

## **Impact of Personal Values on Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention: Mediating Effect of Product Involvement**

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The purpose of this paper is to assess the mediating role of Product Involvement in the relationship between Personal Values and Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention in the Apparel Industry of Pakistan. A Quantitative study approach was employed for this study and the data was collected from the university students. The questionnaire for Personal Values was adopted from (Dickson, 2000), Product Involvement from Kapferer & Laurent, (1985/1986; 1993) and Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention from (Vitell, Singhapakdi & Thomas, 2001). The sample consists of 600 individuals and AMOS (Ver. 22.0) was employed for the analysis. To the best of the knowledge of the authors, it is the first study of its kind to assess such variables and the results proves that, Personal values positively impact Product Involvement and individuals have a positive Intention to Purchase Ethical Fashion products when it comes to Personal Values. Yet the constraint of Product Involvement plays a vital role. Marketers can get to know whether their target consumers are prepared for Ethical Fashion Products. Furthermore, understanding the barriers of Product Involvement which impact Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention can help brands to set strategy accordingly.

*Keyword.* Ethical fashion, personal values, product involvement, Pakistan, apparel

Throughout the recent two decades, buyers have started to articulate their interest toward environmental and societal issues by

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altering their consumption pattern (Shen, Wang, Lo, & Shum, 2012). Buyers can explain their expectations by purchasing items for their optimistic moral conduct (e.g., Fair trade, social, environmental or biological) or by boycotting items for their apparent unethical parts (Grankvist, Dahlstrand, & Biels, 2004; Auger, Devinney, & Louviere, 2000). Consumers generally affirm an inspirational state of mind and eagerness in buying ethical items, yet these items have restricted market share and the purpose for this is that basically consumers perceive several product attributes collectively while settling on a buying decision. For example, cost, value, accessibility, brand knowledge, approach, and the involvement of ethical quality attributes are also possible (Tallontire, Rentsendorj, & Blowfield, 2001; Norberg, 2000; Roberts, 1996). Numerous related items and advertising attributes that enter clients' multi-aspects evaluation when judging an ethical item have been perceived in past researches. They can be classified into three groups. To begin with, buyers confront a decision between diverse sorts of ethical claims, some less engaging to consumers than others (Pelsmacker, Driessen, & Rayp, 2005). Second, the keenness to purchase ethically labeled products will base on their sincerity (Lee & Lee, 2004; Loureiro, McCluskey, & Mittelhammer, 2002). Third, marketing efforts which include Promotional campaigns, branding and distribution strategy may have an impact on consumer buying intentions (Maignan & Ferell, 2004; Nilsson, Tuncer, & Thidell, 2000).

The most recent achievement and business development in the fashion market hoist the issue that whether or not ethical consumerism is "Back in Fashion" (Joergens, 2006). As consumer intentions are expanding to buy ethically produced goods, the ethical fashion market is foreseen to be rapidly emerging around the Globe (GreenBiz, 2008). Moreover, it has also been analyzed that the ethical consumer market is going through a significant period of growth and in the fashion industry a change is taking place (Joergens, 2006). In recent years, a rise in ethical consumption in the fashion arena as awareness of ethical issues has increased (Chan & Wong, 2012; Annama, John, Jr, Alladi, Jeff & Ricky, 2012). Thus increasing consumer awareness has led to the emergence of "Ethical Fashion" and Ethical Fashion brands like Nike, Gap and Levi Strauss (Shen et al., 2012). The trend toward ethical fashion is also encouraging retailers to become alarmed and take action. Like, organic cotton or recycled material made shopping bags are now commonly available even in small boutiques and large chains (Shen et al., 2012). However, this trend is not universal as the attitudes towards ethical fashion differ between countries in line with

other ethical phenomena (Leonidou, Leonidou, Palihawadana, & Hultman, 2011).

