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ETHICAL ECO-FASHION-FUTURE OR UTOPIA: ROLE OF SUSTAINABILITY MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

Ethical Eco-fashion is sustainable fashion, yet its marketing practices is a topic where we are still in phases and cycles of learning about. The word ethical has been added to the ecological part of the product because though the concept began as niche market and appealed to few consumer, generally found to be of higher social strata or social class in the society. With innovative strategic marketing strategies and tactics, it is being presented before the masses and hence it is a big turn-around towards environmental sustainability. The research study here tries to explore and find out as to how ethics and self of a consumer plays a remarkable role in maintaining the ecological sustainability by purchase of organic or green labelled products. The research also investigates as to how Eco-Fashion is growing, either as fad, or future mantra or utopia in the new millennium. Study also finds out the compelling interest of fashion conglomerates to produce, process and promote – what is eco-friendly and environmentally sustainable, including the maximum possible usage of moral, ethical ways of manufacturing and production of these sustainable, non-harmful products. Interestingly the study aims to find out if the Eco-friendly green products are becoming the mainstream gradually in India and aspects of future consumer buying behaviour in real as well as virtual world.

INTRODUCTION

Context

“Ethically Ecological Fashion marketing refers to a segment of the fashion industry where the practices of design, production, distribution, usage and disposal of a fashion product have a benign impact on the environment. These practices along with the values of global equity, fair trade, social justice and responsibility are interconnected and form a solid relationship.” The research investigates the role of marketing in relation to eco-fashion: it looks into the reasons this market niche was created, how marketing is shaping consumer behaviour and what the market forecast is. It looks into streamlining some basic terminology used by the industry itself, the media and by consumers. It examines whether the use of marketing tactics and communications can considerably shape and shift consumers’ perceptions of what eco-fashion is. It investigates the extent to which marketing can affect consumer demand for eco-fashion vs. fad fast fashion, which is cheap and disposable (2006, Allwood et al.). This research will look into the whole marketing mix of ecological apparel products and will examine ways that the ratio of profitability vs. eco-fashion can gain a bigger market share.

SUSTAINABILITY, GREEN AND ECOLOGICAL

These relatively new terms in business and marketing have been introduced to the vocabulary of the fashion industry since the 1970s, when fashion started to become associated with the ecology movement (Siegel, 2008). The ecology movement primarily focuses upon the protection of the environment. Its principal idea is that Nature is a value in itself. Human acts and behaviors, events, people’s lifestyle and political actions are all directly linked and affect the value of Nature. Some scholars argue that the ecology movement was born in the 1960s with Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, one of the first books to practice social criticism by elaborating on the detrimental effects of pesticides on the environment (Belz and Peattie, 2009). In the 1970s the movement encompassed issues such as the ozone depletion, followed by acid rain in the 1980s and deforestation in the 1990s. With the dawn of the new millennium greater problems are the focus on the ecology movement, which this time have a more global appeal. Such matters are global warming, climate change, the greenhouse gas effect and species extinction among many others. As a result the ecology movement presently includes any group, idea or other movement involved in environmental protection (Anderson & Cunningham, 1972). The ecology movement has challenged the fashion industry since its early stages. The main reason is because to create fashion garments, one needs resources that are either grown naturally -cotton, silk and wool-, are man- made –

viscose-, or are made from oil - polyester, acrylic, nylon- (Allwood et. al, 2006). All this activity adds considerably to the problem of Global Warming because:

- -The industry extensively uses fossil fuels to create energy for water heating and laundering (Allwood et. al, 2006).
- -Cultivation of cotton relies on heavy consumption of fresh water, which is translated as 2,700 litres per kg of cotton fibre (Allwood et. al, 2006).
- -The use of toxic chemicals for the production of conventional cotton is extremely harmful to the environment and to humans (October 2008, Agriculture, www.wbcsd.org), while fertiliser production is energy intensive.
- -The industry uses chemicals for dyeing, printing and garment treatments (Allwood et. al, 2006).
- -'Fast-fashion' is one of the main waste creators: it has been estimated that on average one person in the India sends 30 kg of unwanted garments to landfills each year adding to the problem of 2.35 tons of combined clothing per year (Allwood et. al, 2006).

