to Rivoli (2009) factory owners and managers use the docile workforce in the apparel and textile industry to their advantage. In many cases workers in the apparel and textile industry earn only two thirds of the hourly wage that is found in other industries and within developing countries the pay can be as low as \$1.63 to \$1.67 per hour with the workers being forced to perform repetitive tasks for 10-15 hours per day, 6- 7 days per week (Ross, 2004).

Additionally, responsible consumer behaviors can influence the environmental impact of the industry on the planet. Hiller Connell and Kozar (2014) determined that knowledge is an important determinant of consumer behavior. Thorgerson (2000) also discussed that lack of knowledge is a restraint to a wide range of sustainable behaviors for a number of reasons including, consumers may be unaware of the impacts their behaviors have on the environment, they do not understand how changes in their behavior can benefit the environment, and/or they do not know how to specifically change their behavior to be more environmentally responsible. Balderjahn's (1988) study determined that if the consumer believes that their actions can negatively affect the environment, he or she is more likely to participate in pro-environmental consumer behavior. Stephens (1985) also supported this by concluding that when consumers are concerned about the environmental impact associated with clothing consumption, they

demonstrate an increased level of care for the environment. However, Butler and Francis (1997) found that 90% of participants in their study never or rarely considered the environment when purchasing apparel; in a similar vein, Kozar and Hiller Connell (2013) found that only 41% of participants were willing to pay more for environmentally sustainable clothes. In a separate study, Kozar and Hiller Connell (2010) found that about half of the respondents indicated being knowledgeable about socially responsible clothing businesses and that they were generally informed of environmental issues regarding apparel and textiles. However, the study, which included a sample of undergraduate students, showed that AT upperclassmen were more informed of issues and more likely to consider this when purchasing apparel than lower classmen. Thus, this study further substantiates that the more education provided to consumers on these topics, the more knowledge may be retained and the greater likelihood of purchase intentions of sustainable apparel (Kozar & Hiller Connell, 2010).

Furthermore, there is literature to support the connection between consumer knowledge of social issues within the apparel and textile industry and purchase behavior. According to a number of studies there is a relationship between knowledge of issues and the purchasing of socially responsible consumer goods (Antil, 1984; Henion, 1972; Roubanis, 2008; Schahn & Holzer, 1990; Tanner & Kast, 2003; Kozar & Hiller Connell, 2013). Meinhold and Malkus (2005) found that there was indeed a relationship between environmentally aware knowledge and pro-environmental purchase behaviors. Dickson (1999) found that if consumers are concerned with labor issues they feel more for domestic workers rather than offshore workers and that those consumer were more willing to boycott the irresponsible factories that mistreated their labor force, particularly products made by child workers. It has also been discovered that important relationships between knowledge of social responsibility issues and support for likeminded socially responsible businesses are significant (Dickson, et al., 2009). Hustvedt and Dickson (2009) found that some segments within the consumer market use environmental information to inform their purchase decisions to be more environmental. However, Carrigan and Attalla (2001) found that this is not always the case and that oftentimes the ethical and social responsibility of a business was not a strong influencer of purchase decisions and behavior. Dickson et al. (2009) state that consumers can make a change and that “Through their purchasing, consumers can pull the economy and effect change in business as well as contribute to the formation of a virtuous circle of business development and social responsibility” (pp. 313-314).

Mont and Plepys (2007) call for a change in consumption pattern across the population through a less materialistic focus. Evans (2011) calls this movement “frugality” (p. 550). Evans (2011) says the answer to lessen consumption is through three tactics, including: “(1) the scale at which they exercise care and compassion; (2) their relationship to the normative expectations of consumer cultures, and; (3) their consequences in terms of environmental impacts” (p. 550). There must be a social movement and a change in the way consumers not only think but also act in regards to their purchasing intention and attitudes. Through knowledge on a mass scale there can be a change in those attitudes. What is acceptable in terms of consuming products and the materialism movement can be replaced with more of a caring a compassionate employment of purchasing power. In a study focused on the relationship between information exposure and eco-conscious apparel acquisition, Sonnenberg, Jacobs, and Momberg (2014) discovered that participants were not willing to acquire environmentally sustainable apparel based on their concern for the environment because they were still more concerned about attributes such as

