

## INVESTIGATING FEMALE CONSUMERS' ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS APPAREL PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR THROUGH STIMULUS-ORGANISM-RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

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### Abstract

The objective of the study is to examine the influential factors of female consumers' environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour, in the context of an emerging European economy. The study builds upon Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theoretical framework and proposes the moderating role of style orientation on the direct effects on purchase behaviour. Online questionnaire-based survey was performed to gather data, using convenience sampling framework. Hypothesized relationships were examined on a sample including 343 responses. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), using SmartPLS4, was applied to examine proposed research framework. Results of the study point to green self-identity as more influential direct determinant of purchase behaviour, in comparison to green advertising, and the mediating role of green self-identity in the relationship between green advertising and environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour. The study revealed the moderating function of style orientation in the relation between green self-identity and purchase behaviour. Theoretical and practical implications of the study are discussed and limitations of the study, followed by future research directions to overcome the drawbacks of the present research, are noted.

*Keywords:* green advertising, green self-identity, environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour, style orientation

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry significantly contributes to environmental degradation throughout the entire process, from production to purchase (Apaolaza et al., 2023). This industry is associated with numerous environmental problems, such as soil and air pollution, greenhouse gas emission, extensive use of chemicals. Whereas important perspective on the problem is related to the production side, the role of consumers is also unquestionable, taking into account that clothing overconsumption represents a growing global phenomenon which exhibits serious impacts on the environment and society (Tandon et al., 2023).

Following research conducted in developed countries, the topic of sustainable consumption of apparel in the context of developing countries has been gaining increasing research interest (e.g. Sadiq et al., 2021; Arora & Manchanda, 2022; Tewari et al., 2022; Rutelione & Bhutto, 2024; Yadav et al., 2024), even though it still remains an under-researched field (Yadav et al., 2024). The study intends to reduce the research gap by exploring environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour in a developing European country. Some of the study findings indicated that female consumers demonstrate more favourable attitudes and intentions toward sustainable clothing than males (e.g. Tung et al., 2017; Chi et al., 2021; Rausch et al., 2021). On the basis of such findings, the focus of this research is on female consumers in a developing country.

Green apparel's growing popularity contrasted with the slower pace of actual purchases is acknowledged in the literature (Dhir et al., 2021a; Dhir et al., 2021b). Numerous authors emphasized the necessity

to gain better understanding of determinants and antecedents of consumers' pro-environmental behaviours (Lalot et al., 2019; Becerra et al., 2023; Sondhi et al., 2023). Discovering the drivers and barriers of sustainable consumption helps shedding light on the reasons causing the gap between positive attitudes and actual purchasing of green apparel (Kumar et al., 2021; Brandao & Costa, 2021; Blas Riesgo et al., 2022; Dhir et al., 2021a; Apaolaza et al., 2023; Tandon et al., 2023). Unlike some other theories used to explain consumer behaviour, the application of stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) theoretical framework in the context of green apparel is still scarce (Tandon et al., 2023). In that sense, this research makes a contribution to the existing body of knowledge related to this particular field.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the determinants of female consumers' environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour, by grounding the research on the S-O-R theoretical framework. Specifically, this study investigated how green advertising and green self-identity influence environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour. The novelty of the present research lies in the examination of the moderating role of style-orientation, unlike previous research which has examined the contribution of this construct to sustainable apparel-related choices, including style orientation as a direct determinant of behaviour. In addition, little empirical evidence currently exists on the influence of green self-identity on sustainable consumer choices in emerging economies, particularly European economies. Although several recent studies have examined the mediating role of pro-environmental self-identity in the formation of sustainable consumer behaviour

(Dermody et al. 2015; Dermody et al., 2018; Sajjad et al., 2024), far less research attention has been directed thus far to the intervening function of green self-identity in the context of an emerging European economy.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory, developed by Mehrabian and Russel (1974), represents a psychological framework used to describe the process of how organisms (including humans) respond to stimuli from their environment. This framework is useful to “explain the individuals' behaviour by analyzing the affective and cognitive states influenced by the stimulus” (Yadav et al., 2024). Stimulus (S) refers to any external event or cue that can trigger a response from an organism. The organism (O) refers to the internal processes instigated when an individual is experiencing the stimulus. Finally, Response (R) is the behaviour or action that results from the interaction between the stimulus and the organism's internal state (Tandon et al., 2023). A number of studies in the context of environmentally friendly behaviour of consumers has built upon the S-O-R framework (e.g. Sultan et al. 2021; Amaya Rivas et al., 2022; Sohaib et al., 2022; Tan, 2023; Wang et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2024).