Now, this area of study is significant for various reasons: In the context of ethical consumption behavior only a small number of studies have been conducted (Bray & Kilburn, 2011). It is noted that there is still room for further study in the context of ethical/ unethical consumption (Bateman & Valentine, 2010, Newholm & Shaw, 2007). From the context of individual's personal value, no explicit study related with ethical and unethical consumption has been addressed (Manchiraju & Sadachar, 2014). Another important educational, executive and communal objective is analyzing the gap between what ethically minded consumers intend to do and what actually they do at the point of purchase, and understanding how to fill this gap up (Carrington, Neville, & Whitwell, 2010). According to Shen, et al., (2012) the impact of ethical trend in consumer buying behavior were composed in Hong Kong alone. The conclusions may not be generalisable to other regions. In Accordance to the applicability of the segments and scale outcomes with respect to Ethical Grocery Shoppers require more research to confirm the findings in other shopping environment (Memery, Megicks, Angell, & Williams, 2011). According to (Samarasinghe, 2012) the research exploring ethical consumption behavior in developing countries is limited. Moreover, limited researches have been conducted concerning the consumers' view on ethical issues in the fashion industry and its influence on their purchase behavior (Dickson, 2000). Lastly, in the context of Ethical Fashion Consumption, the findings are ambiguous at best e.g. (Kim, 2011; Joergens, 2006).

This article is based on research being carried out in Pakistan and will be examining the relationship between Personal Values and Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention with the mediating effect of Product involvement. To the authors' knowledge, the association concerning Product Involvement and Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention is not clearly examined in the past researches. So this research will be explaining the new extents of the relationship between Product Involvement and Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention and to address (Manchiraju & Sadachar, 2014) issue, this research fulfills the gap of linking Personal value with Ethical Fashion Intention. This research is different from the other research work conducted on Ethical Fashion Consumption in a way that due to limited research on Ethical Fashion Industry of Pakistan, the researchers are of the view that first thing that should be analyzed is whether the intention of the consumer exists or not, because analyzing consumption directly may become ambiguous, in a way that the

results of consumption of Ethical Fashion Products may come out to be negative, not because intention isn't there, but can be many other reasons. Thus initially, Intention needs to be addressed and this study derives the results about the intentions of the consumers. This will help the Brands to get to know if their audience are interested in ethical fashion industry or not, and if they are, they will get the opportunity to pitch themselves accordingly. This study focuses on Apparel industry specifically; as such product category has been acknowledged by researchers liable to be a product category to make high involvement (Goldsmith & Emmert, 1991; Bloch, 1986). Researchers have ordinarily utilized a single dimension of fashion involvement to highlight interest with the product category of Apparel (Fairhurst, Good, & Gentry, 1989). Moreover according to Dickson, (2000) limited scope of studies are focusing on social or environment responsibility and apparel consumer behavior.

### **Conceptual Framework**

#### *Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention:*

Ethical fashion is defined as "The Fashionable garments that follow the fair trade morality with sweatshop free labor conditions, while making efforts so that environment or workers are not harmed in the process (Joergens, 2006)." Fashion with conscious" is also a term used to describe ethical fashion as it puts forward the concern for environment and labor conditions (Joergens, 2006), whereas Purchase intention can be stated as the buyer's rational position that leads an individual to decide whether to acquire a certain product or service in the near future (Howard, 1989). Therefore, if socially responsible apparel purchasing intention is collectively defined, it can be viewed as consumers' eagerness to purchase that apparel which is produced while eliminating the exploitation and minimizing the environmental damage (Schwartz, 2010). In the context of socially responsible consumption, the apparel industry is a relatively a new concept and literature proves that consumers have initiated to express their concern for environmental and societal issues by altering their consumption pattern for the last two decades (Bae, 2012).

Considering, specifically Pakistan, while purchasing a brand, if a selected consumer sees a certificate of some sort e.g. FBR or any other ISSO certification, then the purchase intention of that consumer alters. Similarly, by Ethical Fashion, it is meant that if Fashion related Brands start to claim that they fulfill all the desired characteristics of being Ethical, then to what extent, their purchase intention would alter.

