

A MODEL FOR CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY AND BEHAVIOR TOWARDS SLOW
FASHION: FROM SELF-CONCEPT THEORY PERSPECTIVE

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	4
Slow Fashion.....	4
Slow Fashion Consumers.....	6
Theoretical Foundation: Self-Concept.....	7
Curiosity.....	9
Moral-Identity: Internalized and Symbolized.....	10
Proximity of Clothing to Self: Self-Esteem in Relation to Clothing and Communicating Self via Clothing	11
Perceived Self-Enhancement Benefits: Empowerment	13
Perceived Self-Enhancement Benefits: Self-Transformation	14
Behavioral Intentions toward Slow Fashion	15
Hypotheses and Conceptual Model	16
III. METHODOLOGY	19
Participants.....	19
Demographics	19
IRB Exemption	20
Measures	20
Pretest I: Brand Choice	23
Pretest II: Brand Representativeness	24

IV.	RESULTS	26
	Direct Effect Testing	26
	Indirect Effect Testing	28
V.	DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS	30
	Limitations and Future Research	32
REFERENCES		34

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Measurement Items	22
2. Indirect Effect Testing for H12.....	29

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Conceptual Model for Hypotheses.....	18
2. Path Analysis Results.....	28

I.INTRODUCTION

With clothing consumption at an all-time high, environmentalists and psychologists have taken great concern of both the environment and human well-being. The rise of fast-fashion as the preferable business model has accumulated for this new “throw away” culture where fashion is acquired, worn, and disposed of quickly. The clothing is often made overseas with low quality materials, giving it a much shorter life span. Because of this, as much as 74% of clothing now end up in landfills; making fashion the second largest pollution inducing industry (Clark, 2008; Langdown, 2014). This accounts for not only environmental damage, but often the low quality garments are made in sweatshops with unsafe working conditions. Over 1,100 employees lost their lives in the 2013 Rana Plaza collapse because of inadequate factory inspections (Langdown, 2014). In order to address concerns of the environment, consumer, and producer, the slow fashion model has come about not as the antithesis of fast-fashion; but as a holistic philosophy that intends to change the way individuals view consumption and production (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2007).

Adopted from the ideals of the slow food movement, slow fashion was first termed by Kate Fletcher in 2007. It places quality over quantity and encourages consumers to buy less garments less often (Fletcher, 2007). This type of fashion is not the first to address environmental issues as sustainable fashion alternatives have been available. Manufacturers have sought to replace clothing materials that contain harmful chemicals with components that are more environmentally friendly. While the attempt to reduce this problem is evident, it simply scratches the surface of the issue rather than address all components. For example, many of these materials such as recycled polyester

are resource depleting as they require more water to grow and produce (Sweeney, 2012, cited in Jung & Jin, 2014). Consumers may also dispose of these items once they grow tired of them or they are no longer on trend which does not align with sustainable behavior. Slow fashion does not just focus on what clothes are made out of, but on slowing down the production process as well as teaching sustainable values to all who take part in the fashion system (Clark, 2008; Langdown, 2014).

Past studies on slow fashion have focused on constructing its formalized definition and understanding how it is perceived by consumers (Jung & Jin, 2014; Pooklungara & Shephard, 2013; Watson & Yan, 2013). While slow fashion has shown to be a promising alternative to the current fast fashion model, consumers are reluctant to fully embrace its philosophy, purchase intention, and utilization (Karamoso, Morales-Alonso & Brun, 2014; Pooklungara & Shephard, 2013). Price, fit, and convenience are still the most important factors that consumers look for thus, shopping for specific fashion items is a rather individualistic phenomenon (Niinimäki, 2010). We argue that because the number of “green consumers” are growing at an impeccable rate, the collectivistic values of these consumers could have the ability to change the future of the fashion industry to where eco-friendly or fair trade clothing would no longer be considered just a niche market. We also propose that these consumers have a need for self-enhancement that extrinsically expresses their overall sense of self therefore, it is important to understand role of self-concept in shaping behavioral intentions towards slow fashion.

The purpose of this study is to update the current body of slow fashion literature by developing and testing a model that illustrates a) the effects of consumers’ self-

concept on their perceived self-enhancement benefits from slow fashion as well as behavioral intentions for slow fashion products b) the effects of consumers' perceived benefits of slow fashion to self-enhancement on their behavioral intentions for slow fashion products and c) the mediating role of consumers' perceived benefits of slow fashion to self-enhancement in the paths from consumers' self-concept to their behavioral intentions for slow fashion products. We consider self-concept to be consistent with two major components: personal or actual-self (curiosity, internalized moral identity, and self-esteem in relation to clothing) as well as social-self (symbolized moral identity and communication of self to others via clothing). The perceived benefits of slow fashion to self-enhancement focuses on empowerment and self-transformation. We also consider both purchase intention and intention to pay more to be the ultimate outcomes in this model. Self-concept theory (Sirgy, 1982) is to be used as a theoretical foundation in order to develop the framework for this study and further explain the hypothesized relationships amongst variables. This proposed research can help marketers and retailers market and promote slow fashion brands competitively with fast fashion brands.

II.LITERATURE REVIEW

Slow Fashion

Slow fashion is based off of the sentiments from the slow food movement. In the 1980's, the slow food movement began in Italy as a reaction to the increase of fast-food presence (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010; Johansson, 2010). The founder, Carlo Petrini, started out by protesting the building of a McDonalds as he saw it as a threat to the local community (Johansson, 2010). Followers of this movement aimed to understand what they were buying as well as who had made their food. They also desired to return to the sense of community they had before which was cooking and eating in social gatherings (Pookulangara & Shepard, 2013). Overall, the philosophy of the movement currently seeks to combine the pleasure of eating with a commitment towards the community and environment (Jung & Jin, 2014). Similarly, the goal of slow fashion is to merge the hedonic aspects of fashion consumption with a commitment towards the fair treatment of garment workers and the environment.