price and functionality. If consumers believe that a product is relevant to them it is more likely it will be of interest to them. Additionally, D'Souza, Taghian, and Lamb (2006) discussed in their article that the more consumers are aware of the negative impact a process or product has on the environment the more apt they are to have a positive attitude towards that product or process and are more likely to support such a product/process. Arbuthnott (2009) looked at education for sustainable development beyond attitude change and found that habits and inconvenience mediate attitude and behavior. Ha-Brookshire and Norum (2011) found that attitude towards environment, age, and gender were all significant factors for consumers to pay more for sustainable products. Hyllegard, Yan, Ogle, and Lee (2012) in their study regarding responsible hang tag labeling indicated that it can benefit sustainable apparel if the tags "feature explicit messages and logos to convey their socially responsible business practices; the use of explicit messages and logos produced favorable evaluations of hangs tags and positive attitudes toward the apparel brand" (p. 30). By making it known to consumers that products are sustainable in some way consumers view the product more favorably, as well as the brand.

Cowan and Kinley (2014) identify attitudes as the strongest predictor for purchasing environmentally sustainable apparel. Ogle, Hyllegard and Dunbar (2004) additionally discover that not only is the individual attitude a determining factor of purchase intention but additionally so is the consumer attitude towards the retail environment. Van Dam and Van Trijp (2011) discuss that consumer cognitive and motivational understanding of purchase intention towards sustainability must conform to the individual in order to be effective and that focusing on sustainability as a practical construct there is more ability to influence users to purchase in sustainable ways based on their attitudes towards sustainable development. Niinimäki (2010) discusses that there must be social and sustainable constructs built around design that matches consumer attitudes towards clothing attributes as well as individual values in order to create a sustainable ideal of one's self. If consumers find themselves relating to the product they will have more favorable attitudes towards that product and more likely to take part in the desired intention/ behavior. Leary, Vann Mittelstaedt, Murphy, and Sherry (2013) support this notion that sustainable apparel purchases are based on consumer's values and ethics and that they are more likely to purchase sustainable apparel when there is perceived marketplace influence and those attitudes can be turned into actual behavior.

As stated by (Jankovska, Hensley, Miller and Yan, 2015) Millennials have large buying power and their understanding of socially responsible apparel is of great importance. Stephen (2016) looked at the impact of digital environments and its correlation with consumer behavior in recent literature and found that five overarching themes occur; 1) consumer digital culture, 2) advertising, 3) impacts of digital environment, 4) mobile and 5) WOM online reviews. Additionally, Puccinelli, Wilcox, Grewal (2015) found that emotion in advertisements or videos created a change in consumer behavior and attitudes towards products or brands. Stephen (2016) makes a call for further research to better understand how digital environments can impact consumer attitudes and actual purchase/interaction with products and brands.

This study looks at the interjection of a type of popular and accepted medium, film, as a possible catalyst to knowledge and attitude change in millennial consumers regarding responsible apparel. The purpose of this exploratory study is to initiate the investigation as to whether or not a short

two hour documentary may be a potential mechanism for increasing purchase intention for sustainable apparel among millennials.

The True Cost

In order to better understand the concept of media being an influencing factor in millennial apparel consumption habits, the film *The True Cost* was chosen. *The True Cost* is a 2015 documentary film which asks the questions “Who pays the price for our clothing?” In the film the globalized supply chain of apparel manufacturing and the continuously speeding consumer culture collide into a resounding narrative that involves workers, activists, consumers, scholars, entrepreneurs, authors and the like. From the ruins of Rana Plaza, Bangladesh to the cotton plains of Texas, USA, to the slow fashion movements in Japan, the film looks at how apparel and fast fashion have taken its toll on the people, economies, and environment around it. It also examines new ways in which clothing production and consumption can be approached and how the average consumer plays a role in either ends of the spectrum.

