Ethical Purchasing—Knowledge- and Person-Related Inhibitors to Consumption of Fair Fashion

Marlene M. Hohn and Christian F. Durach

1 Introduction

How the apparel we wear is produced has changed substantially within the last couple of decades (Arnold and Hartman 2005). Formerly, clothing for the European market was mainly produced by European companies with rather integrated supply chains, while nowadays, apparel on display in stores has travelled across the world and through various firms along the supply chains of big fashion retailers. For example, more than 60% of the apparel imported to Germany in 2016 came from Asian countries (Center for International Development 2018). In addition, an industry-wide development towards ever shorter fashion cycles and decreasing apparel quality has emerged with some retailers now presenting around 20 seasons per year (Ferdows et al. 2015). This "fast fashion" trend has led apparel firms to increase the flexibility of their supply chains while at the same time decrease the production costs. A common way to achieve this is by outsourcing the labour-intensive production of apparel. Such outsourcing efforts, many times to companies in less observable and regulated markets, often result in a vast deterioration of working conditions for factory personnel (Crane and Matten 2010). In response to these practices, a niche for apparel that withstands the dominant market logics and their consequences has developed. So-called "fair-trade fashion" is produced without "sweatshop" conditions, i.e., without child or forced labour, excessive working hours or inappropriately low wages (Shaw et al. 2006).

However, despite many consumers' opposition towards the working conditions in conventional clothing production, fair-trade fashion still represents only a small fraction of products on the apparel market. In Germany, the market share of

M. M. Hohn (✉) · C. F. Durach

Supply Chain and Operations Management, ESCP Business School Berlin Campus, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: mhohn@escp.com

clothing sold under the "fairtrade" label (Germany's most prominent fair-trade certification) amounted to only 0.12% in 2016 (German Federal Statistical Office 2017; TransFair e.V. 2016). The present study aims to identify reasons for this discrepancy by asking which factors moderate the translation of positive attitudes towards buying fair-trade fashion into actual purchasing behaviour.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows: first, the literature on attitude–behaviour inconsistencies in ethical consumption will be reviewed with a special interest in fair-trade and ethical fashion purchasing research. Next, 11 hypotheses concerning knowledge- and person-related factors that are argued to moderate said relationship are presented. The remaining parts detail the research method used, the results obtained and the implications that can be drawn from these.

2 The Attitude–Behaviour Relationship

Starting in the 1960s, scholars have challenged the notion of a strong relationship between attitudes and behaviours of individuals. Until today, an extensive body of the literature has emerged that attests to a difference between what people say and what they do. One research area, in which this phenomenon is very visible, is ethical consumerism. The discrepancy between consumers' positive attitudes towards ethical product alternatives on the one hand and their ongoing conventional purchasing behaviour has often been termed the "attitude–behaviour gap" or the A-B gap (Bray et al. 2011; Carrigan and Attalla 2001; Sudbury and Böltner 2011).

Researchers have addressed the A-B gap in many fields of ethical consumerism, e.g., in green (Johnstone and Tan 2015; Lu et al. 2015) and fair-trade consumption (Chatzidakis et al. 2007; Rode et al. 2008), consumption reduction (e.g., Pereira Heath and Chatzidakis 2012), and more generally, ethical consumption (Auger and Devinney 2007; Bray et al. 2011). Further, the impact of corporate social responsibility, i.e., voluntary actions by corporate actors that further the greater societal good (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001), and the effect of unethical corporate conduct on consumer purchasing (Folkes and Kamins 1999; Ingram et al. 2005) were analysed in this regard.

Following the growing media attention for the social and environmental issues in apparel mass manufacturing, the A-B gap in ethical clothing consumption has received special attention from scholars. Subfields of research include green fashion purchasing (Niinimäki 2010), "sweatshop" avoidance (Dickson 2001; Hassan et al. 2016), fair-trade fashion purchasing (Shaw et al. 2006) and the broader field of ethical fashion consumption (Jägel et al. 2012; Joergens 2006). The common ground of all these studies is that the attitude of a person towards avoiding unethical apparel or towards ethical fashion choices does only partially translate into corresponding purchasing behaviour. Drawing from these contributions, we develop the first hypothesis as the starting point for our analysis:

H1:   The relationship between a person's attitude and his or her purchasing behaviour concerning fair-trade fashion is positive but small.

