

Factors Affecting Consumers' Willingness to Pay More for Socially Responsible Fashion Products

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Factors Affecting Consumers' Willingness to Pay More for Socially Responsible Fashion Products

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Abstract This study addresses the influences of consumers' demographics, psychographics (e.g. perception), and behavioristics (e.g. habits and past behaviors) on their willingness to pay more for socially responsible fashion products. An online Qualtrics-created survey was used for this study that 748 participants completed. The social responsibility issue in which participants were most interested was "support local businesses." ANOVA was used to test differences by age group and gender. Stepwise multiple regression was used for hypothesis testing. Millennials were more likely to be satisfied with socially responsible fashion purchases than baby boomers. Women were more likely to purchase socially responsible fashion products, be satisfied with socially responsible fashion purchases, and believe the positive impact of socially responsible businesses than men. This study's findings suggest that consumers who are older and purchase fashion products frequently are more willing to make financial sacrifices for socially responsible fashion products. Socially responsible fashion businesses should highlight the positive impact of socially responsible purchases to consumers in their marketing messages to increase consumers' satisfaction with purchases and their willingness to pay more. Consumers' knowledge of social responsibility motivates their socially responsible purchases.

Keywords Consumer behavior, Fashion theory, Social responsibility, Sustainability, Willingness to pay more

Introduction

Concerns for social responsibility has become inevitable in the fashion industry due to consumer demand for an accelerated cycle of new fashion and lower garment prices. (Jones et al., 2005; Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009; O'Cass, 2004). As an example, clothing and textile wastes increased from 24 million tons in 2012 to 26.2 million tons in 2016 in the UK (WRAP, 2017). Due to the complexity of textile and clothing industry processes, it is difficult for both retailers and consumers to make ethical choices

(Hur & Cassidy, 2019). Business bears a substantial share of social responsibility in the current market-place (Porter & Kramer, 2011; Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011). Corporations are increasingly expected to assume corporate social responsibility (Lee & Carroll, 2011). However, consumers influence how business is run since type of products and production processes that business choose are determined based on consumers' desires (Caruana & Crane, 2008; Dickinson & Carsky, 2005). Therefore, motivating consumers to make socially responsible decisions is critical to translate social responsibility into reality. Consumers' efforts to support socially responsible businesses is as important as businesses' efforts to improve sustainable practices (Moore, 2019).

Consumers are showing increasing interest in social responsibility as 75 percent of consumers view sustainability as either extremely or very important to them (Moore, 2019). However, consumers are not necessarily following through with action. It takes more than interest to engage in socially responsible purchases. Bonini and Oppenheim (2008) indicated that only 33 percent of consumers were ready to buy green products or had already done so, while 87 percent of consumers were concerned about the environmental and social impacts of the products they bought. While 60 percent of millennials are interested in sustainable clothing, only 30 percent of millennials have actually purchased it (Mageean, 2018). Given the lack of consumer acceptance of socially responsible products, it is likely that many socially responsible consumption barriers exist. Knowledge regarding the barriers to socially responsible consumption is of increasing importance as marketers place greater emphasis on social responsibility.

A number of barriers to socially responsible consumption have been addressed in previous studies. Meyer (2001) have found that higher cost, fewer choices, aesthetics and functional disadvantages, consumers' lack of knowledge, and uncertainty about the benefit discourage consumers' green apparel purchases. Similarly, Bonini and Oppenheim (2008) have also identified higher prices, lack of awareness of green products, negative perceptions of green products, distrust of green claims, and low availability as barriers for purchasing green products. Among these, price has been found to be the highest barrier to socially responsible consumption (Bonini & Oppenheim, 2008; Gashi 2010; Meyer, 2001; Moisander et al., 2010). Gleim et al. (2013) identified price as a top barrier for green consumption as 42% of non-green consumers indicated price as their barrier for green consumption. Despite of widespread positive attitudes toward socially responsible products, not many consumers opt for those products when they have to bear higher prices (Olson, 2013). This is particularly true in the fashion industry, since most consumers are able to obtain fashion within their budget through fashion retailers' effort to attract consumers with inexpensive fashion (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009;). Sustainable fashion brands often price their products beyond the average consumer's budget and it makes younger consumers hard to afford sustainable fashion products (Moore, 2019). Apparel businesses have aggressively cut costs and this has resulted in the apparel price to fall. Apparel prices had been reduced by 3% while prices of other goods had been increased by 55% between 1995 and 2014 in the United States (Remy et al., 2016). In the United Kingdom, apparel prices had been cut by 53% while other prices had been increased by 49% during the same period. An, Jung and Lee (2016) have found that economic efficiency affect consumer satisfaction with fashion purchases. It has been noted that higher prices

