Ethical Fashion Consumer Behavior in Korea -Factors Influencing Ethical Fashion Consumption-

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한국에서의 윤리적 패션 소비자 행동 -윤리적 패션 소비에 영향 미치는 요인을 중심으로-

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Abstract

Understanding ethical fashion consumers in Korea is essential for the expansion of the ethical fashion market. This study analyzed ethical consumers in Korea in an examination of the factors that influence ethical purchase behavior and attitudes. The differences between ethical fashion consumers and non-ethical fashion consumers were investigated using eight variables (perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE), self-direction, benevolence, universalism, social responsibility, perceived behavioral control, face saving, and group conformity). Data were collected by means of a questionnaire through both on-line and off-line surveys from April 20 to June 7, 2009. Only the respondents knowledgeable of ethical products or ethical consumption were asked to complete the questionnaire. A total of 494 samples were used for analyses. Using independent samples t-test, the differences in each variable between two groups were examined. There were significant differences between ethical fashion consumers and non-ethical fashion consumers in attitudes toward ethical consumption behavior, behavioral intention, PCE, self-direction, universalism, social responsibility, and face saving variables. The factors influencing attitude and behavior intention were investigated by step-wise regression analyses. For ethical fashion consumers, the attitudes to ethical consumption behavior were largely influenced by PCE and benevolence. Social responsibility was the most predictable variable in guiding behavioral intention. Behavioral intention was also influenced by benevolence and attitude. Group conformity was found to be negatively correlated with behavioral intention. The findings of this study provide significant guidance for marketers of ethical fashion products. This study is the start of ethical fashion consumer research in Korea and can develop into variable subfields in the future.

Key words: Ethical fashion, Ethical products, Consumer behavior, Korea; 윤리적 패션, 윤리적 상품, 소비자 행동, 한국

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I. Introduction

The ethical market has risen in prominence, yet it is still in its infancy and contains an infinite amount

of potential. A growing segment of consumers consciously buys ethical or sustainable products, such as organic, fair trade, animal friendly, environment friendly, or locally produced products (Crane, 2001). In the fashion industry, a movement is taking place (Joergens, 2006) with consumers who are interested in organic foods seeking to expand their organic lifestyle to include apparel (Hustvedt & Dickson, 2009).

This global trend of “ethical consumption” is also evident in Korea. Ethical consumption is a conscious purchase behavior based on personal moral beliefs of what is long-term, community oriented, and environmentally friendly, even though not economically beneficial to the consumer at present (J. K. Kim, 2009). In Korea, the concerns for fair-trade, donation products, and social enterprises have grown and the sales volume of ethical products (particularly fair-trade goods) has increased substantially. The total sales of six representative fair trade organizations in Korea (e.g., The Korea Fair Trade Association, Beautiful Store, Fairtrade Korea, Inc., Korea YMCA, iCOOP Saenghyup Association, and Dure Saenghyup) increased by 149% in 2008 (J. K. Kim, 2009). However, the market represents only a minority of consumers, despite of the increasing demand for ethical choices in the Korean marketplace.

Numerous studies have identified so-called ethical consumers. Joergens (2006) found that when it comes to ethical fashion purchases, personal needs motivated consumers primarily to buy garments take precedence over ethical issues. Strong (1996) investigated that the well-informed consumer was not only demanding fairly traded products, but was also challenging manufactures and retailers to guarantee the ethical claims they are making about products. Carrigan et al. (2004) examined mature consumers and detailed their potential for ethical consumption. Iwanow et al. (2005) revealed that factors such as price, quality, and style had a greater influence on apparel purchase behavior than the concerns about the ethical practices of the supplier, despite consumers possessing a high level of awareness on ethical issues. Although there were numerous studies concerning ethical issues, the majority of studies that focus on ethical consumerism are U.S. and Europe-based. There exist only limited

studies in Korea that examine the factors that influence ethical consumer behavior despite the increasing concerns over ethical products. In addition, the market represents only a minority of consumers. Accordingly, understanding ethical fashion consumers in Korean society is essential for the expansion of the ethical fashion market. This study investigated the differences between ethical fashion consumers and non-ethical fashion consumers. The significance of eight variables (perceived consumer effectiveness, self-direction, benevolence, universalism, social responsibility, perceived behavioral control, face saving, and group conformity) are hypothesized and examined in their influence on ethical purchase behavior.