S-O-R theory has been also applied in several studies related to environmentally friendly apparel consumption. Drawing on two theoretical frameworks, one of which was the stimulus-organism-response, Tandon et al. (2023) explored economic, cognitive and ecological factors which preceded

consumers' buying intentions towards green apparel, and by taking into consideration the moderating role of consumers' familiarity with apparel production. Rutelione and Bhutto (2024) applied the S-O-R theory to investigate Gen Z consumers' green apparel purchase behaviour and concluded that psychological benefits acted as stimuli, which influenced individuals' attitudes toward green apparel, which further significantly predicted purchase behaviour related to green apparel. Yadav et al.'s (2024) findings revealed that stimuli (self-transcendence and self-enhancement values) impacted motivation toward green apparel in a positive way and barriers in a negative way, which further influenced consumers' responses reflected in attitudes and intentions towards adopting green apparel. Grounding their study on the S-O-R theory, Tymoshchuk et al. (2024) found out that the quality of product, information and service influenced perceived hedonic, utilitarian and environmental values, which further influenced purchase intentions of second-hand clothing in a positive way.

By applying the S-O-R model, the premise of this study is that green advertising, acting as an external stimulus (S), can influence consumers' environmental self-identity which serves as the organism (O), triggering further environmentally conscious apparel consumption (R). Along with these direct relationships, green self-identity is also proposed as a mediating variable, whereas style orientation is proposed as a moderating variable.

### 2.2. Green self-identity

Green self-identity is explained as the extent to which consumers observe themselves as persons who act in an

environmentally responsible manner (van der Werff et al., 2013; Lalot et al., 2019). As defined by Chen and Chang (2012, p. 505) it represents “a consumer’s overall appraisal of the net benefit of a product or service between what is received and what is given based on the consumer’s environmental desires, sustainable expectations, and green needs”. Consumers possess green identity if they perceive themselves “as supporting environment protection, recycling, green technologies, and products” (Khare & Pandey, 2017). It represents a feature of consumer’s identity which indicates personal identification with green consumerism (Sharma et al., 2020) and alignment with environmental concerns (Khare & Pandey, 2017; Mahasuweerachai & Suttikun, 2022). Having a green self-identity can motivate individuals to develop pro-environmental intentions and conduct eco-friendly activities (Carfora et al., 2017). Within the context of the sustainable apparel consumption, Tung et al. (2017) noted that consumers who demonstrated stronger environmentally conscious identity were also more involved with eco-friendly apparel and this was even more highlighted in case of female consumers.

### **2.3. Green advertising**

Green advertising, as one form of green communications, refers to any form of advertising which is used to explicitly or implicitly raise consumers’ environmental awareness and propose actions that can help mitigate or resolve them (Fowler & Close, 2012). It is used to convey messages that products are made in an environmentally-friendly manner and that producer is committed to maintain sustainability of its brands (Reich & Armstrong Soule, 2016).

Promoting the green features of a product in the advertisement can help its differentiation from the competition by addressing the group of environmentally conscious consumers (Agarwal & Dubey, 2024). The effectiveness of green advertising lies in its ability to instigate consumers’ cognitive, affective and behavioural reactions (Krstic et al., 2021). It was shown that consumers’ positive reactions to advertisements appeared to be strong predictor of purchasing intention of an environmentally friendly apparel brand (Yan et al., 2012). By using the S-O-R model, Sultan et al. (2021)’s findings showed that marketing communications had a direct and significant impact on consumer attitudes regarding organic foods. Similarly, within the S-O-R framework, Amaya Rivas et al. (2022) found out the positive impact of green marketing on consumption values, environmental attitudes and personal norms of consumers. As concluded by Dermody et al. (2015), marketing demonstrates a crucial role in urging behavioural change by highlighting the symbolic aspects of sustainable consumption practices, which are integral to building a pro-environmental identity. Since it was shown that green advertising can influence green apparel consumption by raising awareness, shaping consumer attitudes and encouraging behavioural change, it can be assumed that conveying messages via green advertising can support the building of consumers’ green identity. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Green advertising significantly affects green self-identity.

## 2.4. Environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour

Consumers who conduct environmentally conscious apparel purchases tend to purchase apparel made of natural or recycled materials, as well as apparel which can be taken care of without requiring high energy use (Gupta et al., 2019). Clothing consumers who demonstrate environmental attitudes and demonstrate sustainable apparel buying intentions and behaviour can be characterized as environmentally conscious and they behave in such way as they feel that they can support the reduction of environmental problems (Chang & Watchravesringkan, 2018). Exploring eco-conscious apparel acquisition behaviours, Hiller Connell, (2011) came to three main characteristics of such behaviour: (1) the apparel acquisition is based on actual needs and focused on the extended lifetime of the apparel; (2) purchased apparel is made from eco-friendly fibers or possess some other environmentally preferable attributes; and (3) apparel is acquired from sources perceived as environmentally responsible, such as eco-conscious companies, second-hand shops, home sewing etc.