### *Personal values*

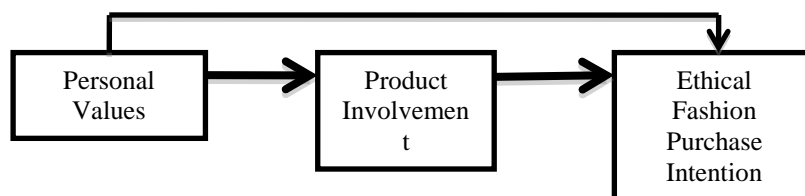
Personal values are defined as notions or attitude, which affects the individual desirable end state (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). Personal Values can also be described as beliefs, those are learned and that serve as the leading principles in the life of an individual (Olver & Mooradian, 2003). Talking about it, in terms of ethical dimensions, it can be defined as, the ethical principles and standards that direct the behavior of individual or groups as they obtain, use, and dispose goods and services (Muncy & Vitell, 1992). Values eventually direct the behavior of any individual (Mario, Olson, Bernard, & Luke, 2003). Number of researches e.g. (Doran, 2009; Kim & Chung, 2011) states that values have an influence on ethical consumption. However, this study will use (Dickson, 2000) model to analyze personal values. It consists of six different individual values and is considered to be common among various cultures. These values are segmented into two dimensions as “Micro Societal Values” and “Macro Societal Values.” Micro Societal Values includes three items i.e. Fairness, Family Security and Tolerance and Macro Societal Values also comprise three items i.e., Environment Security, A world at Peace and An educated Society.

### *Product Involvement*

Involvement concept comes from social psychology. Product involvement is generally defined as “A consumer’s enduring insight of the importance of the product category based on the consumer’s intrinsic needs, values, and interests” (De Wulf, Orderkeren-Schroder, & Lacobucci, 2001). The involvement concept influences the advertisement activities of any organization because if consumer can easily recognize the product, it increases their involvement in it, e.g. (Bloch, 1986; Goldsmith & Emmert, 1991; Kapferer & Laurent, 1985/1986) and whereas “Apparel” is considered to be a product category that can induce high involvement. Product involvement is also defined as the feeling of interest and enthusiasm consumers hold for various or certain product categories (Goldsmith & Emmert, 1991). It can also be defined as consumer acknowledgment for a specific product (Traylor, 1981). Product Involvement is frequently used with Apparel Industry that scholars often name it “Fashion involvement” (Fairhurst, et al., 1989; Shim, Morris, & Morgan, 1989).

### *Relationship of the Variables*

Personal values have been linked to product involvement (Lastovicka & Gardener, 1979). It is stated that personal values affect an individual product involvement (Mario et al., 2003). Personal values have been found to be positively associated with ethical consumption in several studies, e.g. (Doran, 2009; Cheung & Chan, 2010; Kim & Chung, 2011; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2008). Whereas personal values are also found to be linked with “Behavioral intentions toward Ethical Fashion Consumption” (Manchiraju & Sadachar, 2014). The relationship between product involvement and ethical fashion purchase intention is not clearly linked with each other in any research article, as per researchers’ findings. And the reason explored is that, limited studies are conducted with Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention. \*No study linking Product Involvement with Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention has been found in the literature. but the relationship between product involvement and ethical product decision involvement was found (Bezencon & Blili, 2010). Furthermore, because their relationship is not tested before, so this research would be defining a new relationship between “Product involvement” and “ethical fashion purchase intention” and which can also be used in further studies. Therefore, this research is likely to contribute in the field of consumer behavior with Pakistan’s perspective and when talking about the discussed variables the gap becomes more prominent.



### Hypotheses

1. Personal values significantly impact Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention.
2. Personal values significantly impact Product Involvement.
3. Product Involvement significantly impacts Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention.
4. Product Involvement significantly mediates the relation between Personal values and Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention

## Method

### Participants

A total of 600 questionnaires was filled and 468 questionnaires were found useable, 42% of the individuals are from the age category of 15-20, 55% are from the age category of 21-25, 2% are from the age category of 26-30 and lastly 2% are also from the age category of Above 30. Gender is distributed with 38% Female and 62% male. In case of Education, 72% of the individuals are a student of "Bachelors", 23% are a student of Masters Degree and remaining 5% are a student of Post Graduate and Doctorate.

### Measures

The scale for all the variables discussed is adopted. Questions from 1 to 6 are used to measure Personal Values and are adopted from (Dickson, 2000). Similarly the questions ranging from 7 to 22 are used to measure Product involvement and are adopted from Kapferer & Laurent, (1985/1986; 1993) and the questions ranging from 23 to 26 are used to measure Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention and are adopted from (Vitell, Singhapakdi & Thomas, 2001). As a whole, questionnaire composed of a single section and 26 questions were required to rate their degree of agreement from the respondents, in which "1" represented "Strongly Disagree" and "5" represented "Strongly Agree" and a five-point Likert scale was used. A Pilot test was employed with 45 participants to safeguard against obtaining invalid or irrelevant data. A total of 45 questionnaires was examined and the results were pleasing, although there was a little ambiguity in the questionnaire, which was addressed and resolved. Yet the results of the pilot test ensured the reliability of the research instrument and the Cronbach's Alpha values are PV = .830, PI = .852 and EFPI = .815.