outweigh ethical considerations in case of purchase of green products (e.g., Connell, 2010; Gleim et al., 2013; Padel & Foster, 2005; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Previous studies have revealed that price sensitivity of consumers affect green purchase behavior (Aertsens et al., 2011; Eze & Ndubisi, 2013; Lea & Worsley, 2008; Ma et al., 2013). Despite consumers' caring about socially responsible businesses, this does not cause consumers to favor or punish those businesses (Carrigan & Attala, 2001). Joergens (2006) has noted that consumers are interested in eco-fashion but they do not want to purchase eco-fashion if there is inconvenience such as higher prices.

Despite of their interest in businesses' socially responsible practices, not many consumers do not actually buy socially responsible products due to its higher price. If it takes more than concern about social responsibility to overcome the higher price, what would those be? What would lead consumer make financial sacrifices for socially responsible products? It is important for businesses to understand what consumers care when it comes to social responsibility and socially responsible purchases. In addition, what consumer characteristics do influence their socially responsible purchase decision? Consumers react differently to social responsibility due to demographic and psychographic characteristics. Businesses need to know the differences to formulate effective marketing strategies for each group. In turn, businesses want to convince consumers to pay the premium for their socially responsible products. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate 1) consumers' interest in and perception about social responsibility and socially responsible purchases, 2) differences by demographics in consumers' interest in and perception about social responsibility and socially responsible purchases, and 3) impact of consumers' demographics and perception about social responsibility on their willingness to pay more for socially responsible products.

Literature Review

Fashion Adoption Theory

Sproles' (1979) fashion adoption theory was used as a theoretical framework for this study. This theory describes consumer behaviors and variables that influence consumer decision making with regard to fashion purchases. There are three main variables in fashion adoption theory: 1) pre-existing conditions, 2) directing influences on consumer choice and use of fashion, and 3) a central channel of consumer decision making. Pre-existing conditions include consumer awareness and current level of acceptance of product that influence consumer's information seeking and decision making behavior. Variables that reflect consumer identity such as demographics and behavioristics could be included in pre-existing conditions. Directing influences on consumer choice and use of fashion are composed of psychological and social forces. Cognitive orientation such as psychological identity and sociocultural developments could be defined as psychological and social forces. The actual purchase decision is made in the third variable, a central channel of consumer decision making as evaluation, alternative identification, decision, use and disposal occurs. In conclusion, fashion adoption theory shows that consumers' purchase intention starts with an awareness of new fashion social issues, and their adaption is affected by their social/psycho-

logical needs such as adjusting to a changing society (Sproles & Burns, 1994). This theory has been implemented in previous studies to test the acceptance of fashion products such as short skirts and exotic leather apparel products (Belleau et al., 2001; Forsythe et al., 1991). Gam (2011) also has used this theory to investigate the adoption of eco-friendly clothing. Socially responsible fashion products can be considered as new products in the market since many consumers have not purchased these products or purchased without recognizing socially responsible practices that are implemented in the product. In this study, only 48.3% of the participants indicated that they have ever purchased a socially responsible fashion product.

Willingness to Pay More for Socially Responsible Fashion Products

In fashion adoption theory, a central channel of consumer decision making includes evaluation, alternative identification, decision, use and disposal occurs. Consumer will evaluate socially responsible fashion products by comparing to similar products that are not socially responsible and decide whether they are willing to pay more for socially responsible fashion products. A few studies have identified factors that influence consumers' willingness to pay more for socially responsible products. For example, Hustvedt and Bernard (2008) have investigated consumer willingness to pay a premium for three credence attributes of fiber: origin, type and production method. Consumers were willing to pay a premium for organic and non-genetically modified cotton. Consumers also would pay more for locally produced cotton than they would for imported cotton. Ritch (2015) has also revealed that consumers' motivation to avoid unethically produced fashion causes consumers' willingness to pay more for ethical companies. However, little research has been conducted to address influences of demographics and behavioristics, which are critical for market segmentation. Thus, this study seeks to address influences of consumers' demographics, psychographics (e.g., perception), and behavioristics (e.g., habit, past behavior) on consumers' willingness to pay more for socially responsible fashion products.