The relationship between green self-identity and consumers' purchase intentions is recognized in the literature (Lalot et al., 2019; Sharma et al., 2020). In the research studies by Dermody et al. (2015), Patel et al. (2020), Sharma et al. (2022) and Kumar et al. (2023), green self-identity was found to act as a predictor of consumers' green purchase intentions and behaviour. Additionally, in the study of Becerra et al. (2023), it was found out that green self-identity and green product value positively impacted green purchase and referral intentions of young adults. In the context of emerging markets, Dermody et al.

(2018) showed that pro-environmental self-identity affected sustainable buying/curtailment behaviour of consumers. A number of research findings confirmed significant and direct influence of green self-identity on pro-environmental intentions and behaviour in various fields, such as behavioural intentions toward products made of bioplastic (Confente et al., 2020); intention to adopt electric cars (Barbarossa et al., 2017); purchasing intentions of organic milk (Carfora et al., 2019); green energy purchase intention (Grebosz-Krawczyk et al., 2021); energy-saving behavioural intentions (van der Werff et al., 2013); intention to change to an energy-efficient heating appliance behaviour (Neves & Oliveira, 2021); purchasing of circular products (Sajjad et al., 2024). Within the context of sustainable apparel consumption, Tung et al. (2017) identified that green self-identity acted as the only factor which motivated behavioural intentions of female consumers towards eco-friendly apparel. Drawing on these findings, authors hypothesize the following:

**H2:** Green self-identity significantly affects environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour.

As found out by Wu and Long (2024), consumers' perception of green communication and their receptiveness to green communication demonstrated significant effects on consumers' intentions towards green consumption. In the study conducted by Dai and Sheng (2022), green advertising appeals stimulated consumers' green purchase intentions. By applying S-O-R, Tang et al. (2019) found out that media publicity, acting as a stimulus, achieved a significant direct and positive influence on perceived responsibility towards energy saving. Within the green apparel context, a

study conducted in a developing country, showed out that young consumers' receptivity to green communication was one of the three significant predictors of purchase intention towards green apparel (Tewari et al., 2022). A study which explored the potential of green advertising to make an influence on consumers' purchase intentions of electric vehicles, showed that it significantly increased purchasing intentions in comparison with non-green advertising (Bi et al., 2023). Also, in the research of Nguyen-Viet (2022), related to food products, positive and significant impact of green advertising on green purchase intentions was identified. Aiming to explore factors that influence purchasing intentions of eco-labeled products, Sun et al. (2021) identified the positive influence of consumers' receptivity to green advertising on their intentions. By communicating the beneficial effects of sustainable products and practices, green advertising can drive consumers toward more environmentally-friendly choices. Thus, it can be assumed that:

**H3:** Green advertising directly affects environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour.

Besides its direct influence on consumers' behaviour, green self-identity was taken to be a mediating variable in some studies. The mediating effect of environmental self-identity on the link between biospheric values and energy-saving intentions and behaviour was one of the findings of van der Werff et al.'s (2013) study. The mediating role of pro-environmental self-identity was also examined by Dermody et al. (2015), who found out that it partially or fully mediated the relations between consumers' environmental concern, materialism, social consumption motivation and sustainable

consumption behaviours. In the subsequent research of Dermody et al. (2018), it was also confirmed that pro-environmental self-identity mediated the relations between biospheric/altruistic values, social consumption motivation and perceived consumer effectiveness and sustainable buying behaviour and consumption reduction. Green self-identity was also considered as a mediating factor of the relation between consumers' green self-concept and their green purchasing intentions (Sharma et al., 2020). In the research conducted by Bhutto et al. (2022), the relationship between consumption values and young consumers' intention to adopt green vehicles was found to be mediated by a similar concept, entitled ethical self-identity. As found by Sajjad et al. (2024), green self-identity acted as a mediator of the influence of contextual activators on purchasing of circular products. On the basis of the previous findings related to the mediating role of this concept, the following can be assumed:

**H4:** Green self-identity mediates the relationship between green advertising and environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour.

## 2.5. Style orientation

Style orientation relates to choosing quality over quantity and choosing well-made garments that last longer and are not strictly related to current fashion trends. For such reason, style orientation is closely related to the concept of slow fashion orientation (Jung & Jin, 2016; Suhud et al., 2020). As defined by Zarley Watson and Yan, (2013, p. 155), slow fashion consumer is "a consumer who chooses to purchase high quality, versatile clothing that allows them to

