

Understanding the impacts of emotions and knowledge on the consumer's behaviour towards sustainable clothing – a Brazilian's perspective.

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Abstract

Previous literature found heavy pollution during the manufacturing process in the textile industry and thus placed large emphasis on the possible sustainable solutions. This research aimed to provide a holistic understanding of the purchase behaviour towards sustainable clothing in Brazil. Applying TPB/RAA (Theory of Planned Behaviour and Reasoned Action Approach), we try to explore the role of anticipated emotions (guilt and pride) and consumer knowledge on consumers purchase intention towards sustainable clothing, through attitude, perceived norm, and perceived behavioural control. Through 506 Brazilian consumers, our SEM findings demonstrated a positive impact of anticipated guilt on attitude and subjective norm and while no significant effects on perceived behavioural control (PBC) and intention. Anticipated pride shows significant impacts on attitude, PBC, and a direct effect on intention, while no significant influence on the subjective norm was found. Consumer knowledge influenced attitude, subjective norm, and PBC, while there was no evidence supporting a significant impact on intention. Attitude and PBC affected the purchase intention. Subjective norm has not demonstrated any significant influence on intention, which significantly explained purchase behaviour. Our results contribute to understand the effects of customers' emotion and knowledge on the purchase behaviour of sustainable clothing in an under-researched context, Brazil. The results also highlight that stakeholders could invest in emotional appeals, especially pride, and information, to incentivise sustainable clothing consumption.

Keywords (3): Sustainable Consumer Behaviour; Sustainable Clothing; Theory of Planned Behaviour.

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics

1.Introduction

Sustainable consumption has been broadly researched in the food, energy, and cosmetics industries (Jung et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2017; Vermeir and Verbeke, 2008). Not as much attention has been dedicated to sustainable clothing (Blazquez et al., 2020; Rausch and Kopplin, 2021) albeit the fact that the fashion and textile industry is considered as a heavy pollution industry (GFA and BCG, 2017). In this context, the Brazilian clothing industry has gradually increased sustainable initiatives. Still, it presented a dramatic increase of Gt CO₂ emission between 2000 and 2015 (Peters et al., 2021), meaning that more efforts have to be done towards a shift to sustainable consumption in Brazil. Given the growing relevance played by Brazil in the world debate towards sustainability and the social and economic relevance of this industry (Garcia et al., 2019), we selected the consumers from this country to conduct our research.

Little research has been done on the impacts of varied emotions on a particular sustainable consumption behaviour (Wang and Wu, 2016). To unveil this relatively under-researched industry and to understand Brazilian consumers' behaviour over sustainable clothing, we draw from Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) and investigate the influences of anticipated emotions (Wang and Wu, 2016). Despite its proven validity in sustainable behaviours (Harland et al., 1999), the TPB has focused on measuring cognitive constructs' impact on behaviour, while emotional features have been under-researched (Bamberg and Möser, 2007). However emotional features have been emphasised as fundamental elements inducing behavioural changes (Onwezen et al., 2014). Hence, our goal is identifying: *To what extent anticipated emotions (guilt and pride) and consumer knowledge impact on consumers' attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control and intention when purchasing sustainable clothing?*

Our study deepens the knowledge of sustainable consumption in the perspective of an emerging economy, such as Brazil, where studies in this subject have received limited attention (see Garcia et al., 2019), yet, it is considered a big consumer market in this industry, as well as polluter.

2. Literature Review and hypothesis development

2.1 Sustainable clothing in Brazil

Various terms are used to address sustainable clothing in previous research (Rausch and Kopplin, 2021). Ethical fashion (Joergens, 2006) or green fashion (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012) are used when it involves fair trade, labour conditions, and environmental impacts.

Other similar terms such as eco-clothing or eco-fashion are used, especially with the adoption of eco-labels, and reduced environmental impacts (Fletcher, 2013; Niinimäki, 2010). In this study, we define sustainable clothing as garments produced with recycled, upcycled, or biodegradable and organic materials, clothes acquired from second-hand shops or garments made to last for a long time (Goworek et al., 2012; Rausch and Kopplin, 2021).

Following the worldwide scenario of the clothing industry, Brazilian apparel production is expressive (Garcia et al., 2019). Further, the nation is among the ten countries that dominate purchasing clothes (Westbruck and Angus, 2021). In addition, 65% of Brazilian consumers sought to purchase general products from sustainable businesses (Garcia et al., 2019). Despite the advances brought by Lionço et al. (2019) on young Brazilian perceptions of sustainable clothing, the research was limited on the purchase intention of one specific sustainable apparel (denim made with sustainable cotton and Tencel®), and it did not focus on the actual behaviour.