Demographics and Fashion Shopping Behaviors

Demographics influence consumer decision making as pre-existing conditions in fashion adoption theory since they reflect consumer identity. Age, gender, education level, occupation, income level, and family size are among the demographics that have been found to be significantly related with ethical behaviors (Bekhet & Al-alak 2011; Sang & Bekhet, 2015; Yau, 2012; Yuan & Zuo, 2013; Zhao et al., 2014). Regarding socially responsible consumption, Lee (2009) has indicated that female adolescents score significantly higher in environmental attitude, environmental concern, perceive seriousness of environmental problems, perceived environmental responsibility, and green purchasing behavior than male adolescents in Hong Kong. David et al. (2013) also found that those who are younger, with higher income and higher education tend to purchase organic products. Later, Chekima et al. (2016) noted that motivational factors for green purchase intention are greater among highly educated, female individuals. Two other studies have identified gender as a characteristic of consumers who are willing to pay more for green goods

(Barber, 2012; Laroche et al., 2001). For this study age, gender, income, and education level are taken into the analysis. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

- H1a: Age is associated with willingness to pay more for socially responsible fashion products.
- H1b: Gender is associated with willingness to pay more for socially responsible fashion products.
- H1c: Income is associated with willingness to pay more for socially responsible fashion products.
- H1d: Education level is associated with willingness to pay more for socially responsible fashion products.

In addition, fashion shopping behaviors such as frequency of fashion purchases and spending on fashion products are also considered as pre-existing conditions as they determine consumer awareness and current level of acceptance of fashion product. Consumers who enjoy shopping have specific lifestyles, motivations and opinions related to shopping (Lee & Kim, 2008; Shim & Kotsiopoulos, 1993). Moreover, consumers who often shop for fashion have more exposure to fashion information and current issues in the fashion industry as they participate in more shopping-related activities (Moye & Kincade, 2003). Thus, consumers with an interest in fashion and shopping are likely to seek new knowledge regarding fashion products, which leads to greater curiosity about socially responsible fashion products. In fashion adoption theory, fashion leaders are defined as who have more interest in fashion, spend more money on clothes, search for more fashion-related information, shop more often, and try more new fashion items than others (Bertrandias & Goldsmith, 2006; Goldsmith et al., 1991). These fashion leaders are more socially active and likely to adopt new products (Huddleston et al., 1993). Once these consumers learn about socially responsible fashion products, they could realize the benefits and ultimately pay more for the benefits. Kim and Damhorst (1998) have found that consumers' environmental knowledge and consciousness influence their willingness to pay more for green products (Kim & Damhorst, 1998). Gam (2011) have found that consumers who are interested in fashion and shopping are likely to adopt eco-friendly clothing earlier than other consumer groups. Thompson and Tong (2016) have found that fashion leadership are associated with consumers' purchase intention towards bamboo textile and apparel products. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

- H2a: Frequency of fashion purchases is associated with willingness to pay more for socially responsible fashion products.
- H2b: Spending on fashion products is associated with willingness to pay more for socially responsible fashion products.

Perception towards Socially Responsible Fashion Products

Perception is cognitive orientation that reflects psychological identity and sociocultural developments that are described in the second variable in fashion adoption theory (Sproles, 1979). In this study, perceived

satisfaction with socially responsible fashion purchases and perceived positive impact of socially responsible businesses were tested. Satisfaction and perceived positive quality of green products affect purchase intention (De Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007; Gleim et al., 2013; Straughan & Roberts, 1999). Consumers who present positive attitude toward organic and sustainable agriculture are likely to purchase organic cotton apparel (Hustvedt & Dickson, 2009). Consumers’ positive attitudes toward sustainability affect consumers’ willingness to pay more for a locally produced textile product because those attitudes increase the value the product holds for consumers (Cao et al., 2014). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

- H3a: Perceived satisfaction with socially responsible fashion purchases is associated with willingness to pay more for socially responsible fashion products.
- H3b: Perceived positive impact of socially responsible businesses is associated with willingness to pay more for socially responsible fashion products.