Theory of Reasoned Action

When looking at the ability to modify consumers’ attitudes towards a subject, idea, or product, many marketers look to Azjen and Fishbein’s (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). In their book, *Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behavior*, Fishbein and Azjen (1975), pose that when attempting to modify consumers’ reasoning to become brand loyal or prefer certain products, attributes, and images, the variable of attitude is the main concern amongst scholars and marketers. In *Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behavior*, Azjen and Fishbein (1980) acknowledge that people consciously understand the actions they make and the consequences to those actions before they decide to partake in a certain behavior. According to Sparks and Shepherd (1992) TRA “is a theory of attitude –behavior relationships which links attitude, subjective norms (akin to perceived social pressure), behavioral intentions, and behavior in a fixed cause sequence” (p. 388).

Due to the limited research regarding this topic, the Theory of Reasoned Action was chosen to better understand whether there was a place for further research regarding this topic within the Theory of Planned Behavior. The researchers hoped to add to a new updated Theory of Reasoned Action Model applicable to the current age of technology, making Azjen and Fishbein’s (1975) original theory more applicable to the present time.

METHODS

This is an exploratory quantitative research study to explore possible future directions of how to impact sustainable purchase intentions of millennials in a consumer driven society. Understanding their preferences and considerations when purchasing clothing will help to understand more targeted approaches. Incorporating a short video with information can show whether or not this type of medium is impactful in any way to the students’ knowledge, attitudes, and purchase intentions of sustainable apparel. A online Qualtrics pre and post surveys of 34 questions regarding student environmental and social issue knowledge, attitudes/concern, and purchase behavior were given to 167 undergraduates at a Midwest University from spring of

2016 to fall 2016. The between treatment of the 2015 documentary *The True Cost* was applied to understand any differences in knowledge, attitudes, and purchase intentions. *The True Cost* “is a documentary film exploring the impact of fashion on people and the planet” (IMDB, 2015).

Students were then given a post qualitative survey of ten open ended questions to reflect and expand upon their reasoning and opinions post film. Questions in the qualitative portion included “If possible, what would need to happen for you to personally as a consumer buy solely social and or environmentally sustainable apparel? Why?” and “About how far into the movie were (if at all) impacted by the information? Why? If not at all, why? What specifically caught your attention?” Another example includes, “Do you believe social responsibility or environmental responsibility is most time sensitive and crucial for positive change? Please explain.”

The pre and post surveys utilized three scales to assess students' knowledge and attitudes of environmental and social issues in the apparel and textile industry, along with their apparel purchasing intentions. All items were measured on a 3-point scale, which included 1) “yes,” or “agree,” 2) “no,” or “disagree,” and 3) “I don't know.”

Dickson's (1999) Knowledge of and Concern with Apparel Social Issues Scale was utilized to assess student's knowledge of and attitudes toward apparel and textile social issues. As part of the scale, 11 statements assessed students' knowledge of issues concerning child labor and the treatment of workers in both domestic and foreign apparel manufacturing factories. Items included statements such as “The use of child labor is not common in American apparel manufacturing industries,” and “Besides America and China, use of child labor is not common in apparel manufacturing industries of other countries.” Additionally, students' attitudes towards banning apparel products produced by child laborers, involving government in regulating working conditions in apparel manufacturing factories, and labeling apparel goods produced in a socially responsible manner were included. For instance, the 11 items included such statements as “I am concerned with issues affecting workers in U.S. clothing manufacturing businesses.” And “Sale of products made by child labor should be banned.”

Kozar and Hiller Connell's (2010, 2013) Apparel Purchasing Behavior scale and was used to examine the students' past experiences with purchasing socially and/or environmentally responsible clothing. This scale included 8 statements which assessed participants' willingness to pay premium prices for socially responsible goods, experiences in boycotting firms because of labor abuses, and experiences in researching a company's policies on social responsibility prior to making purchasing decisions. Additional statements analyzed students' eco-conscious apparel-purchasing behavior, such as their willingness to pay premium prices for goods produced in an environmentally responsible manner, experiences boycotting firms because of environmental abuses, and experiences in researching a company's environmental practices prior to making purchasing decisions.