In the following, several additional hypotheses will be formulated that describes how various factors influence the relationship assumed in H1.

3 Inhibitors to Translating Attitudes into Behaviour

Resulting from the overwhelming evidence for the A-B gap in ethical consumption, scholars have aimed to provide explanations. One important approach that has been used in previous studies relating to this research domain is Izek Ajzen's "theory of planned behaviour" (Carrington et al. 2010; Chatzidakis et al. 2016; Shaw et al. 2007). This theory states that in addition to behaviour-specific attitudes, individual perceptions of behavioural control as well as prevalent subjective norms influence a person's behaviour. Hence, the A-B gap is explained by stressing the importance of influencing factors that are internal to the individual and/or context dependent. However, while Ajzen's theory is mainly used to understand *how* these determinants affect one's behaviour, the aim of the present research is to study *which* specific factors are influencing the A-B relationship in fair-trade apparel purchasing.

To enable a more thorough analysis, the current study focusses on two categories of inhibitors, namely knowledge- and person-related factors (Fig. 1). The first group pertains to the readily mentioned issue of consumer awareness and information availability (Bray et al. 2011; Carrigan and Attalla 2001) and will be addressed in the hypotheses H2–H5. The second category focusses on factors that are either intrinsic to the consumer or that are dependent on his or her relationship with others (H6–H12).

4 Knowledge-Related Factors

Somewhat separate from the other constructs in this category, the first inhibitor researched in this study is consumers' awareness of the social issues in apparel production. Previous studies indicate that consumers seem to have good knowledge
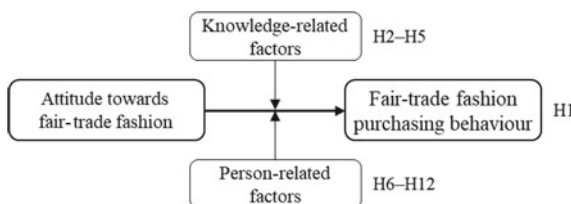

Fig. 1 Model for regression analysis (authors' own figure)

(Dickson 1999; Sudbury and Böltner 2011). However, uncertainties exist concerning the scale of the problems and how to avoid supporting the continuance of these unsustainable practices (Harris et al. 2016; Hassan et al. 2016). As being knowledgeable about the social impacts of conventional consumer goods production has been directly linked to fair-trade purchasing (Andorfer and Liebe 2012), the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2:   The less a person is aware of the social issues in conventional clothing production, the less will his or her positive attitudes towards fair-trade fashion translate into corresponding purchasing behaviour.

Previous research has indicated that consumers are often not very knowledgeable about the existing alternatives to conventional consumption (Bray et al. 2011; Papaoikonomou et al. 2011). While it is easy for consumers to name firms that have been called out for ethical transgressions like child labour scandals or oil spills, they are seldom able to recall companies that are known for their ethical conduct (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000; Carrigan and Attalla 2001). However, to reach an informed purchasing decision, consumers need to be aware of the seals that signify fair-trade clothing and need to know brands and retailers for such fashion. Otherwise, they might make wrong assumptions about the available range of ethical apparel (Harris et al. 2016; Hassan et al. 2016) and could, in turn, refrain from looking for a fair-trade alternative as they believe to be unable to find what they are looking for. Drawing from what the previous literature has indicated, the following three knowledge-related hypotheses are developed:

H3:   The fewer seals for fair-trade fashion a person knows, the less will his or her positive attitudes towards fair-trade fashion translate into corresponding purchasing behaviour.
H4:   The fewer brands and retailers for fair-trade fashion a person knows, the less will his or her positive attitudes towards fair-trade fashion translate into corresponding purchasing behaviour.
H5:   The less a person knows about the existing range of products in the fair-trade fashion segment, the less will his or her positive attitudes towards fair-trade fashion translate into corresponding purchasing behaviour.

5   Person-Related Factors

The decision to buy fair-trade clothing is very complex. Not only does it require an active assessment of one's ethical attitudes but also requires additional effort as fair-trade fashion is by far not as easily accessible as conventional clothing. The following paragraphs will present several inhibitors that are dependent on the individual consumer and his or her values, beliefs and social environment. Building on these, seven additional hypotheses are formulated.