Methods

Sample

A survey was distributed to faculty, staff, and students at a US Midwestern university through the university email listserv. Participants were provided with the website link that contained the consent form and survey questions. Participants were given a consent form on the webpage to indicate if they were interested in participating in the research project. The participants were informed of the nature of the study regarding social responsibility and fashion purchases. An online Qualtrics-created survey was used for this study. Of the total of 748 people who participated in the survey, 67.7% were female; the average age of the participants was 28.4 and 42.5% completed Bachelor’s degree or higher. Most of the participants were either single, never married (53%) or married/domestic partnership (41.9%). See Table 1 for sample characteristics. About half of the participants (48.3%) indicated that they have purchased a socially responsible fashion product while 39.4% indicated “I do not know” and 12.3% said “no”.

Table 1.
Sample characteristics

Variable	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-20	164	22.2
	21-30	231	31.3
	31-40	96	13.0
	41-50	100	13.6
	51-60	104	14.1
	61-70	36	4.9
	71-80	7	0.9

Variable	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	237	32.3
	Female	496	67.7
Income	Less than \$9,999	220	30.2
	\$10,000 to \$20,999	118	16.2
	\$21,000 to \$30,999	46	6.3
	\$31,000 to \$40,999	50	6.9
	\$41,000 to \$50,999	68	9.3
	\$51,000 to \$60,999	46	6.3
	\$61,000 to \$69,999	28	3.8
	&70,000 and above	152	20.9
Education	No school completed	4	0.5
	Some high school, no diploma	3	0.4
	High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent	73	10.0
	Some college credit, no degree	250	34.2
	Trade/technical/vocational training	29	4.0
	Associate degree	62	8.5
	Bachelor's degree	215	29.4
	Master's degree	77	10.5
	Doctorate degree	19	2.6
Marital status	Single, never married	388	53.0
	Married or domestic partnership	307	41.9
	Widowed	6	0.8
	Divorced	30	4.1
	Separated	1	0.1

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Questionnaire

The questionnaire items were developed by the researcher. The questionnaire measured frequency of fashion purchases, annual spending on fashion products, perceived satisfaction with socially responsible fashion purchases (e.g., how much did you satisfy when you purchased socially responsible fashion products?), and perceived positive impact of socially responsible businesses (e.g. how much do you agree that socially responsible businesses positively affect you?). Perceived satisfaction with socially responsible fashion purchases and perceived positive impact of socially responsible and businesses were measured with a 1 to 5 Likert type scale. Participants also answered questions on social responsibility issues that they are interested in, motivations for their socially responsible purchase decision and demographics.

Results
Descriptive Analyses

The social responsibility issue that participants were most interested in was “support local businesses” (22.8%), followed by “reuse and recycle materials” (17.8%) and “fair wages/safe working conditions for workers” (17.3%). See Figure 1. Differences by generation (i.e., baby boomers, generation X, millennials) were tested as well. While all the generations were most interested in “support local businesses”, there were differences by generation in social responsibility issues that they were second-most interested in. The second-most interested in issue to baby boomers was “fair wages/safe working conditions for workers. It was “reuse and recycle materials to generation X and millennials. Overall, there was no one specific social responsibility issue that millennials were particularly interested in since similar numbers of millennials chose the four social responsibility issues (20.1% for support local businesses, 17.6% for fair wages and safe working conditions for workers, 17.1% for reuse and recycle materials and 14.3% for make donations) as their interest. See Figure 2. Nearly half of the participants (46.4%) indicated that their socially responsible purchase decisions were motivated by knowledge of the issue, followed by personal ethics (35.3%) and influence of family/friends (10.1%). See Figure 3. More than half of participants (60.6%) were willing to spend “less than 10%” more on a socially responsible fashion product. See Figure 4. However, a significant portion of generation X participants (30.5%) were willing to pay between 10 % and 14.99% more. See Figure 5.