Data Analysis

Reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha, in which Cronbach's alpha >0.7 is considered acceptable (Stevens, 1992). Using SPSS 24.0 paired samples t-tests were conducted to compare the mean scores of the pre and post test results of the students. Item differences were noted to

determine the specific knowledge, attitudes, and purchase intentions that were positively affected and negatively affected through the treatment of the documentary.

FINDINGS

Final pre and post questionnaires were transferred from entered into SPSS 24.0 for data analysis purposes. A total of 128 participants from a large Midwest university took part in the study during spring and fall 2016 leading to a 76.65% completion rate. Of the participants 89.1% (n=114) were female with the rest identifying as male (n=13, no identification, n=1). A majority were 18 years of age (n=45) followed by 19 (n=31), 20 (n= 18), 21 (n=13), 22 (n= 11), 23 (n= 5), 27 (n=2), 24 (n=1), 17 (n=1), no answer (n=1). Race was found as a majority of participants were white (n=84) followed by Asian (n=27), Black (n= 6), Hispanic (n=5), other (n=5), unidentified (n=1).

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess reliability of the summed mean variables. The values were low for the knowledge and concern scales leading to the possibility that the scales were possibly not measuring what was expected when using media as a possible catalyst of change. Therefore individual paired tests were conducted to better understand what exact items were impacted by a media treatment of *The True Cost* Film. See Table 1.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha

Scale	α (pre and post)	Number of Items
Knowledge of Apparel Issues		
Pre	.54	11
Post	.77	
Concern of Apparel Issues		
Pre	.45	11
Post	.45	
Apparel Purchasing Behavior		
Pre	.75	8
Post	.86	

Paired samples t-tests of individual scale items were also analyzed to better understand participants' knowledge, attitudes and purchasing intentions more specifically of socially and environmentally responsible apparel. Regarding Knowledge it was found that the film *The True Cost* made a significant difference in millennials regarding items such as "Separate from the U.S. and China, use of child labor is not a general practice among foreign clothing manufacturers." (p< .05) "U.S. clothing manufacturers generally have their employees work no more than 40 hours per week.," (p< .01) "Aside from the U.S. and China, foreign clothing manufacturers generally have their employees work no more than 40 hours per week.," p< .05) "I am knowledgeable about socially responsible clothing businesses.," (p< .01) and "Aside from the U.S. I believe that I am informed about issues in foreign clothing manufacturing businesses." (p<

.01) Mainly, these last two items indicate that participants considered themselves much more knowledgeable about social issues in apparel manufacturing and considered themselves informed after watching the film. Participants became significantly more knowledgeable on child labor and work hours of laborers outside of the U.S and China. See table 2.

Table 2. Paired Samples T-tests Among Individual Items- Knowledge

Item	M	Std. Dev	t	df	Sig.
Use of child labor is not a general practice among U.S. clothing manufacturers.	1.60 1.46	.76 .61	1.70	127	.092
Separate from the U.S. and China, use of child labor is not a general practice among foreign clothing manufacturers.	1.98 1.87	.46 .40	2.31	127	.023**
U.S. clothing manufacturers generally pay their employees at least the local minimum wage.	1.45 1.38	.71 .53	1.07	127	.287
Aside from the U.S. and China, foreign clothing manufacturers generally pay their employees at least the local minimum wage.	2.07 2.07	.37 .26	.97	127	.332
U.S. clothing manufacturers generally have their employees work no more than 40 hours per week.	1.83 1.48	.84 .60	4.33	127	.000*
Aside from the U.S. and China, foreign clothing manufacturers generally have their employees work no more than 40 hours per week.	2.01 1.88	.49 .36	2.59	127	.011**
U.S. clothing manufacturers generally provide non-hazardous workplaces for their employees.	1.48 1.39	.73 .54	1.40	127	.164
Aside from the U.S. and China, foreign clothing manufacturers generally provide non-hazardous workplaces for their employees.	2.02 1.99	.44 .24	.76	127	.452
I am knowledgeable about socially responsible clothing businesses.	1.72 1.38	.72 .59	4.55	127	.000*
I believe that I am informed about issues in U.S. clothing manufacturing businesses.	1.84 1.86	.74 .48	-.22	127	.826
Aside from the U.S. I believe that I am informed about issues in foreign clothing manufacturing businesses.	1.91 1.38	.65 .55	7.42	127	.000*