At present, eco-fashion is a very broad term. Literature demonstrates that eco-fashion is the result of the unification of the journalistic jargon of the 26.5 million employee and one trillion dollars' worth global fashion industry, and academic research on sustainability (Allwood et al., 2006, Thomas, 2008). Terms that the industry uses to describe eco- fashion are: green, sustainable and organic. Eco-fashion first made its appearance in the 1990s with consumers actively showing an interest in environmental and ethical issues, vocalized by pressure groups, the press and international conferences (cited at Birtwistle and Moore, 2007, p. 210). Slowly many designers started using ethically and organically produced fabrics for their designs, but the main debut of ecological fashion was during the New York Fashion Week of Spring/Summer 2005, when the non-profit Earth Pledge teamed up with upscale clothing retailer Barneys to sponsor a special runway event called Future-Fashion (April, 2005, www.earthpledge.org)

Growth

Sustainable fashion belongs to the growing sustainability trend, which in the fashion industry is directly linked to the philosophy of sustainable design and production. Sustainability is described as "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundland Commission, 1987). Since sustainable fashion is based on those parameters, it can be considered to be a direct 'offspring' of the ecology movement (Siegel, 2008). Green or organic fashion represents products that have been designed, produced & distributed by 'organic, green or sustainable methods' (Klonsky et al., 1998). Thus eco- fashion can be either green, organic, or both in meaning and definition. The main reason that there does not exist a specific definition of ecological fashion is due to the broadness of the industry, which represents many standards and not just one (Joergens, 2006). As far as academic definitions are concerned, eco-fashion is a word that is used when fabric and textile production is analyzed, as well as a product's life cycle usage (Thomas, 2008). Fashion classified as ecological, takes under consideration the effect that it has as on the environment during its production process, but also with the people involved. Thus, the ethics aspect of the industry adds another dimension to the definition of eco-fashion.

Ethics

Ethical production is not only concerned with how the product mix of a fashion garment evolves, but also what are the parameters and the working conditions of the people who are engaged with this process. Ethical and fair trade refer to decisions on design, manufacturing, distribution and consumption that are determined by the impact they have on others (Klonsky et al., 1998). The impact is always positive and it refers to people -workers and consumers-, the environment, and animals (Thomas, 2008). All companies that are serious about conducting business in the sustainable or ecological route, always factor in the working conditions and the principles that are engaged in fair-trading (Strong, 2007).

Such attributes mainly refer to fashion garments that are manufactured from scratch. However, when considering a fashion product's whole life span, about 45% of fashion products (Hollingsworth, 2007) can have a second or third life cycle prior to their disposal. Since none of these categories require new fibres to be grown, their impact on the environment -Carbon Footprint- for production is minimal; thus, they qualify to be part of the eco-fashion market segment. Products in their second life cycle are categorized as second-hand, vintage, and refurbished. Vintage or second-hand fashion products are garments that are of no use to their original owner and



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are resold to another person. In 2000 alone the second-hand sector was worth over one billion dollars in the United States (Allwood et. al, 2006). Usually vintage or second hand fashion products are sold in charity shops, or specialized vintage stores and on the Internet. Refurbished fashion refers to garments whose primary materials are reused to produce another product. Refurbished items can be up-cycled, redeployed or down-cycled. Up-cycled or redeployed products consist from recycled materials but have been redesigned in order to re-enter the fashion cycle. Down-cycled products are garments that are turned into rags or stuffing materials for mattresses, or car seats (Thomas, 2008).

Problem Overview

At present it appears that most of the predominant fashion designers, such as Stella Mc Cartney, Mark Jacobs and Calvin Klein, or conglomerates such as Marks & Spencer, H&M or Topshop, who want to sustain a competitive edge in the fashion arena, use the term 'green', 'ethical' or 'sustainable' in some way or another. Increasingly more companies are aiming to 'green' their operations via their product mix, their marketing and innovation strategy as an answer to the impending demand to keep up with the current sustainability trend. Numbers show that growth of the eco-fashion segment is imminent; for example global retail sales of organic cotton garments increased from \$245 million in 2001 to \$583 million in 2005 (West, <http://environment.about.com>), whereas Nike formed Xchange, a web forum where companies can work together and share intellectual property towards sustainability business models and innovation (Tapscott, January, 2010). In the meantime, there seems to be a significant amount of confusion among consumers regarding green or ecological perceptions and sustainability. The main reasons for this observation are: the lack of a well defined and accepted labelling code, deficiencies in consumer education regarding what is considered green or not in fashion (Thomas, 2008), inefficient and unclear sustainable marketing actions (Belz and Peattie, 2009).