build a wardrobe based on the concept of clothing created out of care and consideration". Whereas fashion trends are temporary and seasonally changing, style resonates person's identity and lifestyle (Gwozd et al., 2017). The findings of Gupta et al. (2019) emphasized three main differentiating characteristics of consumers possessing style orientation, in comparison to consumers with high fashion orientation: they are less frequent buyers, they practice more sustainable consumption and disposal of apparel products. Those consumers also purchase fewer, but higher quality apparel items, avoid mass retailing market, and rather choose second-hand clothing or mending their own clothing (Bly et al., 2015). As they are more likely to take into consideration environmental impact of their consumption, they engage in more environmentally friendly clothing consumption, which includes purchasing clothing items made from sustainable fibers and those requiring lower energy for care (i.e. washing at lower temperatures, shorter drying, less ironing and easier mending) (Cho et al., 2015; Gupta et al., 2019). Previous research indicated that female consumers had higher tendency towards style consumption than males (Cho et al., 2015), which makes this gender group more suitable for research including style orientation as a relevant factor.

Although, to our knowledge, prior studies have not considered the moderating role of style orientation, it would be logical to presume that higher style orientation could reinforce the relationship between green advertising and environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour. Therefore, we assume the following:

**H5:** Style orientation positively moderates the impact of green advertising on

environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour.

As noted in the literature, consumer green self-identity, which reflects how individuals perceive themselves in terms of environmental consciousness, often strongly influences their green purchasing intentions. However, we propose that while a strong green self-identity generally encourages green purchasing, the extent of this effect can vary based on the consumer's orientation towards style, as individuals with this orientation may seek products that satisfy both their environmental values and style preferences. In accordance with that, the following is hypothesized:

**H6:** Style orientation positively moderates the effect of green self-identity on environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour.

Hypothesized relationships are shown in Figure 1.

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1. Measurement items

Data gathering for this study has been realized by means of an online structured questionnaire. The items were adapted from recognized and previously validated constructs in existing literature. A 7-point Likert-type scale, in a range from 1-strongly disagree to 7-strongly agree, was used to measure responses.

Specifically, items addressing the construct of green advertising were adopted from the study of Bailey et al. (2016). Respondents' task was to express their level of agreement with nine items related to green advertising (e.g. "I pay attention to green advertising messages...I pay attention to

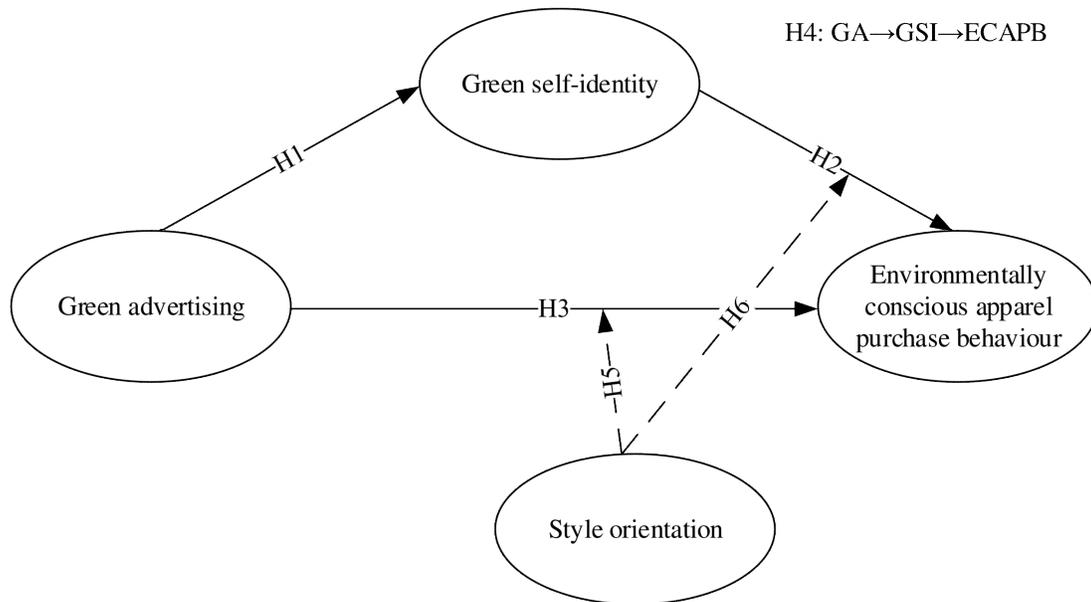


Figure 1. Research framework

advertising messages that talk about the environment...I am the kind of consumer who is willing to purchase products marketed as being green”). Items addressing green self-identity were adopted from previous research of Dean et al. (2012). Two items were used to measure green self-identity (e.g. “I consider myself as someone who is concerned with green issues.”). Seven items proposed by Kim and Damhorst (1998) and Cho et al. (2015) were used to measure environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour (“I buy apparel made from recycled material... I purposely select fabrics that require cooler washing temperature, shorter drying time, or less ironing... I buy clothing made of organically grown natural fibres”). Six items, adapted from previous research (Cho et al., 2015; Gwozdz et al., 2017), were used to measure style orientation (e.g. “By being stylish, I am able to wear my apparel for a long time... I prefer to purchase apparel that I can utilize for a long time...I prefer to purchase clothing that is timeless”).