While slow fashion has often been described as the antithesis of fast-fashion, Fletcher (2007) suggests that it is simply a different approach in which “designers, buyers, retailers, and consumers are more aware of the impacts of products on workers, communities, and ecosystems (p.37).” A variety of scholars have agreed that the purpose of slow fashion is to place emphasis on creating a process that encompasses both social and environmental aspects of sustainability in a way that works for all production processes including design planning, sourcing, and education (Clark, 2008; Fletcher,

2010; cited in Pooklungara & Shephard, 2013). According to Fletcher, (2007) slow fashion achieves this definition by placing quality over quantity. In other words, more time is spent on the construction of each individual garment rather than trying to create several pieces by an unrealistic deadline. Moreover, suppliers are given the power to meticulously plan orders as well as not succumb to the pressure of hiring subcontractors; or forcing employees to do an unreasonable amount of overtime (Fletcher, 2007).

With slow fashion arising as a new concept, it is important for consumers to understand its definition and how it is both similar and divergent from eco-fashion. Jung and Jin (2014) were one of the first to operationalize slow fashion through scale development. Jung and Jin concluded that slow fashion is a broad and complex principle, extending beyond environmental sustainability through specific orientations. These orientations make slow fashion an individual doctrine from sustainability by underlining care for producers and local communities, seeking history for sustainable perceived value of the product, pursuing diversity for the eco-fashion world, and maximizing product lifespan for the benefit of both the environment and consumer well-being (Jung & Jin, 2014). The five imperative orientations of slow fashion were discovered to be equity, localism, authenticity, exclusivity, and functionality (Jung & Jin, 2014). *Equity* considers the understanding and care consumers have of fair labor practices when buying clothes; *localism* stresses the perceived value of buying domestic products; *authenticity* refers to the appreciation of clothing made by handcrafted and traditional methods; *exclusivity* is the value consumers place on rare clothing; and *functionality* is defined as the concern consumers place on the longevity and versatility of the garments (Jung & Jin, 2014). These orientations are exemplified in many slow fashion brands. For example, Alabama

Chanin produces limited edition jewelry and clothing which are handmade from recycled materials (Clark, 2008). Their designs for hand-sewn garments are constructed by the use of stitching techniques that can be traced back to the southern United States during the depression era (Clark, 2008). Zady, an online retailer launched in 2013, reviews for sustainable production by featuring products that are handmade, locally sourced, environmentally conscious, and made of high quality materials (Azoff, 2013). Anytime a consumer views an item from the Zady website, they can immediately trace where the garment was made and who made the piece.

Slow Fashion Consumers

Although few studies have been conducted specifically on the self-concepts of slow fashion consumers, it can be inferred from literature that their values would differ significantly from fast-fashion or regular consumers. Consumers who are highly involved in slow fashion were found to relate to all the slow fashion dimensions as well as display a high degree of benevolence and self-transcendence (Jung & Jin, 2016). Comparing the decision process of fast-fashion and slow-fashion consumers, Watson and Yan (2013) found buyer's remorse to be one of the emerging themes from conducted focus group interviews. Fast fashion consumers avoided buyer's remorse by placing quantity over quality. They pay less money and in return; consume a greater amount of clothing. In contrast, slow fashion consumers were able to avoid buyer's remorse because even though the clothing items required more money for purchase, consumers placed solace in the fact that their clothing would last longer, be more versatile, fit well, and be consistent with their wardrobe. They also viewed their clothing as "art" and enjoyed the idea of divesting less often.

In Kim, Choo, and Yoon's (2013) study of fast-fashion avoidance amongst South Korean consumers, de-individualization was found to play a prominent role. The researchers further concluded while Korean consumer's negative attitudes of inauthenticity were not directly related to fast-fashion avoidance; the foreignness and inability to express their personality and culture contrasted heavily with the importance they placed on uniqueness. Similarly, Jung and Jin (2016) found exclusivity to be the only predictive factor that influenced perceived customer value which in turn increased the intention to purchase and willingness to pay a price premium for slow fashion. Therefore, it is recommended for retailers to utilize strategies that distract consumers away from the price point by highlighting the features and benefits of slow fashion apparel (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013).

Theoretical Foundation: Self-Concept

One of the main reasons for consumption of new fashions is not just for need based reasons; but for the idea of self-expression. This is achieved through the extrinsic cues of the outer appearance. Through individual style, one expresses personality, preferences, values, and the need for acceptance from others. Research has shown that consumers buy products that are congruent with or enhance their self-concept (D'Souza, 2015; Niinimäki, 2010; Sirgy, 1982). Self-concept refers to the perceptions and attitudes consumers have of themselves as well as to the extent which a product expresses imperative aspects of a consumer's self-image, identities, and values (Fournier, 1998; Goldsmith et al., 1996; Solomon, 1994). Sirgy (1982) concluded that there are four psychological constructs of self-image: *actual self* which is how a consumer sees themselves in the truest fashion; *ideal-self* which illustrates how a consumer would like

to see themselves; *social-self* which refers to how the consumer is seen by others; and *ideal-social self* which is how the consumer would like others to view them. Due to this need for self-expression and self-enhancement, consumers are often motivated to purchase products that make them feel as though they have enhanced their self-image through fulfilling values. These products are often viewed as the bridge to something meaningful in the consumer's life (Niinimäki, 2010). For instance, Niinimäki (2010) found that consumer's labeled as "ethical hardliners" prioritize a moral, personal ideology as a potent value in their buying decisions. If a consumer has a strong ethical commitment, such as protecting the environment or making sure that factory workers are paid fair wages, this may submerge strongly into their outer aesthetic and overall identity (D'Souza, 2015; Niinimäki, 2010). Wearing slow fashion apparel may be the consumer's way of achieving actual and ideal self-concept by communicating an image that stresses both aesthetic uniqueness and care for sustainability related issues. Through their ideological beliefs, consumers may feel empowered from learning about and understanding slow fashion objectives as well as feel "transformed" by acquiring timeless fashion pieces. The self-concept theory provided us a ground in which we would develop the conceptual model, through how consumers view and would like to view themselves (actual and ideal-self) as well as how consumers view or would like others to view themselves (social and ideal-social); would impact the consumers' behavioral intentions toward slow fashion. Specifically, we consider curiosity, internalized moral identity, symbolized moral identity, self-esteem in relation to clothing, and communicating self to others via clothing to be important self-concepts that are intended to be related to behavioral intentions toward slow fashion. The relationship is further expected to be

mediated by how much the consumer perceives self-enhancement benefits to be derived from slow fashion. Specifically we shed light on empowerment and self-transformation as the perceived benefits of slow fashion toward self-enhancement.