Focus

Focusing on the evolution of the green fashion niche is important, as the conventional fashion industry is a serious polluter of the environment. Table 1 below demonstrates an example of the waste one 250 gr. T-shirt provokes during its average life cycle (2-4seasons). As India is one of the upcoming leading markets world-wide as far as high street fashion is concerned, the study will be undertaken in NCR, as it is a metropolis of fashion and designers demonstrate new ideas, concepts and products, and where new products are tested out (Limnander, 2009). The study will focus on the different dynamics that evolve as far as eco- fashion is concerned; it will examine the role of sustainability marketing in relation to consumer behaviour, companies' sustainability transformations and political processes aiming to shape the industry's behaviours in becoming more sustainable (Belz and Peattie, 2009). Many questions to be explored arise, such as:

- -Is the Indian consumer clear on what green/ecological/sustainable fashion is?
- -Is the Indian consumer making greener, ethical and more sustainable choices?
- -How is the current consumer behaviour affecting design and the product mix of the fashion high street?
- -Are sustainability marketing strategies introduced because they only aim to keep businesses profitable or is there really a change in the way companies and consumers think about the future of high street fashion in relation to the viability of the environment?

The world undergoes one of the worst economic crises ever, which affects all industries, including fashion and luxury. Experts tend to say that understatement, stealth wealth and non-conspicuous consumption are becoming implicit rules. Consequently, some consumers might select new forms of status display, via philanthropic or environmental- friendly actions. In addition, consumers might feel a need to refocus on what is really important in their lives, especially their health via reconnecting with nature. Hence, the new economic context tends to encourage the trend to go green in many industries and fashion brands begin to pick up the interest. Diesel launched a Global Warming Ready Collection. Stella McCartney is one of the well-known designers who are pushing this trend to the forefront, helping it trickle down to high street in Great-Britain. In the rest of India, the trend is emerging based on the success of organic food. Yet, not much is known on how consumers evaluate the fit of "green" with fashion. In addition, the scarce number of studies on ethical fashion has focused mainly on fair trade and does not take into consideration variability between nations. In order to understand the perceptions of consumers, a set of studies were conducted with participants from different cultures (focus groups and in-depth interviews) and samples originating from NCR and Noida (120 respondents in total) . It appears that the



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interest in purchasing organic fashion is moderate, although slightly higher in our Indian sample, with no significant difference between genders. Overall, there appears to be a lack of awareness and trust that calls for more information on the nature and certification procedures of green fashion.

Motivation

The first three reasons that would motivate the purchase of organic clothes are, in order, environmental-friendly reasons, health concerns and ethical concerns. Nonetheless, expressing social status is evoked more in the French sample and self-expression in the Indian one. Main differences also appear in the appeal of green fashion. For Indian respondents, organic fashion is lacking glamour dramatically. The typical consumer portrayed by the participants is a very simple woman in her 40's, wealthy yet not sophisticated in her tastes. For Indian respondents, the typical green fashion consumer is young, sexy, trendy and self-confident. This difference of perception seems linked to the diffusion of organic brands in the respective countries under study. Overall, if consumers are ready to pay a premium to purchase organic food, they do not see the interest yet in organic fashion. There is a need to inform better the consumers on the nature of organic fashion and to continue "glamorizing" both the communication and the products. Across the world, a growing segment of consumers are seeking ethical or environmentally friendly products (Kaufman, 1999; Montoro et al., 2006; Phau & Ong, 2007), which range from organically grown product, to hairsprays, paper and in more recent times clothing (Connolly & Prothero, 2003). For long, fashion and environmental concerns seemed to be conflicting concepts, the first one implying products with short lifecycles when the second one promotes durability, sustainability and the reuse of products. Yet, a whole industry has flourished around a number of brands devoted to being green such as Veja or Patagonia and brands launching eco-collections such as H&M, Zara or designers such as Marc Jacobs or Stella McCartney. Ironically, supply seems to precede demand in the eco-fashion industry (Fineman, 2001). Consequently, researches have been concentrating more on the supply and manufacturing side of eco-fashion than on consumers' side. In addition, the scarce number of researches that studied the green fashion consumer has led to inconsistent results (Butler and Francis, 1997). Last, there seems to be different levels of acceptance of eco-fashion between countries within India itself and between Indian and India countries. However, cross-cultural comparisons on ethical issues have mostly concerned consumers' misbehaviors and fair trade issues (Newholm and Shaw, 2007). Little is known on cross-cultural similarities and differences in green attitudes and behaviors. Newholm and Shaw (2007) call for the study of ethical consumption patterns across cultures. This paper is a first attempt to explore the perception of and interest in eco-fashion from a cross-national perspective.