Prior to launching a survey, the questionnaire was pre-tested on a small sample of clothing customers, in order to reveal and address potential drawbacks, such as equivocal or difficult-to-understand items. Participants were invited to provide their feedback on the construct items, on the basis of which the final refinement of the measurement instrument was performed.

### 3.2. Data collection

Data acquisition for this study was performed on a convenience sample of female clothing customers, using self-administered web-based questionnaire. The focus of the study was on female consumers, as they have been recognized as more oriented towards adopting environmentally friendly behaviour (Becerra et al., 2023) and more fashion-conscious consumers than males (Cho et al., 2015). In an exchange for some extra course credit, students attending Marketing-related courses of a large public faculty in Serbia assisted in data collection,

by delivering a link to the survey instrument through social media platforms. Overall, 454 responses were collected. Respondents not matching the target group of the present study, i.e. not being of female gender, or those whose responses indicated straight-lining response pattern, were filtered out, which resulted in 343 responses which were entered into data analysis. Minimum sample size was calculated using a priori power analysis in G\*Power. For medium effect size of 0.15, at the level of probability of 95% and statistical power of 0.80, with three predictors, sample size of 81 responses was necessary. Hence, a number of collected responses exceeded minimum requirement related to the sample size.

### 3.3. Data analyses

Data analysis was conducted using PLS-SEM, due to its suitability for exploratory studies, its causal-predictive nature, ability to handle complex relationships, using relatively small sample size, and its ability to handle non-normal data distribution (Khan et al., 2019; Magno et al., 2024). Measurement model was assessed first, to examine internal consistency reliability and convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs included in the survey, which was followed by the estimation of structural relationships. The application of moderation analysis was done to examine whether the relationships of green advertising and green self-identity with environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour depend on the level of style orientation. SPSS v.26 was used for an examination of the presence of common method bias, whereas hypothesized relationships were tested by means of SmartPLS4 software (Ringle et al., 2024).

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Common method bias (CMB)

As all responses were obtained using a single questionnaire, on the same sample, the presence of CMB might have affected the validity of the findings. The presence of CMB was investigated by performing Harman's single factor test. An unrotated solution of principal component analysis resulted in more than a single factor with eigenvalue above one, whereas the first extracted factor explained less than 50% (34.267%) of variance in the data, which indicated that CMB was not a serious threat of the study (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

### 4.2. Measurement model analysis

The assessment of internal consistency reliability was done by calculating Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability coefficients (CR) for all constructs. Cronbach's alpha values fell in the range from 0.741 and 0.943, and being above the threshold of 0.70, were acceptable. The range of composite reliability values was between 0.885 and 0.951, thus being above the threshold of 0.70, signified acceptable reliability of the constructs. Majority of factor loadings were above the threshold of 0.708, indicating acceptable item reliability. Several item loadings were slightly below the recommended level, however, according to Hair et al. (2017), even outer loadings lower than 0.708, but above the level of 0.40, are acceptable, provided that their retainment within the corresponding constructs does not adversely affect internal consistency reliability. Average variance extracted (AVE) values which were above the 0.50 threshold indicated acceptable level of convergent validity of the constructs.

Table 1. Reliability and convergent validity assessment

Constructs	Items	Outer loadings	t-values	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Green advertising	GA1	0.782	30.478***	0.943	0.951	0.685
	GA2	0.855	51.876***			
	GA3	0.849	41.685***			
	GA4	0.870	43.634***			
	GA5	0.877	47.439***			
	GA6	0.801	27.341***			
	GA7	0.756	23.052***			
	GA8	0.816	34.823***			
	GA9	0.833	47.901***			
Green self-identity	GSI1	0.905	94.265***	0.741	0.885	0.793
	GSI2	0.876	52.809***			
Environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour	ECAPB1	0.700	19.864***	0.869	0.900	0.568
	ECAPB2	0.629	15.928***			
	ECAPB3	0.846	56.102***			
	ECAPB4	0.587	14.301***			
	ECAPB5	0.803	33.534***			
	ECAPB6	0.849	45.044***			
	ECAPB7	0.814	38.819***			
Style orientation	SO1	0.769	16.811***	0.851	0.885	0.563
	SO2	0.750	18.443***			
	SO3	0.818	16.527***			
	SO4	0.802	14.585***			
	SO5	0.663	8.974***			
	SO6	0.687	14.033***			

Discriminant validity, which pertains to the assessment of whether various constructs truly differ from each other, was assessed by means of Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and Heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) (Henseler et al., 2015). Evidence in support of discriminant validity according to Fornell-Larcker criterion, i.e. square root of AVE of each construct above the correlations of that construct and every other construct, is displayed in Table 2. Discriminant validity was also supported by HTMT criterion (Table 2), as all ratios were below the threshold of 0.85, i.e. 0.90 for conceptually similar constructs (Hair et al., 2017). In addition, a bootstrapping procedure with 5000 subsamples and 95% Bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) confidence interval

method was performed, which revealed that none of the confidence intervals related to the HTMT ratios included the value of 1, and therefore discriminant validity was supported (Hair et al., 2017).