II. Literature Review

1. Ethical Fashion

Interest in the issues surrounding ethical fashion has increased in both the marketplace and within the literature (e.g., Carrigan et al., 2004; Dickson, 2001; Hustvedt & Dickson, 2009). The Ethical Fashion Forum (EFF) defines ethical fashion as an approach to the design, sourcing, and manufacture of clothing that maximizes benefits to people and communities while minimizing the impact on the environment. Ethical fashion promotes environmental and social awareness in the industry through eco-friendly and fair trade products (H. Kim, 2009). Consequently, ethical fashion can be defined as fashionable clothes that incorporate fair trade principles with sweatshop-free labor conditions while not harming the environment or workers through the use of biodegradable and organic cotton (Joergens, 2006).

2. Perceived Consumer Effectiveness

Perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) has been the representative factor when identifying ethical or green consumers. PCE is defined as the extent to which individuals believe that personal efforts can contribute to the solution of a problem (Ellen et al., 1991).

Several studies have consistently linked PCE to ecologically conscious consumer behavior and found

the usefulness of PCE in predicting purchase intention. Berger and Corbin (1992) investigated the influence of perceived consumer effectiveness on the relationship between environmental concerns and behavioral intentions. Consistent with Berger and Corbin (1992), Lee and Holden (1999) supported the role of perceived consumer effectiveness and faith in others as determinants of some environmentally conscious consumer behavior. Roberts (1996) developed a profile of the ecologically conscious consumer and found that PCE was the single strongest predictor of ecologically conscious consumer behavior (ECCB), surpassing all other demographic and psychographic correlates examined (Straughan & Roberts, 1999).

3. Values

Values can be another important factor in the consumer decision-making processes, such as sustainable product choice and brand choice (Burgess, 1992). Values serve the interest of some social entities that motivate action into direction, produce emotional intensity, and function as the standards for judging and justifying action (Schwartz, 1994). Numerous studies have linked ethical and socially conscious behavior to personal values (e.g. Anderson & Cunningham, 1972; De Pelsmacker et al., 2005; Dickson, 2001; Doran, 2009; Fritzsche, 1995; Roberts, 1996; Shaw et al., 2005; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2008).

1) Schwartz Value Survey (SVS)

The most commonly used instrument in recent value research to predict attitudes and behavior surrounding ethical purchases is the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS). Schwartz's theory is based upon 57 single values, which can be abstracted into 10 values by the type of motivational goal they express. The 10

value types included in the theory are: Universalism, Benevolence, Conformity, Tradition, Security, Power, Achievement, Hedonism, Stimulation, and Self-direction. This paper explores three values (universalism, benevolence, and self-direction) that are found to be considerably associated with ethical or sustainable consumption patterns (Table 1).

(1) Universalism

De Pelsmacker et al. (2005) found universalism values to be influential in the consumption of fair trade coffee in Belgium. Shaw et al. (2005) found universalism values (with an emphasis on prosocial concern) as most important in ethical consumer decision making in a grocery consumption context.

(2) Benevolence

Benevolence values have a shared motivational focus with universalism values, which is the promotion of the welfare of someone other than the self. The difference between the two sets of values is that benevolence values focus only on the in-group, whereas universalism values do not distinguish between the in-group and the out-group (Schwartz, 1992, 1994). An empirical study found benevolence values are related to ethical consumption (Shaw et al., 2005).

(3) Self-direction

Shaw et al. (2005) found that the self-direction values were related to ethical consumption in a UK context; in addition, Doran (2009) also found that self-direction values ranked second to loyal fair trade consumers.

4. Social Responsibility

Social responsibility plays an important role in the

Table 1. Universalism, benevolence, and self-direction values

Value type	Single values
Universalism	Broadminded, wisdom, social justice, equality, a world at peace, unity with nature, and protecting the environment
Benevolence	Helpful, honest, forgiving, loyal, and responsible
Self-direction	Creativity, freedom, independent, curious, and choosing personal goals

Adapted from Schwartz (1992, p. 28).

understanding of ethical consumer behavior. To understand ethical consumer behavior in Korea, J. Kim (2009) did a focus group interview with 13 ethical consumers. She found ten significant characteristics in the study, with social responsibility revealed as one of the most important characteristics. Ethical consumers in Korea feel a responsibility as a member of society to help the public and display duty through purchasing behavior.

5. Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)

According to Ajzen (2002), perceived behavioral control can account for considerable variance in behavioral intentions and actions. Past studies have shown that the most important reasons for not buying organic food or sustainable products are lack of availability and a relatively higher price compared to conventionally produced food or non-sustainable products (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003; Fotopoulos & Krystallis, 2002; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

6. Face Saving

“Face” is a concept of central importance among Confucian society, and it has a pervasive influence on interpersonal relationships (Yau, 1986). Lee and Green (1991) found that saving face is important in Korea because individuals are more concerned with the perception of themselves by others and with the maintenance of personal status.