First, there seems to be a foggy understanding of what is "eco-fashion" as a variety of terms have been used such as ethical, organic, green, fairtrade, sustainable, recycled, re-used, eco etc. Words seem to be interchangeable although they have different meanings. Moreover, the fact that these words are used extensively and in different contexts frequently unrelated risks making them meaningless. It appears that the eco-fashion industry needs to formalize better boundaries, norms and regulations. Recently, Mintel (2009), a market research company, proposed the following definitions in order to clarify the distinct concepts included in the overall umbrella term of "ethical fashion": "Ethical clothing refers to clothing that takes into consideration the impact of production and trade on the environment and on the people behind the clothes we wear. Eco clothing refers to all clothing that has been manufactured using environmentally friendly processes. It includes organic textiles and sustainable materials such as hemp and non-textiles such as bamboo or recycled plastic bottles. It also includes recycled products (clothes made from recycled clothing including vintage, textile and other materials and can also be termed re-used) and is not necessarily made from organic fibers. Organic clothing means clothes that have been made with a minimum use of chemicals and with minimum damage to the environment and fairtrade is intended to achieve better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability and fair terms for farmers and workers in the developing world". (Mintel, 2009). Green, for its part refers mainly to the environmental effects of textile processing and consumption of clothing (Phau & Ong, 2007). With reference to labels, the Australian Ecolabel Program, the Indian Union official eco-label and the US Green Seal label are all summarily united under the Global Ecolabelling Network. Trade or verification bodies are contingent to particular countries, but at an international level, a global network of organizations exists such as the International Fairtrade Association (IFAT) and the Global Organic Textile Standards (GOTS). However, the above definitions and distinctions between the different strands of ethical fashion have not filtered down yet to mainstream consumers (Mintel, 2009) or even to the wider academic body of literature. The research which is published around the context of the fashion business can also blur the lines of understanding further what is