2.2 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The TPB has been widely employed to analyse sustainable consumption behaviour in general (Wang et al., 2014; Kautish et al., 2019), energy-efficient products (Tan et al., 2017) and sustainable consumption of food (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2008). There are three determinants of behavioural intentions in the TPB – attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms and PBC (Perceived Behavioural Control). The attitude indicates the degree that an individual has a favourable or unfavourable assessment of a behaviour; the subjective norm comprehends the perceived social pressure to perform or not a behaviour; and the PBC refers to the individuals' confidence in their ability to perform or not a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Behavioural intentions capture the motivational determinants affecting the behaviour, indicating the effort people are planning to perform the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

Later, Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) updated the TPB, generating the Reasoned Action Approach (RAA), which includes subcomponents of attitude, perceived norm and PBC (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010). Attitude involves instrumental (cognitive) and affective (experiential) appraisals of behaviour; perceived norm includes the injunctive norm, while the PBC incorporates capacity and autonomy (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010). Both TPB and the RAA were adopted in this research since we included the construct emotions, aligning with the RAA, which contains affective aspects of behaviours.

Similar to the TPB/RAA, the green literature suggests that attitude, subjective norm and PBC variables influence behavioural intentions towards purchasing sustainable products (Kang et

al., 2013; Kumar et al., 2017). Hence, we hypothesize: *H1: Attitude towards sustainable clothing significantly influences Brazilians' intention to purchase sustainable clothing; H2: Subjective norm significantly influences Brazilians' intention to purchase sustainable clothing; H3: PBC significantly influences Brazilians' intention to purchase sustainable clothing.*

Since intention has been assumed to be a powerful predictor of behaviour we hypothesised the following: *H4: The intention to purchase sustainable clothing significantly influences Brazilians' purchasing behaviour towards these products.*

2.3 The role of emotions

Although emotions in behavioural models can significantly expand their explanatory power (Bagozzi et al., 1999), their function has attracted little recognition since behavioural theories usually focus on cognitive processes (Kim et al., 2013). Many authors argued that TRA/TPB theories do not concentrate enough on the affective side of behaviour (Manstead and Parker, 1995). Attitude measures in consumer behaviour investigations rely almost solely on cognitive dimensions (Morris et al., 2002); hence, cognitive-based models neglect proper measures of feelings, attributing the emotional processes a minor position (Kim et al., 2013). This study proposed adding anticipated emotions, specifically guilt and pride – two relevant but still underexplored emotions in the field of sustainable clothing (Onwezen et al., 2014) – to the TPB/RAA model. Anticipated emotions, described as present thoughts of expected emotions, have been highlighted as essential elements causing behavioural changes (Onwezen et al., 2014). Pride can be defined as a positive self-conscious emotion connected with self-worth and achievement (Rodriguez et al., 2000). In this research, we understand pride as authentic pride, i.e., a more positive dimension of pride, associated with a sense of purpose, motivating people to behave responsibly in the future (Bodolica and Spraggon, 2011). We perceived guilt as a negative emotion responsible for preventing socially undesirable behaviour by self-consciousness (Tangney et al., 2007).

Literature has also shown that anticipated emotions influenced behaviour not directly but rather through intentions (Wang, 2011). Hence, these hypotheses were proposed: *H5: Anticipated guilt significantly influences the Brazilian's attitude (a), subjective norm (b) and PBC (c) towards sustainable clothing; H6: Anticipated guilt significantly influences the Brazilian's intention to purchase sustainable clothing; H7: Anticipated pride significantly influences the Brazilian's attitude (a), subjective norm (b) and PBC (c) towards sustainable*

clothing; H8: Anticipated pride significantly influences the Brazilian's intention to purchase sustainable clothing.

2.4 The role of consumer knowledge

Many studies investigated the role of environmental knowledge in the purchase behaviour of sustainable products (Kumar et al., 2017). Other authors (e.g., Blazquez et al., 2020; Kang et al., 2013) utilised the construct consumer knowledge, which is relatively underexplored in sustainable consumption literature (Kumar et al., 2017; Rausch and Kopplin, 2021; Wang et al., 2014). Similar to emotions, knowledge is also considered a background factor in the TPB/RAA (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010). Particularly, McEachern and Warnaby (2008) observed that consumer knowledge positively affected the intention to purchase eco-labelled products. Therefore, we hypothesize: H9: Consumer knowledge significantly influences the Brazilian's attitude (a), subjective norm (b) and PBC (c) towards sustainable clothing; H10: Consumer knowledge significantly influences the Brazilian's intention to purchase sustainable clothing.