As reliability and validity of the constructs were supported, analysis proceeded with the examination of hypothesized relationships among the constructs.

### 4.3. Structural model analysis

Variance inflation factor values (VIF) were inspected first to examine the presence of multicollinearity issue. As all VIF values were below the upper level of 5 (Hair et al., 2017), multicollinearity was not an issue of the research model (Table 3).

Table 2. Discriminant validity assessment – Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratios

	Green advertising	Green self-identity	Environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour	Style orientation
Green advertising	0.828	<i>0.559</i> <i>[0.443; 0.669]</i>	<i>0.383</i> <i>[0.284; 0.484]</i>	<i>0.226</i> <i>[0.111; 0.360]</i>
Green self-identity	0.489	0.891	<i>0.733</i> <i>[0.644; 0.817]</i>	<i>0.247</i> <i>[0.129; 0.380]</i>
Environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour	0.369	0.598	0.754	<i>0.314</i> <i>[0.225; 0.425]</i>
Style orientation	0.199	0.217	0.294	0.750

Note: Values on the diagonal represent square roots of AVEs, values below the diagonal represent correlations among the constructs; values above the diagonal (italics) represent HTMT ratios, values in parentheses represent lower and upper bounds of the 95% Bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals derived from the bootstrapping procedure.

Table 3. Structural model results

Relationships	Structural coeff.	p-values	95% CI		Results of hypothesis testing	Effect size (f <sup>2</sup> )	VIF
			LBCI <sup>a</sup>	UBCI <sup>a</sup>			
H1: GA → GSI	0.489	0.000	0.403	0.556	Supported	0.314	1.000
H2: GSI → ECAPB	0.520	0.000	0.449	0.586	Supported	0.344	1.341
H3: GA → ECAPB	0.080	0.042	0.005	0.156	Supported	0.008	1.330
H4: GA → GSI → ECAPB	0.254	0.000	0.201	0.309	Supported		
H5: SO x GA → ECAPB	0.018	0.325	-0.045	0.083	Not supported		
H6: SO x GSI → ECAPB	0.087	0.029	0.005	0.156	Supported	0.011	
R <sup>2</sup> (GSI)=0.239; R <sup>2</sup> (ECAPB)=0.402; Q <sup>2</sup> predict(ECAPB)=0.177; Q <sup>2</sup> predict(GSI)=0.232							

Note: <sup>a</sup>LBCI, UBCI – Lower and upper bound of the 95% Bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) confidence intervals derived from the bootstrapping procedure with 5000 subsamples; GA – green advertising, GSI – green self-identity, ECAPB – environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour, SO – style orientation,

The bootstrapping procedure, with 5000 subsamples and 95% Bias-corrected and accelerated confidence interval method (BCa), was employed to examine significance of hypothesized relationships. Confidence intervals which did not include the value of zero indicated statistical significance of structural paths. Results of structural analysis, displayed in Table 3, provided support to hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4.

The magnitude of statistically significant structural coefficients was assessed on the

basis of Cohen’s (1988) effect size (f<sup>2</sup>). Weak, moderate and substantial effect size was indicated by values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35, respectively. According to the effect size, medium to substantial influence was exhibited by green advertising on green self-identity (f<sup>2</sup>=0.314) and green self-identity on environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour (f<sup>2</sup>=0.335), whereas the impact of green advertising on environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour was negligible (f<sup>2</sup>=0.008).

Explanatory power of the model was

assessed on the basis of explained variance ( $R^2$ ). As noted by Chin (1998),  $R^2$  values of 0.19, 0.33 and 0.67 mean weak, moderate and substantial explanatory power of a model. According to the explained variance in environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour of 0.402 (Table 3), the model has moderate to substantial explanatory power. In addition, explained variance in endogenous construct which surpasses 20% can be regarded high in consumer behaviour studies (Suki & Suki, 2019).

Predictive performance of the path model was assessed on the basis of PLSpredict algorithm (Shmueli et al., 2016).  $Q^2$  predict values above zero, as obtained in the present study (Table 3), indicate that the prediction error of the PLS-SEM model is smaller than the prediction error of using mean values and, therefore, PLS-SEM model displays better out-of-sample predictive power.