ethical and eco-fashion. Skov (2009) introduces the notion of ethics in the fashion industry which includes areas such as body and gender images, fakes and animal rights alongside ethical issues concerned with production and consumption issues as defined above such as labour conditions, the effect on the environment and the discarding habits of consumers once the garment no longer serves its purpose. Pretious and Love (2006) on the other hand, explore the effect of the development of ethical codes of conduct for UK retailers. With the global negative publicity which companies such as Nike and Gap have suffered in the past due to their alleged ethical misconduct, ethical standards have an influence on customers' perception of brands and retailers and by inference on sales levels. The scarce numbers of studies which have attempted to measure consumers attitude toward eco-fashion tend to show a neutral or indifferent attitude (Butler and Francis, 1997). Yet, most studies are not recent and were conducted in the US. As noticed by a number of researchers around the world, the green consumer is no longer a niche target (Newholm and Shaw, 2007; Finisterra do Paco et al., 2009). Environmental concerns translate into preferences for eco-friendly products, especially for food and cars (Finisterra do Paco et al., 2009). In the United Kingdom, researches show that at comparable price and performance, consumers would rather purchase a green product and fashion does not seem ignored by this eco-preference (Mintel, 2009). As with many trends, young people seem to lead the way to ethical behaviors in fashion by rejecting animal furs. They are also promoting an eco-chic lifestyle, which corresponds to the emergence of new forms of status-display via philanthropic or environmental-friendly actions under the pressure of the economic crisis. As stated in The Independent (2008) *"We used to spend our money showing people how much money we have got; now we are spending our money on supporting our moral concerns"*. This new motivation for moral expression might even override the traditional environmental concerns and be more heavily weighted at times of purchase. Indeed, many researchers notice that although consumers mention the protection of the environment as an important factor of choice for fashion items, they do not take this criterion in consideration when in a purchasing context. Ultimately, an eco-fashion item is a fashion item, which implies price and style as determinant choice criteria (Butler and Francis, 2007). Overall, attempts to portray the green fashion consumer have been unfruitful. Foster (2004) suggests that the over 45 years old consumers have a tendency to be more open towards ethical information. Yet, many studies found no significant correlation between age and a green orientation (see Finisterra do Paco et al., 2009). Results are also inconsistent in terms of gender differences. Several studies found that women are more concerned by green issues than men and are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviors (Zelezny et al., 2000). This gender difference seems to emerge also in the youngest group of population and in a cross-cultural context (Beutel and Johnson, 2011). Yet, recently, qualitative and quantitative results found by Gronhoj and Olander (2007) do not support the existence of such a difference. Results are more consistent in terms of education and income. The green consumer is considered more educated and wealthier than the average consumer (Shim, 1995). Mintel (2009) also mentions that those with a higher education are more prone to take into account ethical information regarding a company or a brand when they are in a purchase situation. In Portugal, Finisterra do Paco et al. (2009) made a typology of green consumers based on demographics. Three groups emerged: the "green activists" composed of people with the highest levels of education; the "undefined" group composed of people with lowest education levels and the "uncommitted" composed of the youngest people (aged 18-34). The first group, with highest level of education, is the only one claiming positive attitudes toward environmental aspects. Yet, there appears to be a democratization of green purchasing in India. Indeed, Laroche et al. (2011) found that there is a group of consumers which transcends the socio-economic boundaries and is willing to pay for the ethical credentials. Cross-culturally, differences are mentioned in the development and supply of fair trade products in Northern and Southern India (Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2008). Yet, in terms of consumers' interest for environmental issues, there seems to be a similar lack of concern across Asia, India and India (Belk et al., 2012).

RESEARCH METHODS

In order to understand the perception of consumers regarding green / eco fashion products, a set of studies (qualitative and surveys) were conducted with NCR respondents of the discussed profile. The method and results of these studies are described in the following sections:

Two focus groups were organized – first in Delhi (with University students) and second in Noida (with University students). The First group was composed of seven students, three male and four females. This group was very diverse in terms of geography, with two from South Delhi, one from East Delhi, two from west Delhi, one central Delhi and one North Delhi. The ages of the participants were between 19 and 26 years old. The Second group was composed of eight students, with same number of male and females, and five Noida students,



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the rest being Gurgaon residents. The age bracket was similar to the First group. All students were studying business and administration at University level. These focus groups were completed with six in-depth interviews of females in their 30s, with a higher than average income and a post-graduate level of education. All focus groups and interviews were conducted in English. They used the same guidelines except for the First focus group which included in addition to the set of questions two projective techniques (mood boards/collage and DAP). Main results for both techniques (focus groups and in-depth interviews) are described aggregated to ease understanding. Names are changed to respect the anonymity of participants.

RESULTS

Both for First and Second respondents, the concept of “green fashion” is not clear. The majority of participants refers to eco-friendly products but wonder how products adhere to the eco-friendly procedures. It is understood that the raw material is organic and produced in perfect accordance with the protection of the environment. But questions rise on the manufacturing process per se. Respondents wonder if some clear and formalized norms exist and have to be followed for the products to be considered green. In addition, the boundaries are not always clear related to other trends such as fair trade, ethical fashion, and the use of recycled materials. Most participants are not aware of the existence of green fashion alternatives to traditional fashion in their own countries.

- “I understand that it respects the environment... but what does that mean exactly? Not sure” (ABC, 20)
- “The material, the linen, cotton, etc. is organic. I am not sure if it is enough to be considered green. What about assembling, sewing etc.” (DEF, 26)
- “The trend is going in the direction of fair trade products. I think green are also considered ethical. Or is it totally different?” (GHI, 38)

Another issue which emerged very strongly on both sides was trust. Indeed, the lack of knowledge probably due to a lack of information engenders suspicion, especially when the brands claiming green origin are not famous. Participants do not know if the raw material and / or the manufactured items are certified by external agencies, and what these agencies are worth.