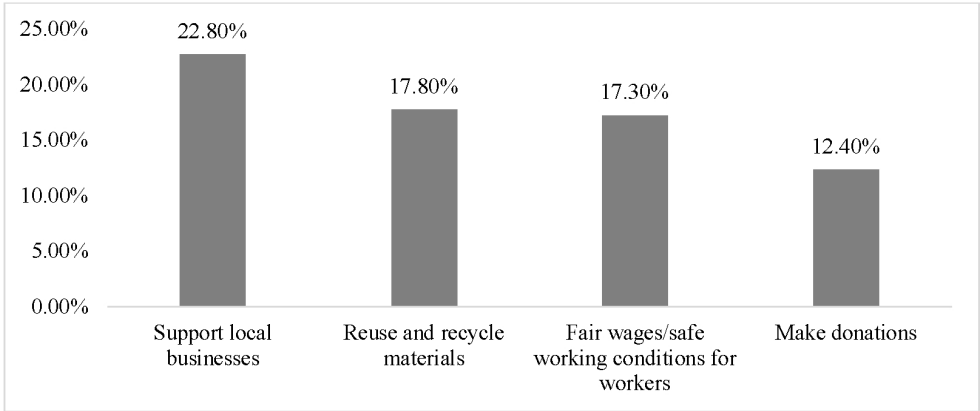


Figure 1.
Interest in social responsibility issues

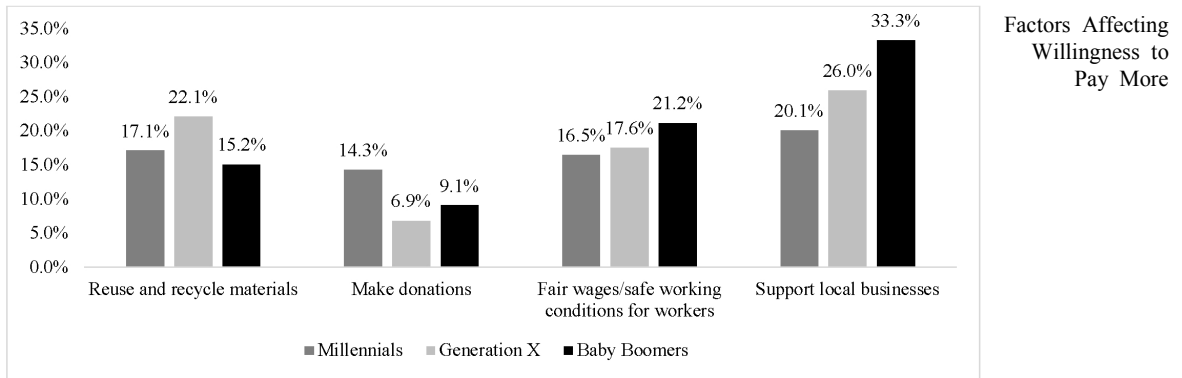


Figure 2.
Interest in social responsibility issues by generation

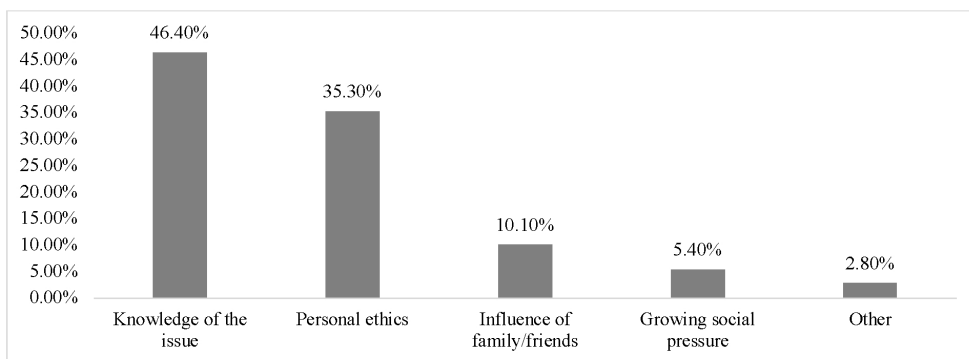


Figure 3.
Motivation for socially responsible purchase decision

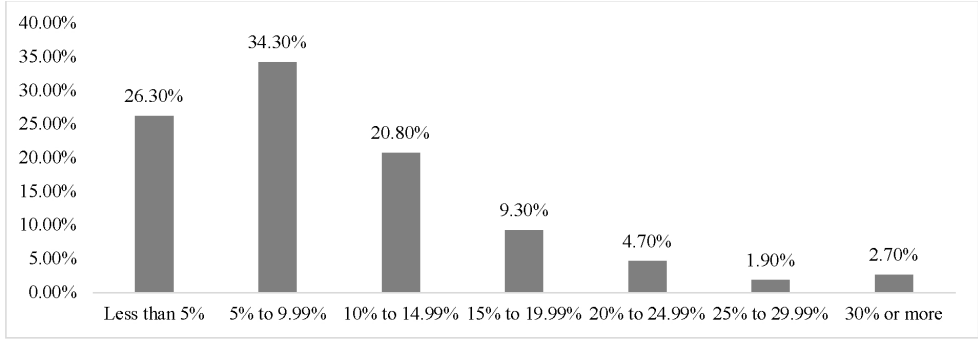


Figure 4.
Premium that participants are willing to pay for socially responsible fashion products

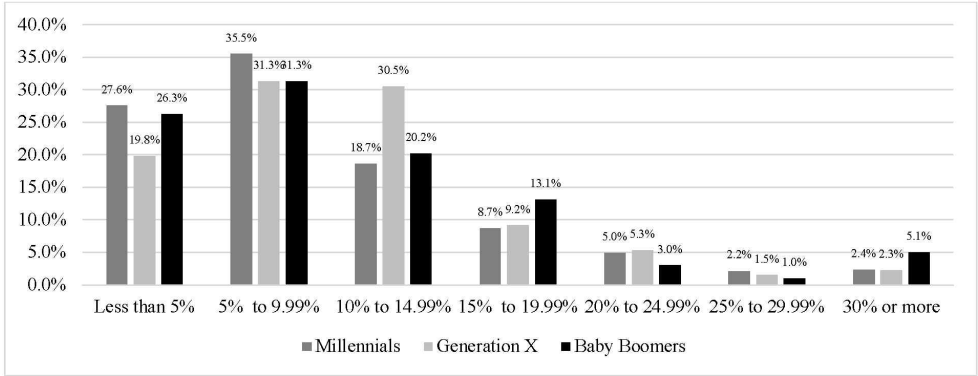


Figure 5.
Premium that participants are willing to pay for socially responsible fashion products by generation

Differences by Age Group and Gender

ANOVA results showed that there was a significant difference in perceived satisfaction with socially responsible fashion purchases by age ($F=9.020$, $\alpha=.0001$). See Table 2. Millennials are more likely to be satisfied with socially responsible fashion purchases than baby boomers (See Table 3). T-test results showed that there were significant differences in frequency of socially responsible fashion purchases ($t=2.878$, $\alpha<.01$), satisfaction with socially responsible fashion purchases ($t=2.516$, $\alpha<.05$), and perceived positive impact of socially responsible businesses ($t=2.106$, $\alpha<.05$) by gender (See Table 4). Women are more likely to purchase socially responsible fashion products, be satisfied with socially responsible fashion purchases and believe the positive impact of socially responsible businesses than men.