P<.01*

P<.05**

In regards to concern with issues in the apparel industry there was many significant changes in individual item reporting from pre and post film. Items that were found to be significantly changed included items 1,2,4,5,6, 8, 9. Items 1 and 2 indicated that concern lessened after watching the film ($p < .01$). Item 4 indicated that participants did not agree that government regulations should be implemented to protect workers ($p < .01$) and item 5 indicated that they were more likely to boycott businesses that do not act responsibly toward employees ($p < .01$). However, items 6 and 7 indicate that millennials would prefer a label indicating responsible manufacturers/items and that they would settle for lower quality if it meant the item was made more responsibly ($p < .01$). Conversely, they indicated that in item 8 they would buy from the cheaper priced retailer than the socially responsible one offering the same items ($p < .01$) but that they would be more likely to purchase a responsible product if they really like the item ($p < .05$). See Table 3.

Table 3. Paired Samples T-tests Among Individual Items- Attitudes

No.	Item	M	Std. Dev	t	df	Sig.
1	I am concerned with issues affecting workers in U.S. clothing manufacturing businesses.	1.28 1.76	.60 .47	-7.27	127	.000*
2	Aside from the U.S. and China, I am concerned with issues affecting workers in foreign clothing manufacturing businesses.	1.17 1.48	.50 .74	-3.79	127	.000*
3	Sale of products made by child labor should be banned.	1.18 1.25	.55 .55	-.98	127	.331
4	There should be more government regulations protecting workers in the clothing manufacturing industry.	1.11 1.30	.42 .57	-3.52	127	.001*
5	I would boycott buying clothing from businesses that do not act responsibly toward their employees.	1.66 1.34	.87 .63	3.45	127	.001*
6	I wish there was a label on jeans telling consumers if they were made by socially responsible manufacturers.	1.30 1.05	.63 .28	4.37	127	.000*
7	I would settle for a lower quality garment in order to buy something from a socially responsible clothing business.	1.89 1.30	.89 .63	6.94	127	.000*

8	If I found the same pair of jeans at a lower price from a clothing business whose business practices I was unsure of, I would buy it from this business rather than one that I know is socially responsible.	1.77 1.14	.80 .41	7.97	127	.000*
9	I would buy from socially responsible clothing businesses only if I really liked the product.	1.62 1.41	.79 .76	2.18	127	.031**
10	I do not usually consider where clothing is made, as long as it suits my wardrobe needs.	1.38 1.34	.68 .66	.37	127	.709
11	I would make an extra effort to buy from a socially responsible business if the product was comparable with those available from other businesses.	1.35 1.48	.72 .76	-1.51	127	.135

P<.01*

P<.05**

Regarding purchase behavior items 2-7 were considered substantial. Participants had significant change in how they would spend their dollars in terms of responsible products. For example, they felt strongly that they would boycott a brand with poor environmental practices ($p < .01$), they would pay more for responsibly made clothes both socially and environmentally ($p < .01$). Additionally, they indicated they would inquire information about social and environmental conditions in which apparel was made ($p < .01$) and that a company's record on treatment of workers would influence their purchase decision ($p < .01$). See Table 4.

Table 4. Paired Samples T-tests Among Individual Items- Purchase Behavior

No.	Item	M	Std. Dev	t	df	Sig.
1	In the past/future, I have boycotted an apparel brand or retailer because of reports that their goods were produced in a sweatshop or because their workers were treated unfairly.	1.86 1.81	.50 .76	.60	127	.551
2	In the past/future, I have boycotted an apparel brand or retailer because of reports that the company had poor environmental policies or practices.	1.89 1.64	.51 .73	3.25	127	.001*
3	In the past/future, I have paid more for clothes and accessories that I knew were made under fair labor standards or in a "sweat-shop" free factory.	1.98 1.37	.73 .60	7.12	127	.000*
4	In the past/future, I have paid more for clothes and accessories that I knew were made in an	1.71 1.21	.74 .54	6.10	127	.000*

environmentally conscious manner.