- “It is more expensive to purchase organic products. I want to be 100% sure I am not misled” (JKL, 23)
- ”I feel that they say this is an organic t-shirt, I don’t always believe it, to what extent it is actually a green shirt. I just have the feeling they put a label organic. It is marketing. Or maybe one aspect is truly organic. But in fact in the manufacturing process, they do not respect the environment. They pollute the water when tainting”. (MNO, 22)

Making the parallel with green/organic food, participants all agree on green fashion being healthier, especially for those suffering of allergies or with a sensitive skin. Naturally, women in their 40’s mention that they would essentially purchase these products for their kids, especially for babies.

- “I try to purchase organic for my baby, especially organic food and diapers. But when I see baby clothes in organic cotton, I also purchase some nice items. There are more and more.” (PQR, 38)

The main difference we found between Second and first was on the appeal of such eco-fashion items. In second, both in the verbatim as well as in the images associated with green fashion, the imagery is not appetizing, not glamorous at all. The world of green fashion is painted in dull colors, brown, grey, white. No luxurious materials (such as silk) are evoked. Green fashion is rather associated with (hairy) wool. No particular brands are spontaneously associated by the majority, except for Marks and Spencer for a couple of students. The typical woman portrayed is in her 40’s, down-to-earth, old fashioned, with a bad taste. She has a simple yet healthy lifestyle. For some, she is a “peace and love” activist.

- “The first thing I think about when hearing green fashion is something dull”. (STU, 23)
- “The style is awful. Maybe if they could improve the style.... Away from potato bags....yet, organic clothes for babies and kids are cute, really cute. I purchased many items for my kids” (VW, 37)



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First participants also tend to associate organic with status. Because organic products are more expensive than non-organic, respondents think it is a form of showing-off. It is the ultimate luxury for those who can afford to pay the price. The latest form of conspicuous consumption.

- “If the price is high, then status will be there” (Mona, 22)
- “It may be easy to show you purchased a green car yet showing that one wears organic clothes is not easy... Brands make a statement for this reason. An example which comes to my mind: I am not a plastic bag” (Mia, 22)
- “It is in. Now people with money eat organic, dress organic, drive organic, and sleep organic in their house equipped with solar systems. One does not talk about brands anymore in social dinners. Discussions are around photovoltaic systems and the new organic supermarket next door.” (Lara, 38)

For Second participants, on the contrary, wearing organic fashion is trendy, young and sexy. They associate with green fashion a woman in her 20's, simple but sexy, with All Stars organic basket shoes, a pair of organic blue jeans and a white organic cotton Marcel tee-shirt. She is healthy and not sophisticated, with a unique urban contemporary style. She is self-confident and expresses herself through her fashion choices. They do not think that organic fashion is more expensive, just that it is less available. The student group associates many fashion brands such as H&M, American Apparel and Urban Outfitters with green fashion. Women in their 40's think it is a trend which originates from the UK. They imagine very stylish designs in linen and cotton. They essentially mention Stella McCartney as the leading warrior of this trend. They also suggest that the image of Calvin Klein fits with the organic trend.

- “It is natural to go toward more organic. It has to be. We cannot go on damaging the planet forever.” (Kim, 24)
- “It is cool and sexy. The American Apparel style.” (Ruch, 22)
- “Just came back from Mumbai. Super hip to wear organic. Stella McCartney is everywhere. Recycled materials too.” (Pam, 40)

SURVEY METHOD

Sample

120 respondents were recruited on a convenience basis, half in NCR and Noida, 70 women and 50 men. Both groups were perfectly matched on age (the French group mean= 29.8, SD 10.9 and the Indian group mean= 32.6, SD 10.2, $F(1,118)= 2.17$, $p=.14$) and on gender ($X^2(1)=.55$, $p=.45$). In both groups, the level of education was higher than average; 2/3 of respondents had an undergraduate degree and 1/3 a graduated degree. All respondents had higher than average level in English. In addition, respondents in both groups were equally “interested in fashion” (overall mean 5.01, SD 1.44, $F(1,118)=.04$, $p=.85$).