The added value a customer receives from buying fair-trade apparel is only implicit as fair-trade clothing is not healthier or more durable than comparable mainstream products. Also, for most consumers hardly any gain can be drawn from wearing fair-trade fashion brands in front of others as these niche-market labels are rather unknown to society. As a result, a person's willingness to translate his or her positive attitude towards fair-trade fashion into purchasing behaviour is strongly influenced by person-specific factors that might either support or inhibit ethical purchasing.

Many consumers only start reflecting on their consumption behaviour when they are affected by the consequences of their action either directly or through empathic feelings (Bray et al. 2011; Carrigan and Attalla 2001). Thus, a person's inclination to buy socially responsible will depend on how intense he or she perceives the social problems in the apparel industry as a moral issue.

H6:   The stronger a person's perception of moral intensity of the social issues in conventional clothing production, the more will his or her positive attitudes towards fair-trade fashion translate into corresponding purchasing behaviour.

Further, qualitative studies by Sudbury and Böltner (2011) as well as Pereira Heath and Chatzidakis (2012) have shown that research participants are quick to point to other players in the consumer goods industry when it comes to answering who is responsible for changing how clothing is made. This tendency to deny one's own role in this matter might explain why many consumers do not consider purchasing fair-trade clothing despite opposing to current production conditions. Additionally, Pereira Heath and Chatzidakis (2012) identified a low level of perceived self-efficacy, i.e., low perception of effectiveness to influence the environment and to change something (Bandura 1977), as a reason for the A-B gap. This individual character trait is defined as the degree to which a person believes that he or she is capable of adapting his or her own behaviour (see Gallagher 2012 for a description of the concept). This trait has previously been analysed with respect to consumer boycotting behaviour by Sen and Bhattacharya (2001). Their results hint at a positive relationship between high perceived self-efficacy and proactive ethical consumer behaviour.

H7:   The greater a person's inclination to deny his or her responsibility for changing the precarious production conditions in clothing production, the less will his or her positive attitudes towards fair-trade fashion translate into corresponding purchasing behaviour.
H8:   The greater a person's perception of self-efficacy, the more will his or her positive attitudes towards fair-trade fashion translate into corresponding purchasing behaviour.

In some studies, consumers described feelings of hypocrisy, i.e., a dissonance of own believes and own actions, when being inconsistent concerning their choice between conventional and ethical products (Johnstone and Tan 2015; Szmigin et al. 2009). This need to either completely limit oneself to buying ethical products or to

consequently refrain from it is problematic for fair-trade fashion purchasing. As such apparel presents only a niche segment, it seems unrealistic that consumers will be able to completely refrain from buying conventional clothing. Hence:

H9:   The more a person aspires to be consistent in the choice between fair-trade and conventional apparel, the less will his or her positive attitudes towards fair-trade fashion translate into corresponding purchasing behaviour.

A large amount of research has established around the idea that ethical product claims can be understood as an additional product feature which consumers may or may not factor in when making a purchase. For apparel consumption, this means that aside from the production conditions of clothing, factors like price, design, quality and brand will influence the purchasing decision. Thus, one potentially relatively dominant reason for the attitude–behaviour gap may rest in ethical concerns that are trumped by more traditional purchasing criteria. This has been indicated for ethical consumerism in general (Papaoikonomou et al. 2011; Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000) and specifically concerning ethical fashion purchasing (Harris et al. 2016; Dickson 2005), leading to the following hypothesis.

H10:   The more importance a person places on traditional purchasing criteria when purchasing fashion, the less will his or her positive attitudes towards fair-trade fashion translate into corresponding purchasing behaviour.