Curiosity

Curiosity is most commonly defined as “the disposition to inquire, investigate, or seek after new information and/or knowledge; the desire to learn or know about anything; an eager desire to know; inquisitiveness (Curiosity, n.d.).” It is an intrinsically motivating trait as curious people tend to seek out personally meaningful interests (Deci, 1975; cited in Kashdan, Rose & Fincham, 2004). In contrast to some past terminology, Kashdan, Rose, and Fincham (2004) argued that a curious person does not necessarily seek out experiences that contain high risks or are intellectually stimulating. Instead, these individuals have a tendency to pursue novelty by (a) exploration or seeking out new information and (b) absorption or becoming fully engaged in a new experience (Kashdan et al., 2004). This is palpable through the realm of fashion information seeking. Gam (2011) inferred that consumers with an immense interest in fashion such as fashion opinion leaders, seek out new information about clothing; which in turn would lead these consumers to express curiosity and interest towards eco-friendly apparel.

Various slow fashion companies over the past years have sought out to provide education and training to all actors of the fashion system. By creating interaction between all groups, Eretik and Atik (2015) concluded that a collective identity would be construed which would help increase better outcomes of sustainable consumption practices. The revival of knitting has been argued to be an effective foundation for bringing these actors together as it has historically been a community based activity (Clark, 2008). The U.K.

knitwear company, Keep and Share, has workshops run by the founder, Amy Twigger Holroyd, in which she helps consumers knit their own sweaters (Langdown, 2014). This enables a connection to the garment so it will not be so easily disposed of. Verity Britton, founder of Baa Ram Ewe, takes a similar approach by developing a network of knitting groups and offering classes for knitters with a wide range of skills (Langdown, 2014). Because slow fashion principles place emphasis on new experiences, skills, and knowledge, it is proposed that consumers who view curiosity as a defining trait in their overall self-concept are more likely to perceive a higher amount of benefits from slow fashion and contain stronger intentions toward slow fashion compared to those who place less emphasis on curiosity as a self-identity.

Moral Identity: Internalized and Symbolized

Throughout academic research, it has been implied that consumers have multiple identities (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Reed et al., 2007). Some of these identities are inherently more important than others when it comes to decision based reasoning and action (Reed et al., 2007). Aquino and Reed (2002) proposed moral self-identity can be a platform for social identification that people use to model their self-definitions. *Moral identity* refers to the extent to which consumers a) view specific traits and values as imperative to their sense of self (*internalized moral identity*) and b) how important they believe communicating these values in a non-verbal manner (e.g., reading books, joining organizations) to be in their everyday life (*symbolized moral identity*) (Aquino & Reed, 2002). In other words, it explains the role specific character traits play in social identification. The role of values have been eminent in predicting behavioral intention and action towards specific products. According to Damon and Hart (1992), “People

whose self-concept is organized around their moral beliefs are highly likely to translate those beliefs into action consistently throughout their lives (p.445).” For example, consumers who place a high value on integrity are less likely to purchase counterfeit goods (Ang et al., 2001; Phau & Teah, 2009). Additionally, consumers of green or environmentally friendly products have been found to appear more altruistic than their non-green counterparts and more likely to use altruistic reasoning as an intention to purchase those products (Barbarossa & Pelsmacker, 2016; Dickson, 2000; Iyer et al., 2016). Meijboom and Brom (2012) argued that moral ideals can be both action guiding and a source for critical reflection in understanding and communicating sustainability related issues. Rest’s (1986) theoretical model determined that in order to take part in a moral action one must first go through a process that engages in moral sensitivity or awareness of the issue; judgment or determining the right course of action towards the issue; and motivation or the commitment made to take the particular action. While one does not necessarily have to express a sense of moral identity to be involved in this process, those who internalize and symbolize altruistic self-concepts may be more inclined to perceive significant benefits from ethical products like slow fashion and further take morally rigorous actions such as engaging in slow fashion ideology.

Proximity of Clothing to Self: Self-Esteem in Relation to Clothing and Communicating Self via Clothing

Fashion is a symbolic reflection of personality, identities, values, and feelings. By adopting and wearing certain fashions, consumers construe meaning which is exchanged through social interactions (Johar et al., 2013). What a consumer wears often mirrors how they feel about themselves as well as what they wish others would feel or think about

them. According to Johar et al. (2013), clothing does not only satisfy physiological needs but also those that are psychosocial. Based off of the quality of life theory, Sontag and Schlater (1982) further defined the concept of proximity of clothing to self from Sontag's (1979) original research. This concept is multidimensional and confirms a consumer's degree of psychological closeness of clothing to their overall self-image (Sontag & Schlater, 1982). Sontag and Lee (2004) later created a scale instrument from open-ended responses found in the original study. This study structured each dimension from theories of prominent psychologists such as Rosenberg (1965). These psychologists focused on the evaluative process of self-esteem (ex: approval or disapproval of self) as well as the way in which appearance establishes meaning through non-verbal cues (Sontag & Lee, 2004). From their works, Sontag and Schlater (1982) created the dimensions of clothing in relation to self-esteem and self as process (communicating self to others). *Self-esteem in relation to clothing* referred to how clothing use affects a person's evaluation of self-worth, self-regard, and self-respect (Sontag & Lee, 2004). *Communicating self to others via clothing* refers to how confident a person feel about their ability to choose clothing that conveys a certain message to others or expresses the need for a distinct identity (Sontag & Lee, 2004). Both are important constructs in predicting consumer's behavioral intentions toward slow fashion because clothing is often used as a way to bridge the gap between a consumers actual self and ideal self-concept (Dogan, 2015). Sirgy (1982) postulated that self-esteem is a primary motive for consumers to seek out products that enhance and push them closer to achieving their ideal self-image. In certain social situations, consumers must decide which self-image to pursue thus, they look for ways of expressing this image by the purchase of products (Sirgy, 1982). In this case, it is logical

to assume that consumers who have a stronger level of self-esteem and ability to express themselves to others would be more likely to perceive slow fashion as a way of showing their appreciation for well-constructed garments that also enhance their appearance and values associated with social justice and therefore, more likely to show stronger behavioral intentions toward slow fashion brands or products.