3. Methodology

To test the hypotheses, we collected data through an online survey. The questionnaire included established scales – *Consumer knowledge and Purchase behaviour control* (Kang et al., 2013), *Pride and Guilt* (Wang, and Wu 2016), *Attitude, Purchase intention, Purchase behaviour* (Rausch and Kopplin, 2021), *Subjective norm* (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2008) – using a five-point Likert-type scale following Fishbein and Ajzen (2010)'s guidance. Respondents were approached through a snowball sampling approach. A total of 526 surveys were obtained, and 506 were valid for analysis. All respondents were Brazilian, and a total of 71.54% (362) were female. Group ages varied as follows – 18 or less (2.77%, 14), 19-29 (20.36%, 103), 30-39 (18.97%, 96), 40-49 (14.62%, 74), 50-59 (22.92%, 116) and 60 or more (20.36%, 103). 50.99% (258) of the respondents presented an education level of post-graduation or above. We also control the purchase frequency of clothes.

4. Results

We use Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to assess our *measurement model*. Findings show an adequate result for the goodness of the model (χ^2 (N = 506) = 455.564, $p < .001$; CFI = .970; GFI = .929; TLI = .963; RMSEA = .045; SRMR = .043). All latent measures showed adequate *reliability* of Cronbach's α and CR of above .70. The squared correlation of each pair of constructs is smaller than the product of these constructs' AVE, thus the construct *validity* is established. We will provide all the detailed loadings if requested.

We also compare the original TPB/RAA model to our extended model with anticipated guilt and pride. The results suggested that the extended model provided a better explanatory power for purchase intention (R^2 (PI) = 0.762) than the original TPB/RAA model (R^2 (PI) = 0.680). An improved explanatory power was also observed for purchase behaviour for the extended model (R^2 (PB) = 0.365) in comparison to the other (R^2 (PB) = 0.339). Table 1 present the results of the hypotheses that are further analysed in the following section.

Table 1 Hypothesis test results – CB-SEM.

Hypothesis	β	SE	p-value	Result
H1	0.481	0.125	***	Supported
H2	0.027	0.029	0.503	Not supported
H3	0.168	0.038	***	Supported
H4	0.604	0.067	***	Supported
H5	0.159	0.028	***	Supported
	0.3	0.04	***	Supported
H6	0.069	0.03	0.215	Not supported
	0.042	0.025	0.319	Not supported
H7	0.624	0.049	***	Supported
	-0.012	0.057	0.797	Not supported
H8	0.257	0.047	***	Supported
	0.342	0.075	***	Supported
H9	0.295	0.033	***	Supported
	0.418	0.047	***	Supported
H10	-0.215	0.036	***	Supported
	0.037	0.037	0.532	Not supported

β - standardised path coefficient. SE - standardised error ***p-value \leq 0.001

5. Discussion and conclusions

By extending and empirically testing the TPB/RAA, this study investigated the importance of anticipated emotions (guilt and pride) and consumer knowledge in the setting of sustainable clothing in Brazil.

5.1 TPB/RAA: The results confirmed that attitude and PBC significantly influenced the intention to buy sustainable clothing. This is consistent with other findings in the field of green purchasing (Kang et al., 2013; Lionço et al., 2019), reinforcing the relevance of both constructs in explaining the purchase behaviour of sustainable clothing.

Different than expected, the subjective norm has not demonstrated a significant effect on intention, meaning that hypothesis H2 could not be supported. This is also in line with controversial results observed in previous studies. While Kim's et al. (2013) findings demonstrated subjective norm to be a relevant predictor of the purchase intention of eco-friendly products; Armitage and Conner's (2001) results demonstrated that subjective norm

was often the weakest construct to explain the intention's variation in the TPB. Further, the absence of evidence regarding the effect of the subjective norm on purchase intention has already been observed when exploring green purchase behaviour (Kumar et al., 2017), including sustainable clothing (Rausch and Kopplin, 2021).

One possible reason for the insignificant influence of subjective norm on purchase intention might be related to individualist aspects of the Brazilian culture. For instance, Han and Chung (2014) found that the subjective norm presented a more significant effect than attitude in the purchase intention of sustainable apparel in Korea – a collectivist culture. In contrast, Brazilian society is increasingly moving towards individualism due to global economic growth (Podrug et al., 2014). This drives to more significance of personal attitudes than subjective norms in behavioural choices (Alam and Sayuti, 2011).

For Hypothesis H4 the results indicated that the purchase intention explained 60.4% of the variance in the purchase behaviour of sustainable clothing, supporting the hypothesis derived from the TPB/RAA, in line with previous studies (Kumar et al., 2017; Rausch and Kopplin, 2021). Further, this reinforces behavioural intention as a relevant predictor of purchase behaviour in the TPB/RAA model (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010). Despite that, a gap could be noted between them, i.e., the intention was not necessarily translated into behaviour, as previously indicated (e.g., Grunert and Juhl, 1995).