5	In the past/future before making a purchase I have actively sought out or inquired about the conditions in which a company's clothes or accessories were manufactured.	1.99 1.51	.53 .79	6.12	127	.000*
6	In the past/future before making a purchase I have actively sought out or inquired about a company's environmental policies or practices.	1.93 1.51	.54 .78	5.40	127	.000*
7	In the past/future a company's record on the treatment of workers in the production of their clothing or accessories influenced my purchase decision.	1.79 1.31	.64 .65	5.74	127	.000*
8	In the past/future a company's record on environmental practices and policies in the production of their clothing or accessories influenced my purchase decisions.	1.75 1.68	.60 .66	.92	127	.358

P<.01*

P<.05**

Finally paired samples t-tests of the summed means were conducted to determine the overall significant differences of participants' pre and post *The True Cost* film. Though the Cronbach's alpha were not high on the knowledge and attitudes there was still significant differences in the pre and post leading to a need for future research to better understand what occurs during a media such as *The True Cost* film being used a treatment for knowledge and attitude change in millennial purchase intention. As the scales dealt with more specific wording regarding the U.S. and China different scales are needed to better assess knowledge and attitudes of millennials. See table 5.

Table 5. Paired Samples T-tests of summed mean scales

Scale	M	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.
Knowledge	1.35	3.12	4.90	127	.000*
Attitude	.97	2.97	3.68	127	.000*
Purchase Behavior	2.76	3.29	9.45	126	.000*

P<.01*

P<.05**

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Most importantly in this study it was found that millennial consumers, after viewing the film *The True Cost*, had significant change in their reported purchasing behavior regarding responsible

apparel. They also considered themselves more knowledgeable regarding the topic. However, their change in attitudes was not towards being more concerned with what was happening in the industry nor their willingness to sacrifice price and style for responsible apparel. This leads to the possibility of other factors playing a bigger role in their purchasing decisions such as peer pressure, motors, family structure etc. Students were, however, interested in being more informed regarding labels that indicate whether an item is responsible. This means that further learning is something that should be of focus as this generation becomes parents and mentors, family structures in their own rights. Overall, millennial participants seemed very interested in being more educated on where their clothing and accessories are coming from particularly based on a socially responsible standpoint.

Implications

As indicated earlier the Cronbach's alpha were not high on the knowledge pretest and attitudes pre and post leading to a need for future research to better understand what occurs during a media treatment such as *The True Cost* film being used to determine knowledge and attitude change in millennial purchase intention of responsible clothing. As the scales dealt with more specific wording regarding the U.S. and China, different scales are needed to better assess knowledge and attitudes of millennials specifically.

Retailers must take into account that labels and information regarding where clothing is made is something that comes from transparency in films and documentaries about the apparel industry. These films are becoming more common and are catalysts to possible changes in transparency for a clothing retailer. According to Nelson (2012) "This [millennial] demographic forms intense brand loyalty, with 70 percent claiming they come back to brands they prefer. Because of this and their increasing interest in brand transparency retailers must take note of this powerful group."

Educators should use this research to understand that the implications of showing educational films, such as *The True Cost*, in their classes can significantly impact how millennials think about responsible topics in the apparel industry as well as impact their purchasing behaviors in the future.

Future Research

As we move closer towards environmental and social destruction in a globalized world, researchers and industry professionals must continue to search for ways to impact consumer's understanding of the realities of the industry. According to Retail Leader (2016), "To engage millennials, or those between the ages of 19 and 37 who collectively are expected to spend more than \$600 billion annually and \$1.4 trillion by 2020 (Lexington Law, 2019), companies should engage them with social media. This research also concludes that mediums such as film could also be a way to engage with and impact millennial purchasing power." Along with this increasing power, millennials will be a major focus of who needs to be educated on imperative

topics. It will take all educators, industry professionals, and consumers working together to combat the atrocities in the industry. Through films like *The True Cost* new mechanisms of impacting change may be realized. Further research must be conducted to better understand this powerful age group as they age.