Perceived Self-Enhancement Benefits: Empowerment

When consumers lack a feeling of empowerment, they experience a sense of helplessness regarding environmental and ethical issues (Ertekin & Atik, 2015). Without the belief that they can play an integral part in remedying problems, apathy could produce thus, motivation to act would be decreased (Ertekin & Atik, 2015). Cutright and Samper (2014) describe empowerment as the degree to which a person believes they have both the ability and drive to control and achieve desirable outcomes. Slow fashion can provide this feeling because consumers have a greater understanding of where and how their clothes are made. It also creates a sense of community where designers, producers, and consumers come together to share ideas, knowledge, and concerns. For instance, Fletcher's Local Wisdom Project (2012) explored ways in which people engage in alternative garment use (Langdown, 2014). According to Langdown (2014), this experiment allowed for fashion users to come together and share their resourcefulness as they no longer saw justice in the current system of fashion. Giving consumers the opportunity to act as a co-creator has also been a viable alternative. Junky Styling, a design company based in London, employs this idea by allowing their customers to bring in worn clothing and then transforming these clothes into new designs envisioned by the customer (Clark, 2008; Ertekin & Atik, 2015). 3D printers, laser cutters, and tech shops

are available to the general public, enabling more individuals to create the products they actually want (Langdown, 2014). Fab labs have been suggested as a way for local communities to create relevant objects which could include construction of new apparel (Langdown, 2014). While not all slow fashion consumers would become designers, the understanding of the design process as well as obtaining new information related to sustainability are puissant factors in creating an empowered individual. Therefore, through the process of acquiring new information and ideas about their clothing, slow fashion could help consumers feel more empowered about both the way they dress and their ability to address daunting sustainability issues through the implementation of sustainable design. In this regard, we propose that when a consumer expects to be empowered from the use of slow fashion products, he or she is more likely to show stronger behavioral intentions toward slow fashion compared to those who less expect to be.

Perceived Self-Enhancement Benefits: Self-Transformation

Self-transformation is the expectation that a purchase will bring a certain degree of positive image, confidence, and status (Richins & Chaplin, 2015). Richin's (2011, 2013) argues that most purchases are done with the assumption that a product will bring some type of change to the consumer. For example, buying a bike for the intention of weight loss or cosmetics to enhance beauty. Doing this is the way in which consumers enhance their own personal interests by incorporating an image of themselves to others that confirms their self-serving bias of viewing themselves through an ideal-self lens (Barber et al., 2012). Barber et al. (2012) determined consumers with greater self-enhancement values place a higher amount of significance on the satisfaction and positive

self-image a product provides. Therefore, consumers who have stronger expectation that slow fashion would help for self-enhancement, especially how they look to others, will show a stronger behavioral intention towards slow fashion.

Behavioral Intentions toward Slow Fashion

In this research design, we not only consider purchase intention but also intention to pay more for slow fashion as an important behavioral intention construct. The view that intentions are the best predictor of behavior remains prevalent (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Despite this assertion, intentions have not always been found to result in an actual purchase (Barber et al., 2012). The attitude behavior gap has been an ongoing inquiry that several scholars have sought to explain. In order for purchase intention to occur, consumers must view sustainable products as less of an inconvenience and must comprehend the self and others serving values that can be obtained from buying these products (Barber et al., 2012). Barber et al. (2012) concluded that consumers who expressed a higher level of purchase intention for environmentally friendly wine also expressed a higher willingness to pay more and actually paid more for the wine when it was auctioned versus consumers who expressed lower levels of purchase intention. They further implied that marketers should focus on communicating the benefits of non-traditional packaging material in a way that stresses both its ease of use and importance of recycling. These self and others serving values mediate the effects of purchase intention thus, influence a consumer's willingness to pay more for a certain product. Laroche et al. (2001) found that consumers who purchase environmentally friendly products also pay more for them because they are concerned with ecological problems and wish to foster warm relationships with others. Thus, it is proposed that once the

consumer has a higher intention to purchase slow fashion, they would be more likely to show a stronger intention to pay more for those products versus those who have a lower level of purchase intention

Hypothesis and Conceptual Model

Based on the current literature review and theoretical framework, twelve hypotheses have been proposed.

H1: Consumers with a higher level of curiosity would feel a stronger level of (a) empowerment and (b) self-transformation from slow fashion than those with a lower level.

H2: Consumers with a higher level of curiosity are more likely to show stronger intention to (a) purchase and (b) pay more for slow fashion than those with a lower level.

H3: Consumers with a higher level of moral identity (both internalization and symbolization) are more likely to feel a stronger level of (a) empowerment and (b) self-transformation from slow fashion than those with lower levels.

H4: Consumers with a higher level of moral identity (both internalization and symbolization) are more likely to show stronger intention to (a) purchase and (b) pay more for slow fashion than those with a lower level.

H5: Consumers with a higher level of self-esteem in relation to clothing are more likely to a stronger level of (a) empowerment and (b) self-transformation than those with lower levels.

H6: Consumers with a higher level of self-esteem in relation to clothing are more likely to show stronger intention to (a) purchase and (b) pay more for slow fashion than those with a lower level.

H7: Consumers with a higher level of communicating self to others via clothing are more likely to show a stronger level of (a) empowerment and (b) self-transformation than those with lower levels.

H8: Consumers with a higher level of communicating self to others via clothing are more likely to show stronger intention to purchase and (b) pay more for slow fashion than those with a lower level.