5.2 The role of emotions: The anticipated emotions, guilt and pride, demonstrated to be relevant factors in understanding the purchase behaviour of sustainable clothing in different degrees (H5, H6, H7 and H8). Specifically, anticipated guilt significantly and positively influenced the subjective norm the most, followed by attitude following findings from Onwezen et al. (2014)'s study. In contrast, anticipated guilt has not presented a significant influence on the PBC. Also, it has not presented a significant impact on the purchase intention directly. This finding contrasted previous studies' results related to sustainable purchase behaviour (Onwezen et al., 2014; Wang and Wu, 2016). Still, this emotion explained approximately 46% of attitude and subjective norm, which influence the purchase intention, indicating an indirect effect from anticipated guilt on the purchase intention of sustainable clothing.

Anticipated guilt also positively affected the attitude, but more meaningfully – 62,4% of the attitude variance was explained by it. This reinforces Onwezen et al. (2014)'s findings, in which anticipated pride seemed to perform as an expected emotional compensation that enforces behaviour consistent with personal values, like attitudes. Lastly, as expected,

anticipated pride had a meaningful effect on the PBC, meaning that this feeling was a relevant factor for explaining this variable. Pride also demonstrated to have a positive and direct impact on the purchase intention, in contrast to Onwezen et al. (2014)'s study. Nevertheless, the result was consistent with other studies (Liang et al., 2019; Hartikka and Labat, 2016). Considering this, pride might be considered the most suitable alternative when stakeholders intend to invest in emotional appeals to incentivise the purchase intention of sustainable clothing. As Wang and Wu (2016) argued, policymakers should be cautious when appealing to negative emotions, such as guilt. Further, these observations corroborated with an established research tradition that claims positive emotions (e.g., pride) have a more powerful influence on sustainable consumption than negative ones (e.g., guilt) (Meneses, 2010; Koenig et al., 2014). Lastly, the findings also shed light on new possible relationships between anticipated guilt and pride, and the TPB/RAA constructs since most studies only investigated the relationships of these variables with attitude, subjective norm, and PBC (e.g., Kang et al., 2013) *or* directly with purchase intention (e.g., Kim et al., 2013).

5.3 The role of consumer knowledge: The hypotheses H9 and H10 were tested to answer whether consumer knowledge was a relevant factor for explaining the attitude, subjective norm, PBC and purchase intention of sustainable clothing. A significant impact of consumer knowledge on attitude and the subjective norm was found, agreeing with other studies concerning sustainable apparel (Blazquez et al., 2020; Kang et al., 2013). Consumer knowledge also indicated a significant and negative effect on the PBC. Previous research also demonstrated the same, except the effect was positive (Blazquez et al., 2020; Kang et al., 2013). Our findings could not support the hypothesis concerning the direct impact of consumer knowledge on intention. Instead, this construct demonstrated to be only a relevant and direct predictor in the case of other TPB/RAA constructs (i.e., attitude, perceived norm, and PBC). In practice, this means that policymakers and other stakeholders could invest in education and information towards sustainable clothing to increase the preference for consuming sustainable apparel in Brazil.

Finally, the findings supported the addition of the anticipated emotions guilt and pride and consumer knowledge in the TPB/RAA models, as they increased the predictive power of the extended model in comparison to TPB/RAA. In the case of purchase intention, the extended model explained 76.2% of its variance. In contrast, the TPB/RAA explained only 68.0%, i.e., the explained variance of intention was improved by 8.6% after including anticipated guilt and pride and consumer knowledge to the TPB/RAA model. At the same time, for the

purchase behaviour, the model explained 36.5% of it and the TPB/RAA, 33.9% – an improvement of 2.6%. Further, these results corroborated with past research, which demonstrated that emotional aspects *or* consumer knowledge improved the predicting power of the TPB in the sustainable purchase setting (Kang et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2013). The present findings must be seen in light of some limitations. First, the sample was collected by sharing the survey across social media; hence, respondents interested in sustainability may have been more predisposed to answer the survey, possibly generating a self-selection bias. Despite that, the sample size was considered significant to draw statistical inferences. Future research could test the model in other countries, developing and developed ones, confirming its validity in different contexts, as well as in other market. To the authors's best knowledge, the extension of the TPB/RAA by combining these emotions with consumer knowledge was applied for the first time to the setting of sustainable clothing purchase. The present findings also provided implications in practical terms. Stakeholders, including policymakers, manufacturers and retailers, might be interested in improving the purchase intention and behaviour towards sustainable clothing for reasons that range from socio or environmental to economic ones.

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