7. Group Conformity

In Confucian society, group goals have primacy over individual goals (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). The Korean group-oriented way of life strongly emphasizes interdependence and conformity to group norms and operates in direct contrast to the individual-centered way of life of Western culture (Lee & Green, 1991). Most Koreans feel a strong social pressure to comply with the group norms regardless of personal and private views (Chung & Pysarchik, 2000). This may influence the consumer purchase behavior of Koreans. This study will explore two salient Confu-

cian concepts of face saving and group conformity that influence the ethical fashion consumer behavior in Korean society.

III. Methods

1. Research Questions

This study examined the differences between ethical fashion consumers and non-ethical fashion consumers. Specific research questions related to this goal are as follow.

1) Ethical fashion consumers and non-ethical fashion consumers will differ on attitude, behavioral intention, and in relation to the eight variables (perceived consumer effectiveness, self-direction, benevolence, universalism, social responsibility, perceived behavioral control, face saving, and group conformity).

2) The relationship between attitudes and behavioral intention, and the effect of the eight variables on both attitudes and behavioral intention will differ in the case of both of groups respectively.

2. Measurements

A survey questionnaire was developed based on the literature review. For attitude, four statements were developed based on Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). The statements used for the measure were “Purchasing ethical product is desirable/pleasant/worthwhile/favorable.” Perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1985; Sparks et al., 1995), Social responsibility (J. Kim, 2009), Face saving (Lee, 1991), Group conformity (Lee, 1991) were developed based on previous research. All variables were measured through a 7-point Likert scale. For values, respondents were asked to indicate the importance level of three values (self-direction, benevolence, and universalism) with each statement on a 9-point importance scale. Behavioral intentions to purchase ethical products were measured by two items with 7-point “likely-unlikely” scales according to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). In addition, respondents were asked about ethical fashion product purchases through the use of nominal

scales. Ethical fashion product purchase experience (experienced or not), ethical fashion product items purchased (multiple responses), reason for purchasing ethical fashion product (multiple responses), intention to pay more for ethical factor, and intention to purchase ethical fashion product in the future.

3. Data Collection

Data were collected by means of a questionnaire from April 20 to June 7, 2009. Surveys were conducted both on-line and off-line because of the difficulty in securing suitable samples. The sample was selected using convenience sampling and only people knowledgeable of ethical products or ethical consumption were asked to answer the questionnaire. As an incentive, respondents were offered a fair-trade coffee sample set and opportunity to enter a draw to win a coupon from an online shop (fair trade online store named B9shop). A total of 507 consumers participated in this research. The final sample consisted of 494 consumers, after the elimination of respondents with missing or insincere data.

4. Data Analysis

Various statistical methods were used for the purpose of analyzing collected data: descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and SD), reliability test, correlation, χ^2 -test, factor analysis, t-test, and multiple regression analysis (step-wise hierarchical) were employed. Data analyses were computed with SPSS 12.0K for Windows.

IV. Findings

1. Ethical Fashion Product Purchase

Several questions were asked to determine the basic characteristics of ethical fashion product consumers in Korea.

1) Items of the Ethical Fashion Product Purchase

Percentage Distribution of Multiple Response, n=140

Fig. 1. Ethical fashion product purchase.

2) Reasons for Purchasing Ethical Fashion Products

Percentage Distribution of Multiple Response, n=178

Fig. 2. Reason for purchasing ethical fashion products.

2. Ethical Fashion Consumers Versus Non-ethical Fashion Consumers

1) Differences in Each Variable between Two Groups

Respondents were divided into ethical fashion consumers (n=95) and non-ethical fashion consumers

($n=399$) on the basis of ethical fashion product purchase (experienced or not). Using independent samples t -test, the differences in each variable between two groups were examined (Table 2).

There were statistically significant differences between two groups for attitude ($t=7.12$, $p<.001$), behavioral intention ($t=4.38$, $p<.001$), face saving ($t=2.91$, $p<.01$), PCE ($t=3.36$, $p<.001$), social responsibility ($t=4.08$, $p<.001$), self-direction ($t=2.00$, $p<.05$), and universalism ($t=4.01$, $p<.001$). However, no significant difference was found in several of the variables (group conformity, PBC, and benevolence).