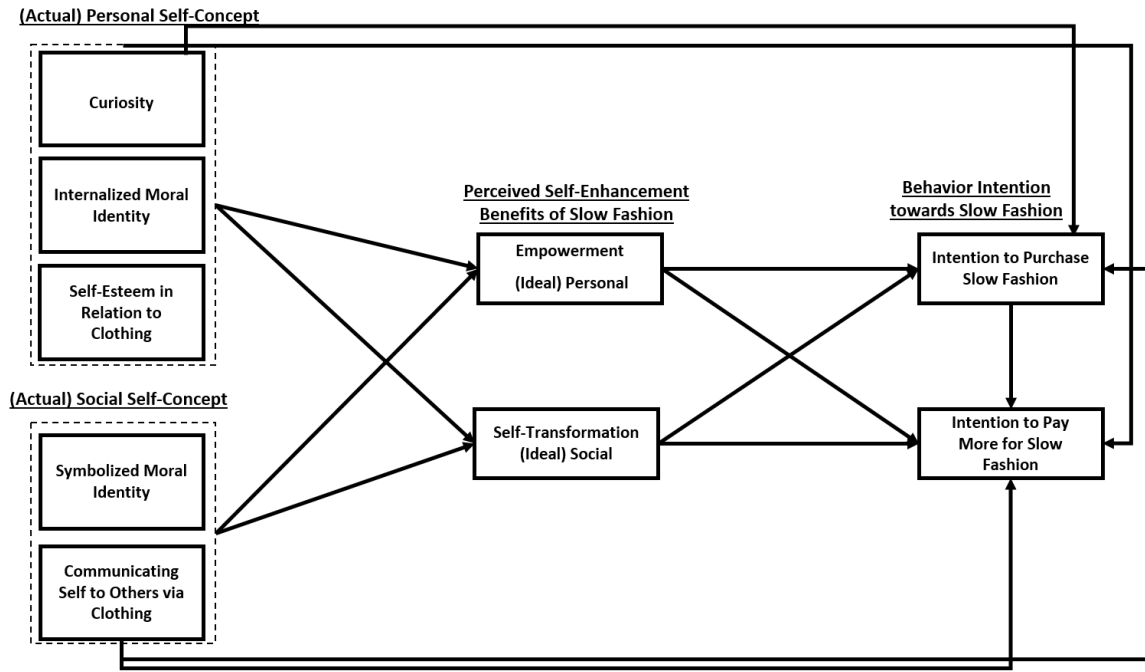
H9: Consumers who feel a higher level of empowerment from slow fashion are more likely to show stronger intention to (a) purchase and (b) pay more for slow fashion than those who are not as empowered.

H10: Consumers who feel a higher level of self-transformation empowerment from slow fashion are more likely to show stronger intention to (a) purchase and (b) pay more for slow fashion than those with a lower level.

H11: Intention to purchase slow fashion is positively related to intention to pay more for slow fashion.

H12: Empowerment and self-transformation mediate the effects of curiosity, moral identity, self-esteem in relation to clothing, and communicating self to others on intention to purchase and intention to pay more for slow fashion.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model for Hypothesis



III.METHODOLOGY

Participants

In order to fully understand the specific role of consumer self-concept on behavioral intention towards slow fashion, an online survey with a nationwide sample was utilized. Data had been collected from general adult panels from a large data company, Qualtrics. The sample included 364 participants with a 50/50 gender split. The split was necessary because gender has been shown to make a significant difference in how consumers respond to certain questions therefore, a variety of perspectives were needed (Mainieri et al.,1997) All were residents of the United States and aged 18 years or older. The participants received the survey through email where they were first notified of the study's research purpose. It was emphasized that participation was on a voluntary basis and that all information related to the study would be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. None of the data collection procedures involved direct contact between the participants and researchers nor direct identifying codes therefore, the IRB standards for confidentiality were maintained.

Demographics

85.7% identified as White or Caucasian, 4.1% as Black or African-American, 2.2% as Hispanic or Latino, 6.6% as Asian, .3% as Native American and 1.1% as another race. According to the gender split, 49.5% of the participants were male and 49.5% were female. 4.1% were between the ages of 18-24, 15.4% between the ages of 25-34, 16.3% between the ages of 35-44, 20.1% between the ages of 45-54, 19.8% between 55-64, and 24.2% were over 65 years old. 19.9% had a high school education or less, 31.6% had

some college or equivalent, 31.3% had a bachelor's degree or equivalent, and 17.2% had a graduate degree or equivalent. 38.7% of the participants were employed full-time, 10.5% were employed part-time, 5.2% were self-employed, 34% were not employed, and 11.6% reported another type of employment status. For the participants annual household income 14% reported that they made under \$25,000 per year, 27.7% reported that they made between \$25,001-50,000 per year, 20.1% between \$50,001-75,000, 13.7% between \$75,001-100,000, 10.4% between \$100,001-125,000, 8% over \$125,000, and 6% preferred not to answer. 25.9% reported their marital status as single, 52.9% were married, 19.2% were separated, divorced or widowed, and 1.7% reported another type of marital status.

IRB Exemption

This research project was approved by the IRB at the exemption level. This indicates that risks to subjects were: a) minimal; and b) did not expose subjects to unnecessary risks that would bring mental, physical, or financial harm. There were no other known, foreseeable risks to any participants of this study. The IRB exemption was granted before 11/15/2016 (No. 2017257).

Measures

The questionnaire measured each variable from the literature review. Four items from Kashdan, Rose, and Fincham (2004) were adapted from their exploration subscale to measure curiosity, all thirteen items from Aquino and Reed (2002) to measure moral identity, and two subscales from Sontag and Lee's (2004) proximity of clothing to self were used as a measurement of self-esteem in relation to clothing and communicating

self to others vis clothing. All items were measured using a seven point Likert scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree and (1) very unlikely to (7) very likely. Items defining empowerment and self-transformation had been adapted from Cutright and Samper's (2014) and Richin's (2011, 2013) respective studies. Intentions to purchase and pay more for slow fashion were taken from the research of Krishnamurthy and Sivaraman (2002) and Castaldo et al. (2009). The full list of measurements are located in Table 1.