Table 2.

ANOVA Results for the age group

	Millennials (n=505)	Generation X (n=132)	Baby boomers (n=99)	F-value
Frequency of socially responsible fashion purchases	2.67	2.68	2.30	1.992
Satisfaction with socially responsible fashion purchases	3.73	3.58	3.31	9.020*
Perceived positive impact of socially responsible businesses	3.84	3.76	3.69	1.652
Premium to pay for socially responsible fashion products	2.44	2.63	2.59	1.128

* means statistically significant at $\alpha < .0001$ **Table 3.**

Post-hoc test for age group

	Age Group I	Age Group II	Difference (I-II)	Std. Error	Sig.
Frequency of socially responsible fashion purchases	Millennials	Generation X	-0.006	0.174	0.999
	Generation X	Baby boomers	0.382	0.236	0.238
	Baby boomers	Millennials	-0.376	0.192	0.123
Satisfaction with socially responsible fashion purchases	Millennials	Generation X	0.153	0.091	0.216
	Generation X	Baby boomers	0.266	0.124	0.082
	Baby boomers	Millennials	-0.419*	0.101	0.000
Perceived positive impact of socially responsible businesses	Millennials	Generation X	0.079	0.076	0.554
	Generation X	Baby boomers	0.061	0.104	0.824
	Baby boomers	Millennials	-0.141	0.085	0.223
Premium to pay for socially responsible fashion products	Millennials	Generation X	-0.185	0.139	0.379
	Generation X	Baby boomers	0.040	0.189	0.976
	Baby boomers	Millennials	0.145	0.156	0.621