#### 4.4. Moderating effect of style orientation

To examine whether the strength and the directions of the relationships between green advertising and green self-identity with environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour differed under the influence of style orientation as an intervening variable, moderation analysis was performed.

The moderating effect of style orientation on the relation between green advertising and environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour was not statistically significant ( $\beta=0.018$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Hence, H5 was not supported. Conversely, the moderation analysis indicated significant positive moderating effect of style orientation on the relationship between green self-identity and environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour ( $\beta=0.087$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), providing support to H6. More

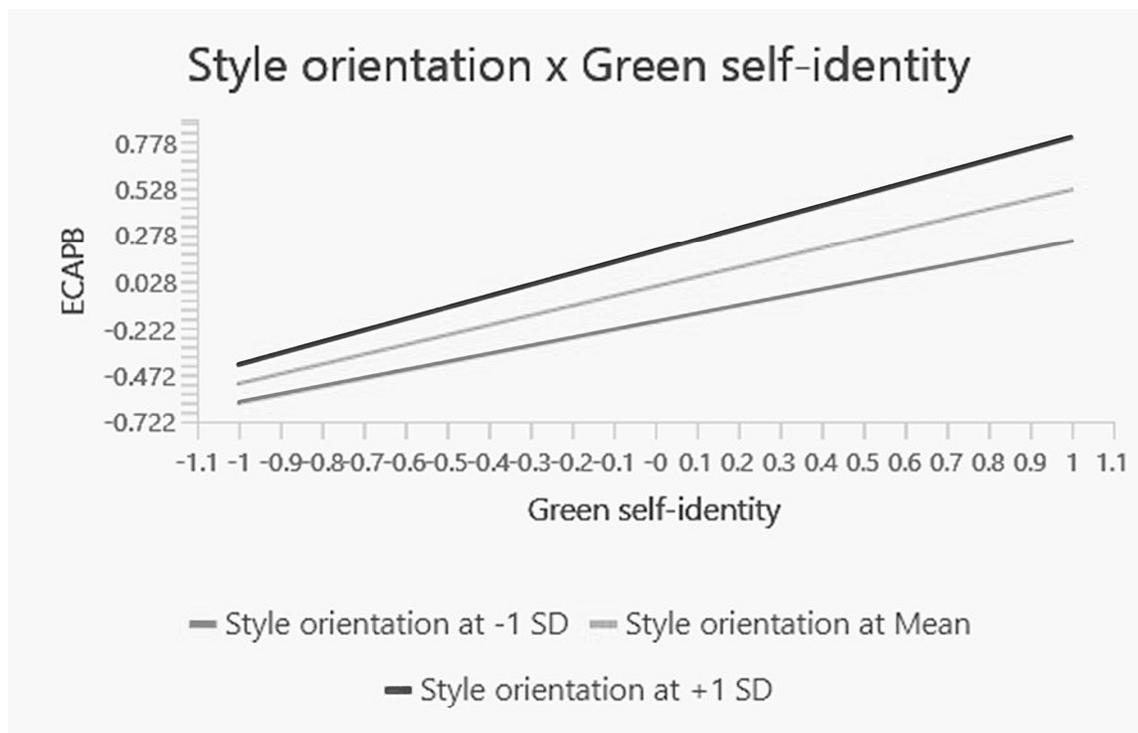


Figure 2. Simple slope analysis plot

precisely, one standard deviation increase in style orientation above the mean would result in an increase of the simple effect of green self-identity on environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour by 0.087, i.e. the linkage between green self-identity and environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour is stronger (the slope is slightly steeper) at higher levels of style orientation, as shown in Table 3 and Figure 2.

Effect size ( $f^2$ ) of the interaction effect indicates the contribution of the moderation variable to the explanation of endogenous construct. The inclusion of style orientation as a moderating variable resulted in the increase of explained variance in environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour from 0.391 to 0.402. In the present case, effect size of the interaction effect of 0.011 was rather small. However, according to Hair et al. (2021), rather limited effect size is generally expected, when it comes to the moderating effect. According to Kenny (2018), values of 0.005, 0.01 and 0.025 indicate small, medium, and large effect sizes of moderation. Hence, effect size of moderation in the present study of 0.011 could be regarded as moderate.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The current study applied S-O-R model to examine the influential factors of environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour among female clothing consumers in an emerging European economy. Green advertising was hypothesized as external stimuli which directly affects consumers' inner states, such as green self-identity in the present case, and directly and indirectly, via green self-identity, further contributes to

consumers' behavioural response, such as environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour in the current study.

The PLS-SEM analysis disclosed significant impact of green advertising (stimulus) on green self-identity (organism) and positive direct linkage between green self-identity and environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour (response). Similarly to the present study's finding, Sajjad et al.'s (2024) research disclosed significant impact of green marketing initiatives on pro-environmental self-identity. A recent study has also verified significant impact of green self-identity on young adult consumers' pro-environmental behavioural intentions in an emerging and advanced economy setting (Becerra et al., 2023).