Measures

The questionnaire was short and administered in English. After demographics, respondents had to rate their intention to purchase organic fashion in the near future on a 7 point scale anchored by “not at all” to “extremely likely”. Next, they had to rank from 1 to 9 a number of propositions corresponding to the reasons that would motivate such a purchase. Propositions were based on the verbatim extracted from the focus groups: “It is more durable”; “I express my unique tastes, different from the crowd”; “It is better for my health”; “I contribute to the protection of the earth”; “It shows my social status”; “It fits with my ethical concerns”; “It is trendy”; “It has a unique style/design”; other. Next, respondents had to evaluate the typical purchaser of organic fashion on a list of 15 adjectives extracted from the focus groups.

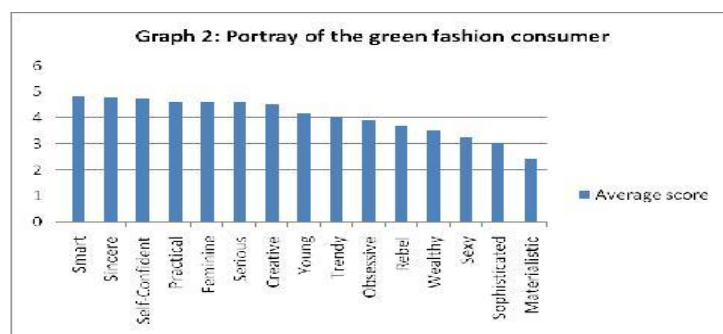
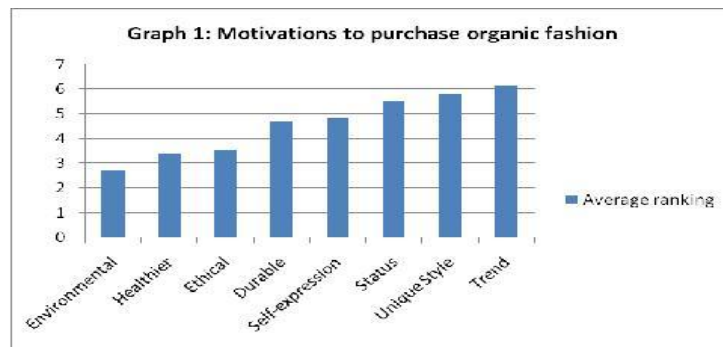
Results

Intention to purchase organic fashion

Overall, the intention to purchase organic fashion is moderate (mean= 4.4, SD 1.6). There is no significant correlation between age and the intention to purchase organic fashion (Pearson correlation 0.06, $p=.52$). Yet, there is a significant positive correlation between the interest of respondents in fashion and their intention to purchase eco-fashion (Pearson correlation = .39, $p=.00$). A Univariate Analysis of Variance with origin and gender as fixed factors demonstrate no difference on gender yet a difference on origin. Respondents from the

Indian sample are more likely to purchase organic than their French counterparts (respectively, mean 4.7 SD 1.6 vs. 4.0 SD 1.5, $F(1,116)= 6.8, p=.01$). There is no interaction effect.

MOTIVATIONS TO PURCHASE ORGANIC FASHION



As one will notice in the graph above, it appears that the three best ranked motivations are: concerns with environment protection, health and ethics. These three motivations are winners in both samples. Yet, differences appear between samples on a number of variables. First, organic fashion being healthier is more a concern for the French sample than for the Indian one (respectively mean= 2.9 vs. 3.9, Kolmogorov-Smirnov nonparametric $z= 1.55, p=.01$). Expressing a social status with the purchase of organic fashion is also better ranked in the French sample compared to the Indian (mean = 4.5 vs. 6.5, K-S non parametric test = 2.37, $p=.00$). On the other hand, expressing different tastes and ethical concerns (K-S non parametric test = 1.64, $p=0.01$) are significantly better ranked in the Indian sample compared to the French one (mean= 4.1 vs. 5.6, K-S non parametric test = 1.37, $p=.05$ for self-expression and mean= 2.9 vs. 4.0, K-S non parametric test = 1.64, $p=0.01$ for ethical concerns).