REFERENCES

- Antil, J. H. (1984). Conceptualization and operationalization of involvement. *Advances in consumer research*, 11(1), 203-209.
- Arbuthnott, K.D. (2008), "Education for sustainable development beyond attitude change",
- Ajzen. I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.
- International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 152-63.
- Balderjahn, I. (1988). Personality variables and environmental attitudes as predictors of ecologically responsible consumption patterns. *Journal of Business Research*, 17(1), 51-56.
- Black, S. (2008), *Eco-chic: The Fashion Paradox*, Black Dog Publishing, London.
- Butler, S. M., & Francis, S. (1997). The effects of environmental attitudes on apparel purchasing behavior. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 15(2), 76-85.
- Carrigan, M. and Attalla, A. (2001), "The myth of the ethical consumer – do ethics matter in purchase behaviour?", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 18 No. 7, pp. 560-577.
- Challa, L. (2012). Impact of textile and clothing industry on environment: Approach to eco-friendly textiles. Retrieved from <http://www.fibre2fashion.com/industry-article/textile-industry-articles/impact-of-textiles-and-clothing-industry-on-environment/impact-of-textiles-and-clothing-industry-on-environment1.asp>
- Cowan, K., & Kinley, T. (2014). Green spirit: Consumer empathies for green apparel. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 38(5), 493-499.
- de Blas, A. (2010). Making the shift: from consumerism to sustainability. *ECOS*, Feb-Mar 2010(153), 10-12.
- Dickson, M. A. (1999). US consumers' knowledge of and concern with apparel sweatshops. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, 3(1), 44-55.
- Dickson, M. A., Eckman, M. J., & Loker, S. (2009). *Social responsibility in the global apparel industry*. Fairchild Books.
- Draper, S., Murray, V., & Weissbrod, I. (2007, March). Fashioning sustainability—a review of sustainability impacts of the clothing industry. London, UK: Forum for the Future.
- D'Souza, C., Taghian, M., & Lamb, P. (2006). An empirical study on the influence of environmental labels on consumers. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 11(2), 162-173.
- Evans, D. (2011). Thrifty, green or frugal: Reflections on sustainable consumption in a changing economic climate. *Geoforum*, 42(5), 550-557.
- Fashion United. (2019), "Global fashion industry statistics-International apparel", available at: <https://fashionunited.com/global-fashion-industry-statistics/> (accessed 19 February, 2019)
- Ha-Brookshire, J. E., & Norum, P. S. (2011). Willingness to pay for socially responsible products: Case of cotton apparel. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 28(5), 344-353.
- Henion, K. E. (1972). The effect of ecologically relevant information on detergent sales. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 10-14.