### *Sample Procedure*

A convenience sampling procedure was used and the target population of the study is the main decision makers and end consumers, basically the students of Undergraduate, Graduate, Post Graduate and Doctorate were chosen from the universities including University of Engineering & Technology, Lahore, Lahore College University of Women, Lahore, Government College University,

Lahore, Forman Christian College University, Lahore, University of Karachi and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar. The study was taken place in Pakistan, which provides fruitful ground for ethical fashion aspect initially. Data were collected using by face-to-face method and collected questionnaires on the spot and with an online facility.

## Results and Discussion

### *Preliminary Analysis*

The scale for convergent and discriminant validity was assessed, followed by the test for hypothesized relationship within the structural model. For conducting the test of convergent and discriminant validity, the procedure suggested by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) was utilized. The analysis indicates a high level of construct reliability ( $\rho > .75$ ) (Joreskog, 1971). The average variance extracted for all the constructs were analyzed to be ( $AVE > .5$ ) for the entire latent variable. The model proves discriminant validity as the average variance extracted (AVE) of each factor was found out to be greater than the squared correlation with the other dynamics in the model.

To fulfill all the preparatory state of structural equation modeling (SEM), we represented scale unidimensionality, reliability, and validity (incl. Both the convergent and discriminant validity) using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) approach. The assessment of convergent and discriminant validity of our scale is grounded on the approach suggested by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). According to (Joreskog, 1971), the results of Composite Reliability (CR) confirm the reliability of the scale used in our study. The score of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each factor is greater than 0.5, which proves the convergent validity of our scale. A comparatively high score of AVE for each variable than the shared variances of the other factors in the model is an indication of discriminant validity of the scale. The psychometric properties of our proposed model are reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Psychometric Properties

Construct	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	P.V	P.I	E.F
<b>P.V</b>	0.838	0.509	0.079	0.053	0.713	---	---
<b>P.I</b>	0.922	0.500	0.079	0.043	0.281	0.707	---
<b>E.F</b>	0.755	0.512	0.027	0.017	0.164	0.086	0.716

Note. PV= Personal Values

P.I= Product Involvement

E.F= Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention



Utilizing the identical foundation data elevated the likelihood for Common Method Bias (CMB), which could further intimidate the validity of experimental results (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Therefore, to avoid such threat, this research implies a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) based on Harman's single-factor approach (Podsakoff et al., 2003). If a threat is anticipated in common method bias, as compared to multifactor model, single dormant factor should acquiesce a better fit. Comparing the single factor representation with the three factor representation (dormant constructs of Personal Values, Product Involvement and Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention) disclose that a common factor bias is not a risk. In comparison with multidimensional model, the fit of the single factor representation is objectionable and considerably worse ( $\chi^2 = 1542.959$ ;  $df = 170$ ;  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 9.076$ ; AGFI = 0.624; GFI = 0.696; TLI = 0.644; CFI = 0.681; RMSEA = 0.132 and PCLOSE = 0.000).

Table 2  
Factor Loadings

Construct	No. of items	Factor Loadings
PV	5	0.72, 0.70, 0.67, 0.72, 0.75
PI	12	0.75, 0.77, 0.87, 0.81, 0.81, 0.65, 0.64, 0.63, 0.61, 0.59, 0.65, 0.63,
E.F	3	0.67, 0.85, 0.61

Note. PV= Personal Values; PI= Product Involvement; E.F= Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention

#### *Measurement model*

The result in Table-2 reveals that all the items of the scale are being loaded only on their respective construct and each item loading is greater than the cutoff value 0.500.

The goodness of our proposed model is drawn on the basis of absolute fit indices. According to (Kline, 2010), the result demonstration a good model fit ( $\chi^2 = 389.276$ ;  $df = 166$ ;  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.345$ ; AGFI = 0.892; GFI = 0.915; TLI = 0.941; CFI = 0.948; RMSEA = 0.054 and PCLOSE = 0.186).