Table 1. Measurement Items

Variable	Scale Items	Reliability	Source
<i>Curiosity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -I would describe myself as someone who actively seeks as much information as I can in a new situation. -I frequently find myself looking for new opportunities to grow as a person (e.g., information, people, resources). -I am not the type of person who probes deeply into new situations or things (R)*. -Everywhere I go, I am out looking for new things or experiences. 	.72	Kasdan, Rose, and Fincham (2004)
<i>Internalized Moral-Identity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caring, Compassionate, Fair, Friendly, Generous, Hardworking, Helpful, Honest, Kind. -It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics. -Being someone who has these characteristics is an important part of who I am. - A big part of my emotional well-being is tied up in having these characteristics. - I would be ashamed to be a person who has these characteristics. (R)* - Having these characteristics is not really important to me. (R) * - Having these characteristics is an important part of my sense of self. - I strongly desire to have these characteristics. 	.86	Aquino and Reed (2002)
<i>Symbolized Moral-Identity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caring, Compassionate, Fair, Friendly, Generous, Hardworking, Helpful, Honest, Kind. -I often buy products that communicate the fact that I have these characteristics. -I often wear clothes that identify me as having these characteristics. -The types of things I do in my spare time (e.g., hobbies) clearly identify me as having these characteristics. -The kinds of books and magazines that I read identify me as having these characteristics. -The fact that I have these characteristics is communicated to others by my membership in certain organizations. - I am actively involved in activities that communicate to others that I have these characteristics. 	.90	Aquino and Reed (2002)
<i>Clothing in Relation to Self-Esteem</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The clothes I like to wear help me feel self-assured. -My self-confidence increases when I dress appropriately. - I try to buy clothing that makes me feel attractive. - When I wear clothes that make me feel good, I am better able to talk with others. -Dressing up makes me feel important. -Good quality clothes that look good on me make me feel competent. -The way I dress is important in giving me a sense of being in control of my life. -When I feel good about what I am wearing, then I have confidence in myself. 	.94	Sontag and Lee (2004)
<i>Communicating Self to Others via Clothing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -My clothing gives others an idea about my interests or activities. - My clothing shows others how I think and feel about myself. -I try to project a certain image of myself to others through my clothing. - I often wear certain clothing to let people know what kind of person I am. - I want my clothes to make a statement about me without any need for words. -What I wear and the way I wear it show others my attitudes. -Through my clothing, I can show my values to others 	.95	Sontag and Lee (2004)
<i>Empowerment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How likely is it that purchasing or wearing items from Zady would make you feel?... -Strong -Confident -Self-sufficient -Determined -Driven -In control 	.97	Cutright and Samper (2014)

Table 1. (Continued) Measurement Items

<i>Self-Transformation</i>	How likely is it that each of these things would happen if you were able to purchase something from Zady? -Other people would respect me more -I would feel like a more important person -I would feel more self-confident -I would become more attractive to other people	.94	Ritchins (2011, 2013)
<i>Intention to Purchase</i>	-I am likely to check reviews regarding Zady products -I am likely to consider Zady the next time I think about buying clothes -I am likely to ask the salesperson about Zady the next time I visit a clothing store - I am likely to suggest Zady to a friend	.93	Krishnamurthy and Sivaraman (2002)
<i>Intention to Pay More</i>	-Buying from Zady seems smart to me even if it costs more. -I would still buy from Zady if other brands reduced their prices. -I would be willing to pay a higher price for Zady products.	.95	Castaldo et al. (2009)

Note. (R)* indicates reverse coding.

Pretest I: Brand Choice

To accurately measure behavioral intention towards slow fashion, it was first necessary to provide a current example of a slow fashion brand. Because slow fashion is a somewhat recent and not well understood concept, it is most beneficial to use a reference point for questions involving purchase intention and intention to pay more. In order to find a relevant brand that could be described as slow fashion, definitions from recent literature were utilized. An internet search was also carried out to find brands that had referred to themselves, either directly or indirectly, as slow fashion. Based on both the literature and internet search, three brands, Zady, People Tree, and Eileen Fischer, were selected as candidates for the first pretest. A short survey was distributed to a merchandising class of twenty-six undergraduate students at a large university in the United States. This survey included a picture of each brand's logo along with a question about how familiar the individual student was with the particular brand. Response options ranged from (1) not at all familiar to (5) extremely familiar. To account for response bias, the most unknown brand of the three choices was intentionally selected. Due to Zady's

greater ambiguity (96.2% responded to not at all familiar), this brand was chosen as a representation of slow fashion for the second pretest.

Pretest II: Brand Representativeness

Although slow fashion can be considered a broad concept, it was crucial that the brand's mission statement and practices adequately reflected the terminology from academic literature before the final study could be launched. A second pretest was given to a class via an online survey. Students who completed the survey received extra credit for the course. The students were first instructed to read the definition of slow fashion from Jung and Jin's (2014) empirical research. The definition included explicit descriptions of five orientations previously mentioned: exclusivity, functionality, authenticity, equity, and localism (Jung & Jin, 2014, 2016). Next, they were asked to read Zady's mission statement as well as view an image of the labels Zady uses to review their products for sustainable, transparent production. The image showed seven symbols that were each individually titled locally sourced, handmade, high quality raw materials, environmentally conscious, made in the U.S.A., fair-trade cotton, and limited edition (Azoff, 2013). Once they had finished the necessary readings, the students answered three questions about how well they believed Zady to be in representing slow fashion's concept, definition, and orientations. Responses were measured on a seven point Likert scale ranging from (1) very inadequate to (7) very adequate and (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. A total of twenty-four responses were collected. For the first question, 87.5 % (n = 21) of students believed that Zady was very adequate or adequate in representing the concept of slow fashion. For the statement "I believe Zady is a slow fashion brand," 87.5 % (n = 21) strongly agreed or agreed. For the final statement "I

believe that Zady encompasses the major values and orientations associated with slow fashion” 75 % (n = 18) of students strongly agreed or agreed. Results of the pretest indicated that Zady was a satisfactory example of a slow fashion brand and could be used in the final survey.