* means statistically significant at $\alpha < .0001$ Factors Affecting
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Table 4.
Results of t-test by Gender

	Gender						
	Male			Female			t
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	
Frequency of socially responsible fashion purchases	2.37	1.518	202	2.76	1.655	429	2.878**
Satisfaction with socially responsible fashion purchases	3.53	.847	202	3.72	.851	431	2.516*
Perceived positive impact of socially responsible businesses	3.71	.835	226	3.84	.741	479	2.106*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Hypothesis Testing

A multicollinearity test has been conducted to determine whether there are strong correlations among independent variables. Variance Inflation Factors were all in the normal range (from 1.047 to 1.739). Thus, it was concluded that there was no multicollinearity symptom. Stepwise multiple regression was used for hypothesis testing. Age ($t=3.78$, $\beta=.15$, $p<.0001$), frequency of fashion purchases ($t=4.58$, $\beta=.18$, $p<.0001$), perceived satisfaction with socially responsible fashion purchases ($t=5.72$, $\beta=.23$, $p<.0001$), and perceived impact of socially responsible businesses ($t=2.94$, $\beta=.12$, $p<.01$), influenced consumers' willingness to pay more for socially responsible fashion products, $F(4, 602)=20.54$, $p<.0001$. Therefore, H1a, H2a, H3a and H3b were supported. See Table 5. H1b ($p=.232$), H1c ($p=.677$), H1d ($p=.640$) and H2b ($p=.214$) were not supported.

Table 5.
Results of multiple-regression analysis

Dependent variable	Independent variable	B	Beta	t	F	R square
Premium for socially responsible fashion products	Age	.01	.15	3.78	20.54 ($p<.001$)	.12
	Frequency of fashion purchases	.13	.18	4.58		
	Perceived satisfaction with socially responsible fashion purchases	.38	.23	5.72		
	Perceived impact of socially responsible businesses	.22	.12	2.94		

Discussions and Implications

The findings of this study provide insight into the development of marketing strategies that will increase consumers' willingness to pay more for socially responsible fashion products and generate important

knowledge about what can be done to convince consumers to pay the premium for their socially responsible products.

All the three generations (i.e., baby boomers, generation X, millennials) were most interested in “support local businesses” among various issues of social responsibility. Companies want to support local communities not only by manufacturing their products locally, but also by setting up smaller, local projects (van Elven, 2019). In addition, this study found a certain inconsistency in issues of social responsibility that different generations are interested in. Socially responsible fashion businesses should note that different issues of social responsibility appeal to different generations. Environmental issues could be more geared towards younger population. Local business support and workers’ rights could be of interest to baby boomers. Ritch and Schröder (2012) have argued that consumers could link lower price points with bad worker conditions and lower salaries. Thus, marketers could remind consumers that lower prices mean lower salaries and benefits for factory workers with their marketing messages to increase consumers’ willingness to pay more for socially responsible products.

Among demographics tested (i.g., age, gender, income and education level), age was the only significant factor that affects willingness to pay more for socially responsible fashion products. Older consumers are more willing to make financial sacrifices for socially responsible fashion products. Particularly, Generation X is the consumer group who would be willing to purchase higher-priced socially responsible fashion products as more than 30 percent of generation X is willing to pay between 10%-14.99% more for socially responsible fashion products (see Figure 5). Moreover, consumers with children would care more about societal and environmental issues, out of concern for the world into which they are bringing their children (Prothero & Fitchett, 2000). Millennials would care more for inexpensive fashion due to a reduced budget and the desire to follow evolving trends. However, millennials are more likely to be satisfied with socially responsible fashion purchases than older consumers, especially baby boomers (See Table 3). Millennials are not able to pay much more for socially responsible products, but their satisfaction with the purchase is high when purchased. It means that they are likely to repurchase when they have financial ability. According to a recent Nielsen survey, 75 percent of millennials are changing their buying habits to help the environment (Pasquarelli, 2019). Therefore, the millennial group is a good potential market for socially responsible businesses and businesses should maintain long-term marketing efforts for this potential market.