Ethical fashion consumers had a higher attitude ($M=6.45$, $SD=0.58$) and behavioral intention ($M=6.19$, $SD=0.81$) than non-ethical fashion consumers. That is, consumers who have a high attitude and intention for ethical consumption would buy ethical fashion items from what is still a small ethical market in Korean society. In addition, ethical fashion consumers scored higher than non-ethical fashion consumers for face saving, PCE, social responsibility, self-direction, and universalism. Of note from this analysis are the results for face saving. Face saving was not different between ethical consumers and non-ethical consumers, but it had a statistically significant difference between ethical fashion product consumers ($M=3.49$, $SD=1.58$) and non-consumers ($M=3.02$, $SD=1.38$). Ethical fashion product consumers have a stronger motivation to maintain face as reflected in personal consumption behavior versus the non-ethical fashion

product consumers.

2) The Factors Influencing Attitude and Behavior Intention

A step-wise regression procedure was run to identify an appropriate model to use for profiling ethical fashion product consumers. At first, the attitude was modeled as the dependent variable with face saving, group conformity, perceived consumer effectiveness, social responsibility, perceived behavioral control, universalism, benevolence, and self-direction as independent variables. Further analysis of the independent variables showed satisfactory multicollinearity statistics, with tolerance values greatly above .10 and the largest variance inflation factor being greatly below 10. <Table 3> summarizes the results of the step-wise regression.

For ethical fashion product consumers, the first variable to enter the model was PCE and explained 38.9 percent of the variance in attitude toward ethical fashion product purchase behavior. Following the PCE ($\beta=.558$, $p<.001$), benevolence ($\beta=.193$, $p<.05$) explained 3.3 percent of the variance. The attitudes of the ethical fashion product consumer were largely influenced by the personal belief that individual effort can contribute to the solution of a problem, and benevolence. The total variance explained by the full model represents $R^2=.422$.

The second factor of behavioral intention was modeled as the dependent variable with the various psy-

Table 2. Independent samples t -test/ethical fashion consumers versus non-consumers ($n=494$)

Variable	Ethical fashion consumers ($n=95$)		Non-ethical consumers ($n=399$)		t -value
	M	SD	M	SD	
Attitude	6.45	0.58	5.91	0.95	7.12***
Behavioral intention	6.19	0.81	5.77	0.96	4.38***
Face saving	3.49	1.58	3.02	1.38	2.91**
Group conformity	3.86	1.40	3.91	1.24	-.36
Perceived consumer effectiveness	5.53	0.94	5.14	1.03	3.36***
Social responsibility	5.91	0.93	5.45	1.12	4.08***
Perceived behavioral control	4.34	1.18	4.14	1.16	1.51
Self-direction	5.25	1.02	5.00	1.10	2.00*
Benevolence	5.15	1.17	4.96	1.11	1.52
Universalism	5.37	1.00	4.90	1.20	4.01***

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$

Table 3. Multiple regression analyses of attitude and behavioral intention toward ethical consumption behavior on independent variables (n=95)

Dependent variable Independent variables	Attitude		Behavioral Intention	
	β	t-value	β	t-value
Attitude			.229	2.287*
Face saving	-		-	
Group conformity	-		-.175	-2.185*
Perceived consumer effectiveness	.558	6.556***	-	
Social responsibility	-		.416	4.471***
Perceived behavioral control	-		-	
Self-direction	-		-	
Benevolence	.193	2.270*	.236	2.705**
Universalism	-		-	
R ²	0.422		0.456	
F	32.888***		17.844***	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

chographic variables and attitudes as predictor variables for the multiple regression analysis. Multicollinearity statistics were checked and satisfied with tolerance values above .10 and the largest variance inflation factor being below 10.

Approximately 46% of the variance in intention for ethical fashion product consumers was explained by the combination of social responsibility, benevolence, attitude, and group conformity. The first variable to enter the model was social responsibility, that explained 30.7 percent of the variance in behavioral intention. After social responsibility, the variables were entered in the following order (incremental gain in R² in parentheses): benevolence (.088), attitude (.031), and group conformity (.030). There was a significant negative correlation between intention and group conformity ($\beta = -.175$, $p < .05$).

V. Conclusions

The Korean ethical fashion market has risen in prominence, yet it is still in its infancy and contains an infinite amount of potential. Understanding ethical fashion consumers in Korean society is essential for the expansion of the ethical fashion market. This study examined the important factors that influence the ethical purchase behavior and attitudes. The differences between ethical fashion consumers and non-

ethical fashion consumers were investigated through eight variables (perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE), self-direction, benevolence, universalism, social responsibility, perceived behavioral control, face saving, and group conformity).