Image of the green fashion consumer

Respondents perceive the green fashion consumer as smart, sincere and self-confident. The three adjectives least describing the green fashion consumer in the mind of respondents are materialistic, sophisticated and sexy. A MANOVA was conducted with gender and origin as fixed factors. There is a main effect of gender on the variable obsessive ($F(1,116)= 13.58, p=.00$). Men tend to find green fashion consumers more obsessive than women (mean = 4.54 SD 1.71 vs. mean = 3.4 SD 1.76). There is a main effect of origin on five variables: sexy ($F(1,116) = 41.17, p=.00$), self-confident ($F(1,116)= 5.89, p=.017$), trendy ($F(1,116)= 7.69, p=.006$), rebel ($F(1,116)= 3.76, p=.05$) and wealthy ($F(1,116)= 10.39, p=.002$). Respondents in the Indian sample tend to find the green fashion consumer more sexy (4.08 SD 0.18 vs. 2.38 SD 1.8), more self-confident (5.11 SD 0.22 vs. 4.35 SD 0.22) and more trendy (4.45 SD 0.21 vs. 3.58 SD 0.22) than respondents in the French sample. Respondents in the French sample tend to find the green fashion consumer more rebellious (4.11 SD 0.27 vs. 3.36 SD 0.27) and wealthier (4.09 SD 0.24 vs. 2.98 SD 0.24) than Indian respondents.



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CONCLUSION

Our results corroborate studies on green and ethical consumption on a number of issues. There seems to be neutral or indifferent attitudes toward green fashion, in line with studies conducted in the past (Butler and Francis, 1997). The intentions to purchase green fashion products are moderate, although higher in our Indian sample, and do not differ between genders. Our qualitative results shed light on possible explanations for this relative lack of concern. Consumers seem lost in the exact meaning of green fashion and lack information on norms and processes. Often, they are unaware of the existence of green fashion alternatives to traditional adult fashion (Hopkins, 2009). Also, the issue of trust arises and a label certifying the organic origin is clearly called for (D'Souza et al. 2006). Further study should examine to what extent consumers would be willing to pay the extra price involved in having a third party label certifying this true organic origin. Environment protection, health impact and ethical concerns are the best ranked motivations to engage in a green fashion purchase. Yet, cross-cultural differences appear clearly in the appeal of organic fashion. Both in our qualitative and quantitative results, we found that green fashion is much more appealing to North American, probably due to the impact of trendy clothing brands claiming their social responsibility concern such as American Apparel or Edun launched by Bono and his wife. North American participants and respondents in our studies have a positive image of the green fashion consumer who is portrayed as much younger, trendy, sexy, and self-confident and with a unique style compared to the green consumer portrayed by the European participants. For the latter, the green consumer is perceived as wealthier and more rebellious: an activist with strong convictions who is prepared to pay for the extra price to support her/his ethical concerns. The status dimension is also more present in the results based on European samples. The trend for understatement in clothes (no logos) and stealth wealth seems to have a special resonance in favor of the consumption of green products in general, and green fashion in particular. Overall, we can conclude that there is a need to create awareness and inform better the consumers on the nature of organic fashion. In addition, green fashion has to be "glamorized" and become more appealing to the young generation which the early adopting group of most trends in the fashion industry. Main limitations of this research lie in the convenience samples used for both qualitative and quantitative studies. Generalization of results is also limited by the homogeneity in education level and age of our samples. Our conclusions are based on samples drawn from a highly educated and rather young population. In the past, results were consistent in showing that highly educated consumers are more concerned with ethical and green issues (Finisterra do paco et al., 2009; Mintel, 2009). Also, younger consumers might be more interested both in fashion and in brands endorsing social responsibility credentials (LaFerla, 2007). Consequently, we assume that green fashion interest and perceptions would be even more negative working with samples of a lower educational level and / or older than ours. Researches in green fashion consumer behavior are in their infancy. Yet, with the development of green fashion offerings and the growing interest of major brands for this trend, studies are called for in a variety of area, from demographics encompassing gender, to inter-cultural including emergent countries, to attitudinal and behavioral. We hope this exploratory paper will open fruitful avenues for researchers on ethical fashion issues.

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