The findings of this study are somewhat consistent with previous studies who found difference in socially responsible consumption by gender (Barber, 2012; Chekima et al., 2016; Laroche et al., 2001; Lee, 2009). T-test results show that women are more likely to purchase socially responsible fashion products, be satisfied with socially responsible fashion purchases and believe the positive impact of socially responsible businesses than men. Female consumers still make up more of the socially responsible fashion market. Thus, more socially responsible fashion products should be geared toward women. On the other hand, marketing efforts to educate male consumers on socially responsible issues would be necessary to expand the market to more male products. Income and education did not affect willingness to pay more. Financial ability and level of education might not be important for consumers to pay more for

socially responsible fashion products. Instead, awareness and perception of social responsibility would determine their willingness to pay more. Thus, consumer education might matter the most in increasing socially responsible fashion purchases.

Consumer who purchase fashion products frequently are likely to pay more for socially responsible fashion products. However, spending on fashion products does not affect willingness to pay premium. Consumers could spend more on fashion products, but they do not necessarily have to purchase frequently. They might purchase a few high-priced items or make a huge purchase a few times a year. Frequency of purchases is important since it heightens consumers' exposure to current issues in the fashion industry and increases their knowledge and awareness of those issues (Moye & Kincade, 2003). In Zanolli and Naspetti (2002)'s study, consumers who purchased organic products more than once a week had greater product knowledge compared with infrequent consumers. Birgelen et al. (2009) also learned that consumers who were most likely to purchase environmentally preferable products also had a high level of environmental awareness. This finding also highlights importance of the awareness in socially responsible fashion purchase decisions.

Fashion businesses should provide consumers with the rationale that stimulates a willingness to pay more for socially responsible products. Consumers would not pay more if they did not recognize the significant benefits in the short term. Moreover, consumers suspect that sustainable status is used as a tool to increase profit for the retailer (Bray et al., 2011). Businesses should highlight the positive impact of socially responsible purchases to consumers in their marketing messages to enhance consumers' satisfaction with willingness to pay more for their socially responsible products. Consumers' knowledge of social responsibility is the biggest motive for consumers' socially responsible purchases. Educating consumers should also be emphasized in marketing efforts. It is interesting that a significant number of participants (39.4%) do not know whether they have purchased a socially responsible fashion product. Many consumers could purchase socially responsible products without recognizing it. The demand for socially responsible products can be increased through consumer education (Kim, 2010). Marketing campaigns could be aimed to educate consumers about what products are socially responsible and how those products benefit the society and consumers. Social responsibility could be advertised as an "expanded benefit" of a product since it is beyond basic benefits received from using the product (Rath et al., 2012). Then, consumers can perceive value-added benefits and in turn, are willing to pay a premium for the value-added benefits. It has been found that company's environmental marketing claims resulted in decreased consumer price sensitivity. (Stall-Meadows & Davey, 2013). Similarly, Borin and Cerf (2001) have also found that products with positive environmental messages are viewed better than products with negative environmental messages. Clearly presented information can make a substantial difference in consumer evaluation of products. In addition, socially responsible fashion businesses may benefit from using hang-tags featuring explicit messages (e.g., Fair labor practices were used in the manufacture of this garment) and logos to convey their socially responsible business practices. Hyllegard et al. (2012) have revealed that the use of those explicit messages and logos resulted in favorable evaluations and positive attitudes toward the apparel brand, which led to purchase intentions.

Limitations and Future Studies

No study is without limitations. The data for this study was gathered from a single location. Future studies can draw sample from multiple locations that reflect diverse populations to be better generalized. Future research could be carried out through a cross-cultural study regarding how geographically different fashion consumers may react differently to social responsibility and socially responsible purchases. There is a gap between intention and action especially when it comes with financial sacrifices. Although studies citing consumer willingness to pay more for socially responsible products, there is insufficient data to confirm that they're actually doing so. Future research may monitor actual consumption behaviors in order to reflect the most accurate indication of socially responsible consumption behaviors. Future researchers can survey with consumers who regularly purchase socially responsible products and identify influences of their actual purchase. Future research that employs other theoretical models also may be valuable in explaining socially responsible consumption behaviors. The findings of this study suggest that consumer awareness and perception can lead to greater socially responsible consumption behavior. Future research could investigate what type of information, messages and sources is effective to improve the awareness and perception. Socially responsible products do not necessarily have to be expensive. Consumer's perception about the price of socially responsible products and its impact on their purchase can be an interest to future researchers as well.

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