The differences in each variable between a two groups were examined through independent samples t-test. There were significant differences between ethical consumers and non-ethical consumers in attitude and behavioral intention variables. Ethical fashion consumers had a higher attitude and behavioral intention than non-ethical fashion consumers. Ethical fashion consumers perceived personal efforts as more effective, as well, they felt more social responsibility and face saving compared to non-ethical fashion consumers. They also thought that the personal guiding principles of self-direction and universalism values were more important than non-ethical consumers.

The factors that influence the attitude and behavior of intention were investigated by a step-wise regression analyses. For ethical fashion consumers, the attitude was largely influenced by PCE and benevolence. In addition, social responsibility was the most predictable variable in guiding behavioral intention. Behavioral intention also influenced benevolence and attitude. There was a negative correlation to behavioral intention in the case of group conformity.

This study provides significant guidance to mar-

keters and promoters who deal with ethical fashion products. This study is the start of ethical fashion consumer research in Korea and can develop into variable directions in the future. There are several limitations to this research. The sample is unlikely to be representative, because the majority of subjects were self-selected. In addition, there was a large gap in number of the ethical fashion product consumers and non-consumers.

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요 약

국내 윤리적 패션 상품 소비자들의 특성을 파악하기 위하여 그들의 윤리적 상품 구매 행동에 영향을 미치는 요인을 연구하였다. 윤리적 패션은 환경을 해치지 않는 소재와 생산과정, 공정무역 등을 기반으로 한 의식 있는 패션으로, 최근 들어 세계 패션계의 중요한 이슈로 부각되고 있다. 전 세계적으로 이에 대한 관심이 커지면서 관련 연구도 꾸준히 행해지고 있지만 대부분 서구 사회를 기반으로 한 것으로 한국 사회의 윤리적 패션 상품 소비 행동을 이해하는 데는 한계가 따른다. 이에 따라 본 연구에서는 윤리적 패션 상품을 한 번 이상 구매한 경험이 있는 윤리적 패션 상품 소비자와 윤리적 패션 상품 구매 경험이 없는 소비자 간의 차이를 규명하였다. 또한, 소비자 효과성 지각, 가치(Self-direction, Benevolence, Universalism), 사회적 책임감, 지각된 통제 요인, 체면 의식, 집단 동조 의식이 윤리적 패션 상품 소비자의 윤리적 상품 구매 행동에 대한 태도와 향후 일반적인 윤리적 상품 구매 의도에 미치는 영향을 알아보았다. 자료수집을 위해 2009년 4월 20일부터 6월 7일까지 온라인과 오프라인을 통한 양적 조사를 실시했고, 편의표본 추출법을 사용하였다. 윤리적 소비 혹은 윤리적 상품의 개념에 대해 알고 있는 소비자를 대상으로 하였고, 총 494명의 응답이 분석에 사용되었다. 구매한 경험이 있는 윤리적 패션 아이템은 액세서리가 가장 많았고, 그 다음으로는 성인의류, 아동의류, 주얼리, 신발 순이었다. 윤리적 패션 상품을 구매하게 된 이유는 공정하게 거래된 제품이어서, 디자인, 기부할 수 있어서, 품질, 주변인의 권유로 등이 있었다. 독립표본 t-test를 통해 윤리적 패션 상품 소비자와 아닌 소비자 간의 차이를 알아본 결과, 윤리적 패션 상품을 구매한 경험이 있는 소비자는 아닌 소비자에 비해 윤리적 상품 구매 행동에 대한 태도와 향후 구매 의도, 체면 의식, 소비자 효과성 지각 요인, 사회적 책임감 요인이 높게 나타났다. 또한 윤리적 패션 상품 소비자는 아닌 소비자보다 self-direction, universalism 가치를 자신의 삶에 있어 보다 중요한 가치로 인식하고 있었다. 다중 회귀 분석을 통해 윤리적 패션 상품 소비자의 윤리적 상품 구매 행동에 대한 태도와 향후 일반적인 윤리적 상품 구매 의도에 영향을 미치는 요인을 알아본 결과, 윤리적 패션 상품 소비자의 경우, 윤리적 상품 구매 행동에 대한 태도에 소비자 효과성 지각 요인이 가장 큰 영향을 미치고, 그 다음으로 benevolence 가치가 영향을 미치는 것으로 나타났다. 또한 윤리적 상품의 향후 구매 의도에는 사회적 책임감, benevolence, 태도 순으로 영향을 받고, 집단 동조 의식의 경우 오히려 윤리적 상품 구매 의도에 부정적인 영향을 미치는 것으로 나타났다.