- Hiller Connell, K. Y., & Kozar, J. M. (2014). Environmentally sustainable apparel consumer behavior: Knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. In S. S. Muthu (Ed.), *Roadmap to sustainable textiles and clothing* (Vol. 2). New York: Springer Publications. doi:10.1007/978-981-287-110-7_2
- Hustvedt, G., & Dickson, M. A. (2009). Consumer likelihood of purchasing organic cotton apparel. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 13(1), 49-65.
- Hyllegard, K. H., Yan, R. N., Ogle, J. P., & Lee, K. H. (2012). Socially responsible labeling: The impact of hang tags on consumers' attitudes and patronage intentions toward an apparel brand. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 30(1), 51-66.
- IMDB. (2015). The True Cost. Retrieved from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3162938>
- Jankovska, D., Hensley, C., Miller, N., & Yan, R. N. (2015). An Exploration of Millennial Consumer's Perceptions of Social Responsibility Product Attributes: USA Made vs. Foreign Made Apparel.
- Kozar, J. M., & Hiller Connell, K. Y. (2010). Socially responsible knowledge and behaviors: Comparing upper-vs. lower-classmen. *College Student Journal*, 44(2), 279-293.
- Kozar, J. M., & Hiller Connell, K. Y. (2013). Socially and environmentally responsible apparel consumption: knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. *Social responsibility journal*, 9(2), 315-324.
- Leary, R. B., Vann, R. J., Mittelstaedt, J. D., Murphy, P. E., & Sherry Jr, J. F. (2014). Changing the marketplace one behavior at a time: Perceived marketplace influence and sustainable consumption. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(9), 1953-1958.
- Lexington Law (January 2, 2019). 45 statistics on millennial spending habits in 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.lexingtonlaw.com/blog/credit-cards/millennial-spending-habits.html>
- Meinhold, J. L., & Malkus, A. J. (2005). Adolescent Environmental Behaviors Can Knowledge, Attitudes, and Self-Efficacy Make a Difference? *Environment and behavior*, 37(4), 511-532.
- Mont, O., & Plepys, A. (2008). Sustainable consumption progress: Should we be proud or alarmed? *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 16(4), 531-537.
- Nelson, E. M. (2012). Millennials want to party with your brand but on their own terms. <http://adage.com/article/digitalnext/millennials-party-brand-terms/236444/>
- Niinimäki, K. (2010). Eco□clothing, consumer identity and ideology. *Sustainable Development*, 18(3), 150-162.
- Ogle, J. P., Hyllegard, K. H., & Dunbar, B. H. (2004). Predicting patronage behaviors in a sustainable retail environment adding retail characteristics and consumer lifestyle orientation to the belief-attitude-behavior intention model. *Environment and Behavior*, 36(5), 717-741.
- Puccinelli, N. M., Wilcox, K., & Grewal, D. (2015). Consumers' response to commercials: when the energy level in the commercial conflicts with the media context. *Journal of Marketing*, 79(2), 1-18.
- Reichard, R. (2013). Textiles 2013: The turnaround continues. Retrieved from http://www.textileworld.com/Issues/2013/January-February/Features/Textiles_2013-The_Turnaround_Continues
- Retail Leader. (2016). Millennial spending power to increase by 2017. Consumer Insights. http://www.retailleader.com/top-story-consumer_insights-millennials_spending_power_to_increase_by_2017-1071.html
- Rivoli, P. (2009). *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy*, 2nd ed., Wiley, Hoboken, NJ.

- Ross, R.J.S. (2004). *Slaves to Fashion*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI.
- Roubanis, J. L. (2008). Comparison of environmentally responsible consumerism and voluntary simplicity lifestyle between US and Japanese female college students. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 37(2), 210-218.
- Schahn, J., & Holzer, E. (1990). Studies of individual environmental concern the role of knowledge, gender, and background variables. *Environment and behavior*, 22(6), 767-786.
- Sonnenberg, N., Jacobs, B., & Momberg, D. (2014). The role of information exposure in female university students' evaluation and selection of eco-friendly apparel in the South African emerging economy. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 32(4), 266-281.
- Stephen, A. T. (2016). The role of digital and social media marketing in consumer behavior. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 10, 17-21.
- Stephens, S. H. (1985). *Attitudes toward socially responsible consumption: Development and validation of a scale and investigation of relationships to clothing acquisition and discard behaviors*. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10919/49876>.
- Stevens, J. (1992). Repeated measures analysis. *Applied Multivariate Statistics for the Social Sciences*, Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Tanner, C., & Kast, S. W. (2003). Promoting sustainable consumption: Determinants of green purchases by Swiss consumers. *Psychology and Marketing*, 20(10), 883-902.
- Thorgerson, J. (2000). Psychological Determinants of Paying Attention to Eco-Label in Purchase Decisions: Model Development and Multinational Validation. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 23, 285-313.
- van Dam, Y. K., & van Trijp, H. (2011). Cognitive and motivational structure of sustainability. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 32(5), 726-741.
- World Footprint. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/world_footprint/