#### *Hypotheses testing*

For validating our study hypothesis, SEM technique has been applied and Bootstrapping was applied for the calculation of direct

and mediated effects and their p-values. The fit indices for structural model are:  $\chi^2 = 389.276$ ;  $df = 166$ ;  $p\text{-value} = 0.00$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.345$ ; AGFI = 0.892; GFI = 0.915; TLI = 0.941; CFI = 0.948; RMSEA = 0.054 and PCLOSE = 0.186.

As hypothesized, the result reveals that Personal Values has a significant positive impression on Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention ( $\beta = 0.246$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), providing support for our hypothesis (*H1*). Similarly, the result reveals that Personal Value has a significant positive impression on Product Involvement ( $\beta = 0.367$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), providing support for our hypothesis (*H2*). Moreover the result also reveals that Product Involvement has a significant negative impression on Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention ( $\beta = -0.133$ ,  $p < 0.012$ ), providing support for our hypothesis (*H3*). For testing the proposed mediated paths; the result demonstrates that Personal Values has a significant impact on Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention, and Personal Values also has a significant impact on Product Involvement and similarly Product Involvement also has a significant impact on Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention. Hence, our proposed hypothesis of mediated effect of Personal values on Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention via Product Involvement (*H4*) is accepted as the significant direct effects (P.V $\rightarrow$ P.I and P.I $\rightarrow$ E.F) fulfill the basic assumptions of mediated effect of Personal values on Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention via Product Involvement (Baron & Kenny, 1986). For the identification of type of mediation; further analysis reveal that direct effect of Personal Values on Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention is statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.246$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), as well as, the corresponding indirect effect (P.V $\rightarrow$ P.I $\rightarrow$ E.F) is significantly negative ( $\beta = -0.49$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Our result provides support for the partially mediated relationship for hypothesis (*H4*), as all the direct and indirect effects are found significant and are displayed in Table 3 and 4.

Table 3

Direct Effects

Relationship	Un-standardized	(Standardized Estimate)
P.V $\rightarrow$ E.F	0.24***	(0.20)
P.V $\rightarrow$ ETHNO	0.36***	(0.28)
ETHNO $\rightarrow$ E.F	-0.13**	(-0.14)

Note. Values in the parenthesis are standardized estimates.

Values without the parenthesis are un-standardized estimates

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

Table 4  
Indirect effects

	Un-standardized Estimate	Standardized Estimate	BCCI	
			Lower	Upper
P.V→P.I→E.F	- 0.49*	(-0.40)	- 0.08	-0.01

Note. Values in the parenthesis are standardized estimates.

Values without the parenthesis are un-standardized estimates

BCCI = Bias-corrected confidence intervals

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

## Conclusion

The results reveal that Personal Values has a significant positive impression on both Product Involvement and Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention. Moreover, Product Involvement has significant negative impression on Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention and lastly, Product Involvement Partially mediates the relationship between Personal Values and Ethical Fashion Purchase Intention.

Considering specifically Pakistan, if an ethically minded customer notices any ISO certifications linked to a brand, it results in the increase in consumption and the goodwill. In such process, some times the conscious and sometimes the unconscious mind of the customer play the role. As, all such certifications come under the umbrella of Ethics, this research recommends marketers a new marketing strategy. A brand can start pitching itself as an Ethically Labeled Brand, a promoting line can be “We are free of Child Labor” or “We do not harm the environment”.

Lastly, Researchers are of the view, that it is nothing more than another marketing tool to sell more. Considering some other industry, by producing/selling unhealthy products, one just cannot claim that they are ethically labeled brand or following any other CSR practices and similarly when it comes to profitability of the company, even managers sometimes neglect ethical issues while taking a decision. Keeping in consideration, our specific audience, researchers are of the view that the true definition of Ethics is not clear to the consumers.

## Implications and Limitations

Considering the apparel industry of Pakistan, individuals have a positive intention to purchase ethical fashion products. Yet the constraint of product involvement plays a vital role. Individuals are least bothered about ethics when it comes to engaging in a certain

product category. In the product category of apparel, due to high product involvement, fashion symbol and status boosting, the consumers are least likely to consider the point of “Ethics” while purchasing. So, this research recommends managers specifically concerned with the industry of low product involvement to set strategy accordingly. This research focused on the limited product category i.e. Apparel Industry and requires other product categories to be examined too and similarly the scope of this study is limited to Pakistan.

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