IV.RESULTS

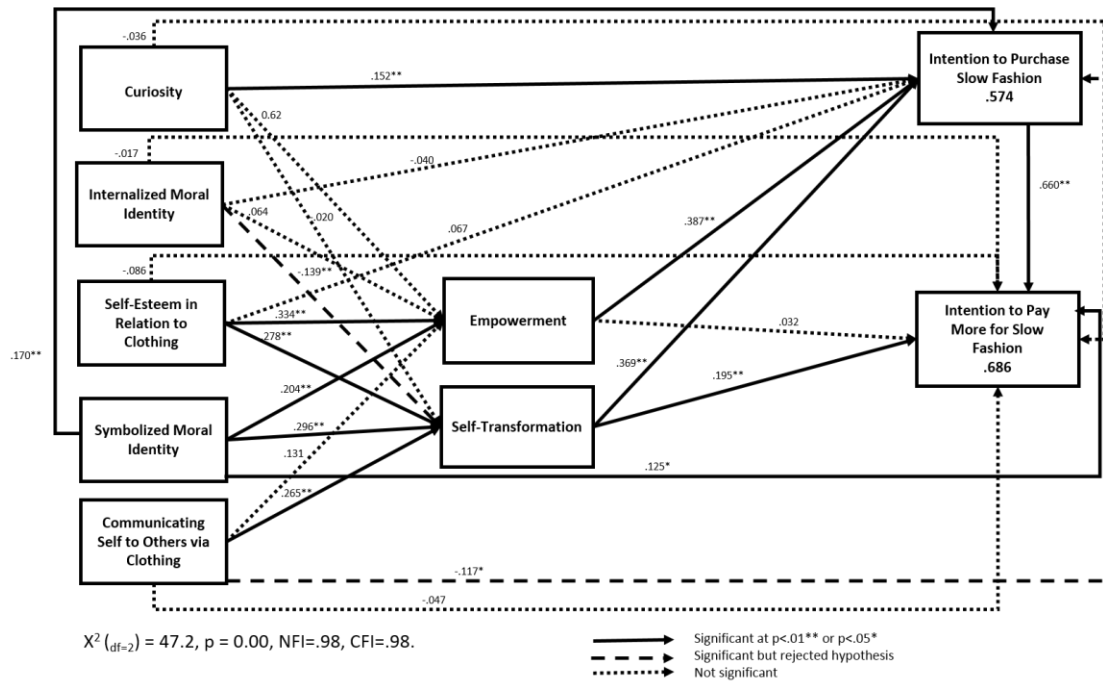
A path analysis was performed to test the model and determine the significance as well as the strength of relationships between constructs. This enabled us to test the hypotheses. Both SPSS and AMOS were used to run the data. Reliability tests were run beforehand to ensure the reliability of multi-item measures of variables. Cronbach's alpha ranged from .72 to .97 indicating that each scale was above the .70 threshold. This confirmed that each scale was a reliable measure of the intended variable. Model fit indices of the path model suggested that the model fit well to the data: $X^2_{(df=2)} = 47.2$, $p = 0.00$, $NFI=.98$, $CFI=.98$.

Direct Effect Testing

First, the direct effects among constructs were examined (from H1 through H11). The direct paths from curiosity to empowerment ($\gamma=.062$, $p=.182$) and self-transformation ($\gamma= -.020$, $p=.651$) did not conclude a significant relationship. Thus, H1 was rejected. Curiosity positively affected intention to purchase slow fashion ($\gamma= .152$, $p<.01$) but did not affect the intention to pay more for slow fashion ($\gamma=-.36$, $p<.301$). Therefore, H2 was partially supported. The direct path from internalized moral-identity to empowerment did not conclude a significant relationship ($\gamma=.064$, $p=.146$). However, the direct path from internalized moral-identity to self-transformation signified a negative relationship ($\gamma= -.139$, $p<.01$). Symbolized moral-identity had a positive direct effect on both empowerment ($\gamma=.204$, $p<.01$) and self-transformation ($\gamma=.296$, $p<.01$). Thus, H3 was partially supported. Internalized moral-identity did not appear to affect purchase intention ($\gamma = -.040$, $p = .291$) nor the intention to pay more for slow fashion ($\gamma = -.017$, $p=.612$). Symbolized moral identity had a positive effect on both intention to purchase (γ

= .125, $p < .05$) and intention to pay more for slow fashion ($\gamma = .170$, $p < .01$). Therefore, H4 was partially supported. Clothing in relation to self-esteem had a positive correlation to both empowerment ($\gamma = .334$, $p < .01$) and self-transformation ($\gamma = .278$, $p < .01$). Therefore, H5 was supported. Clothing in relation to self-esteem did not appear to influence purchase intention ($\gamma = .067$, $p = .250$) and did not appear to influence the intention to pay more for slow fashion ($\gamma = -.092$; $p = .067$). Therefore, H6 was rejected. Communicating self to others via clothing did not appear to have a significant relationship with empowerment ($\gamma = .131$, $p = .052$) but had a strong positive correlation to self-transformation ($\gamma = .265$, $p < .01$). Thus, H7 was partially supported. Communicating self to others appeared to have a significant negative influence on purchase intention ($\gamma = -.117$, $p < .05$) but did not appear to influence the intention to pay more for slow fashion ($\gamma = -.047$, $p = .360$). Therefore, H8 was rejected. Empowerment had a strong positive effect on the intention to purchase slow fashion ($\beta = .387$, $p < .01$) but did not influence the intention to pay more for slow fashion ($\beta = .032$, $p = .453$). Therefore, H9 was partially supported. Self-transformation had a strong positive effect on the intention to purchase ($\beta = .369$, $p < .01$) and pay more for slow fashion ($\beta = .195$, $p < .01$). Therefore, H10 was supported. Intention to purchase slow fashion showed a strong, positive correlation to the intention to pay more for slow fashion ($\beta = .660$, $p < .01$) Therefore, H11 was supported. The squared multiple correlation of purchase intention was .574 which indicates that 57.4% of variance could be attributed to the predictor variables. The squared multiple correlation of intention to pay more was .686 which indicates that 68.6% of variance could be attributed to the predictor variables.