Finding of the present study related to weak direct influence of green advertising on environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour is also backed by empirical evidence of prior research. Significant, though relatively weak, direct effect of green communications on purchase intentions towards green apparel was reported by Tewari et al.'s (2022) study on a sample of young Indian consumers.

Study results point to significant mediating effect of green self-identity on the relationship between green advertising and environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour. Similarly, Sajjad et al.'s (2024) study disclosed that the relationship between green marketing initiatives and consumers' willingness to buy green products was significantly mediated by pro-environmental self-identity.

Style orientation emerged as a significant and positive moderator of the relationship between green self-identity and environmentally conscious apparel purchase

behaviour, i.e. the higher the style orientation, the stronger the association between green self-identity and environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour. Conversely, the intervening role of style orientation on the direct linkage between green advertising and environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour was not significant.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

### **6.1. Implications for theory and practice**

This study's findings contribute to existing literature on pro-environmental consumer behaviour in two aspects. First, they contribute to extant knowledge on pro-environmental consumption by supporting the mediating role of green self-identity in the formation of environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour, in the context of an emerging European economy. Second, the present study expands existing knowledge on the determinants of environmentally conscious apparel purchase behaviour, by shedding light on a thus far under-examined moderating role of style orientation.

Results of the study also provide important managerial implications. Taking into account significant relationships revealed by the present study, marketers of environmentally friendly fashion brands could utilize pro-environmental educational campaigns to invoke positive customer response. In the domain of green marketing communications, social media influencers have been recognized as a potent means of inducing sustainable fashion choices among European Millennials (Johnstone & Lindh, 2022). A recent study points to Instagram

stories and posts as influential modes of communication with young consumers (Olejniczak, 2022). With regards to the significant moderating effect, findings of the present study indicate that promotion of style orientation among female population could lead to more responsible apparel consumption.

### **6.2. Limitations of the study and future research directions**

Several limitations of the present study should be noted and addressed by future research. The major shortcomings of the study are related to its relatively small sample size, convenience sampling as a framework for data collection and a composition of the sample which was biased towards younger population, as vast majority of respondents were up to 30 years of age (90.1%). Further research should examine proposed relationships on a more representative sample of clothing customers, including male respondents and more representative distribution of generational cohorts. As the study has been conducted on a sample of Serbian respondents, future research should include respondents from other countries and cultural contexts in order to enhance generalizability of the findings. Cross-sectional nature of the study, which prevents the drawing of firm causal inferences, represents another limitation of the study. This drawback could be circumvented by longitudinal design of future research. Taking into account relatively low extent of explained variance in green self-identity and its influential role in shaping consumers' behaviour, future studies would benefit from more profound examination of the antecedents of green self-identity.

## ИСТРАЖИВАЊЕ ЕКОЛОШКИ СВЕСНОГ ПОТРОШАЧКОГ ПОНАШАЊА ЖЕНА ПРИ КУПОВИНИ ОДЕЋЕ КРОЗ ОКВИР СТИМУЛУС-ОРГАНИЗАМ-РЕАКЦИЈА

Јелена Крстић, Тамара Рајић, Милица Костић-Станковић, Тамара Властелица

### Извод

Циљ овог истраживања је испитивање утицајних фактора на еколошки свесно потрошачко понашање жена приликом куповине одеће у контексту једне економије у успону у Европи. Студија се ослања на теоријски оквир Стимулус-Организам-Реакција (S-O-R) и предлаже модераторску улогу оријентације ка стилу у директним утицајима на потрошачко понашање. Анкетно истраживање је спроведено путем интернета, користећи приступ заснован на погодном узорковању. Хипотетички односи су испитивани на узорку који укључује 343 одговора. Примењен је модел структурних једначина заснован на парцијалним најмањим квадратима (PLS-SEM), уз коришћење алата SmartPLS4, за анализу предложеног истраживачког оквира.

Резултати истраживања указују на то да је зелени самоидентитет значајнији директни фактор утицаја на потрошачко понашање у поређењу са зеленим оглашавањем, као и на посредничку улогу зеленог самоидентитета у односу између зеленог оглашавања и еколошки свесног потрошачког понашања приликом куповине одеће. Истраживање је открило и модераторску функцију оријентације ка стилу у односу између зеленог самоидентитета и потрошачког понашања. Теоријске и практичне импликације истраживања су размотрене, а наведена су и ограничења студије, уз препоруке за будућа истраживања у циљу превазилажења недостатака актуелног истраживања.

*Кључне речи:* зелено оглашавање, зелени самоидентитет, еколошки свесно потрошачко понашање при куповини одеће, оријентација ка стилу

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