Figure 2. Path Analysis Results



Indirect Effect Testing

To test H12, indirect effects were examined. Empowerment and self-transformation were predicted to mediate the effects of curiosity, internalized moral identity, symbolized moral identity, clothing in relation to self-esteem, and communicating self to others via clothing on purchase intention and intention to pay more for slow fashion. To determine this result, the bootstrapping method and bias-correcting bootstrap confidence intervals were used to analyze the significance of the indirect effects. Before this test could be performed, all missing data was subbed in with the mean average of the variables ($X=4.44$). Test results implied that indirect effects of empowerment and self-transformation on intention to purchase slow fashion were observed to the predictor variables of communicating self to others via clothing and symbolized moral identity. Additionally, indirect effects of intention to pay more were

observed in the predictor variables of both symbolized and internalized moral identity. Finally, we should note that indirect effects of the mediating variables, empowerment and self-transformation appeared to positively influence intention to pay more. No other indirect effects had been observed. Thus, H12 was partially supported. Detailed results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Indirect Effect Testing for H12

Path	Standardized Indirect Effects
CSO → PI	.148*
CSO → PAY	.076
MS → PI	.188*
MS → PAY	.271*
CSE → PI	.232
CSE → PAY	.262
MI → PI	-.027
MI → PAY	-.067*
CUR → PI	.017
CUR → PAY	.109*
ST → PAY	.244*
EMP → PAY	.256*

Note. CSO: Communicating self to others via clothing; MS: Symbolized moral-identity; CSE: Self-esteem in relation to clothing; MI: Internalized moral-identity; CUR: Curiosity; ST: Self-Transformation; EMP: Empowerment; PI: Intention to purchase; PAY: Intention to pay more * $p < .05$ (bias-corrected percentile method).

V.DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

While slow fashion still appears to be in the introductory stage, the demand for ethical products continues to grow at a vast rate (Barber et al.,2012; Pooklungara & Shephard, 2013). With this growth in mind, it is imperative for marketers to implement competitive strategies by analyzing consumer values, character traits, and self-enhancement expectations. This study used a self-report measure of pre-existing scales to asses traits, values, self-conception, and expressed behavioral intentions. The first variable curiosity, was found to influence purchase intention but not the intention to pay more. This aligns with other studies which have found that while some consumers value certain aspects of slow fashion or may take interest in the idea, most do not understand or know enough about slow fashion to make an actual, informed purchase decision (Pooklungara & Shephard, 2013). Also, past research has found that consumers may appear to be skeptical of businesses with positive environmental or ethical messages. This can be explained by the concept of “greenwashing” or businesses that project deceptive claims about their products (Nyilasy et al., 2014). In this study, consumers who valued altruistic traits (internalized moral-identity) did not appear to have said traits influence their behavioral intention towards slow fashion. Marketers and retailers must be cautious when highlighting the features and benefits of their products and should have enough evidence to back up their claims so they do not appear dishonest. Because internalized moral identity allows consumers to picture someone to model benevolent self-constructs after, celebrity endorsements may prove to be an effective strategy. Industry professionals should focus their efforts on attracting fashion opinion leaders as they tend to be the most willing to search for and try out new fashions.

Many of the hypotheses, whether supported or rejected, indicated that purchase intention for slow fashion appears to be value driven rather than just for social purposes. For example, it was interesting to find that in this study, consumers who reported high levels of moral identity in the symbolization dimension had a high intent to purchase and pay more for slow fashion. However, consumers who reported high levels of communicating self to others via clothing did not appear to take interest in purchasing slow fashion and did not appear to have either a high or low intention to pay more for slow fashion. This could be as theorized in past research that consumers with a “green” ideology desire to be someone who engages their thinking and acting towards beneficial causes or as an, “aesthetic of existence” (Niinimäki, 2010). For these consumers, their self-concept is not only invested in how they look and are perceived in their clothing, but by forming connections through an ardent sense of justice. Hence, slow fashion businesses should focus on providing messages and projects that can get the consumer actively involved in just causes. Also, past studies have found that some consumers have a negative view eco-friendly apparel because they view the clothing as unfashionable (Gam, 2011). Consumers who want their clothing to make a statement about themselves may be reluctant to purchase slow fashion because of negative stereotypes surrounding clothing appearance as well as social justice and environmentalist movements. Thus, slow fashion brands should also focus on displaying attractive visual aesthetics in stores for consumers who place a stronger emphasis on fit and style.

Self-esteem in relation to clothing did not have an effect on purchase intention for slow fashion and did not significantly correlate to the intention to pay more for slow fashion. Lee and DeLong (2017) discovered in their research that self-esteem also did not

play a factor in determining U.S. teenager's attachment to handcrafted items. Instead, attachments were formed through emotional bonds with the creator of the piece.

Therefore, it is apparent that slow fashion businesses must continue to bridge the divide between consumers and producers by encouraging communication that fosters meaningful relationships.

Finally, high degrees of self-transformation were found to be positively correlated to the intention to pay more for slow fashion. It has been implied that many consumers are growing tired of fast-fashion because of its perceived poor garment quality and lack of unique clothing styles (Kim et al., 2013). Through the aspects of functionality and exclusivity, slow fashion can potentially reach consumers who place importance on self-enhancement by stressing aesthetic uniqueness and durability found in slow fashion items. As mentioned, Jung and Jin (2016) found perceived exclusivity to be a factor that influenced purchase intention and willingness to pay a price premium for slow fashion. While the other dimensions of slow fashion did not mediate perceived quality or behavioral intention, this study suggests that transformative dimensions such as functionality should also be communicated to the consumer. For example, it should be emphasized that users can wear the clothing for many years which contrasts extensively with the much shorter life span of fast-fashion.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study makes important theoretical contributions, there were several limitations that could be addressed in future research. First, this study was conducted using an online survey. There is always the probability that consumers may not answer truthfully or objectively especially when it comes to questions involving character traits

or beliefs. A focus group or other qualitative approach with open ended responses may be a better way to account for this particular limitation.

Second, the sample included participants who were mostly Caucasian and of middle to older ages. All participants were from the United States so it is unknown if the results from this study could be applied to a cross-cultural population. Future studies may find it pertinent to include a sample with a younger average age, more racial diversity, or from different country.

Third, one example of a slow fashion brand was given in the study. To account for time, information provided about the brand was limited as only a brief summary of the brands mission statement as well as a picture of sustainable fashion labels were included. It was not specified that the brand was a slow fashion brand nor was the concept of slow fashion introduced in the final survey. While this might take participants longer to complete, another slow fashion brand with more specific examples of how they apply their mission statement could be necessary as well as a more direct explanation of how that brand embodies slow fashion ideology. Future studies may also want to incorporate questions about fast-fashion and how consumers perceive specific fast-fashion brands in comparison with slow fashion brands.

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