Lastly, findings by Shaw and colleagues indicate that individuals' purchasing behaviour is strongly influenced by their social environment. Their focus on group-based studies revealed that some consumers are supported in their ethical apparel consumption by friends, family and colleagues while others are not (Shaw and Clarke 1999). For the latter, fair-trade fashion purchasing is devalued by their immediate social environment and sometimes even openly criticised (Shaw and Tomolillo 2004). Especially for young consumers, it is of great importance to wear clothing that is in line with social expectations. The inability to fulfil these expectations through buying fair-trade fashion places a significant burden on fashion-oriented, young consumers (Carrigan and Attalla 2001; Shaw et al. 2006). In addition, the fast fashion trend impressively shows the perceived need of individuals to constantly change their wardrobe which contradicts ethical apparel consumption (Sudbury and Böltner 2011). Thus, we argue:

H11:   The less a person's social environment supports his or her intentions to buy fair-trade fashion, the less will his or her positive attitudes towards fair-trade fashion translate into corresponding purchasing behaviour.

H12:   The more fashion oriented a person is, the less will his or her positive attitudes towards fair-trade fashion translate into corresponding purchasing behaviour.

6 Method

An online survey of consumers was used to test the study hypotheses. Consumer surveys, though not free from criticism, allow for time- and cost-efficiency as well as complete anonymity of the participants which reduces socially desirable responding tendencies, a bias that is especially problematic in ethical consumption research (Auger and Devinney 2007). The survey was conducted in Germany and circulated in June–July 2017 via several social media platforms, and thus, the data set can be described as a volunteer sample.

In total, 498 complete datasets were obtained of which 447 were usable. The majority of respondents is female (79% of participants), has undergone higher education (92%), is 35 years old or younger (87%) and has a monthly disposable income lower than 1.300 € (75%). While this sample is not sufficiently representative of the general German population, it can be considered representative of an important consumer group for fashion retail as the market for women's fashion is typically larger than the men's or children's sector and young consumers represents the most important target group for fashion retailers (KPMG et al. 2015).

The survey-constructs were operationalised by making use of scales and items from previous research wherever possible. For most constructs, multiple rating scale items were used, and their internal consistency was assessed by calculating Cronbach's alpha values (Table 1). To ensure construct validity, all pre-existing items were adapted to pertain specifically to fair-trade fashion consumption. Still, not all Cronbach's alpha values obtained for the relevant constructs are satisfying.

Table 1 Construct operationalisation (table compiled by authors)

H	Construct	Description	Type	CA	Based on
1	Attitude towards fair-trade fashion	Measures the respondent's attitude towards fair-trade fashion	MIM	0.829	Chatzidakis et al. (2016), Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) and new items
	Fair-trade fashion purchasing behaviour	Measures the actual purchasing behaviour of respondents concerning fair-trade fashion	Single item	–	Chatzidakis et al. (2016)
2	Awareness of social issues	Measures how well the respondent is informed about the social problems in conventional apparel production	MIM	0.717	Dickson (2001, 2016)
3	Knowledge about fair-trade seals for fashion	How many seals for fair-trade fashion does the respondent know?	MC	–	9 seals listed by German ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development
4	Knowledge about fair-trade fashion brands/retailers	How many retailers/brands for fair-trade fashion does the respondent know?	MC	–	List of 9 brands and 9 retailers (gathered via Google search)

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

H	Construct	Description	Type	CA	Based on
5	Knowledge about existing range of fair-trade fashion	How knowledgeable is the respondent about the existing range of fair-trade fashion?	MIM	0.684	New items
6	Perceived moral intensity of social issues	How strongly does the respondent feel that the social issues in conventional apparel production are a moral concern?	MIM	0.714	Jones (1991) as in Singhapakdi et al. (1999) (5 of the 6 items were used)
7	Denial of responsibility	Measures the extent to which a respondent sees actors other than himself/herself responsible for the social issues in conventional clothing production	ROQ	–	Newly developed list of industry actors
8	Perceived self-efficacy	Measures the respondent's belief in his or her capability to change his or her behaviour	MIM	0.776	Beierlein et al. (2013)
9	Importance of consistency	How much importance does the respondent attribute to making a consistent decision for or against purchasing fair-trade fashion?	MIM	0.490	New items
10	Non-supportive social environment	How strongly does the respondent feel that his/her friends, colleagues and family oppose buying fair-trade fashion?	MIM	0.493	Chatzidakis et al. (2016) and new item
11	Fashion orientation	How much importance does the respondent place on being fashionable/wearing the "right" clothes?	MIM	0.650	New items
12	Importance of traditional purchasing criteria	How important is the fair-trade attribute in comparison with factors like quality or price when purchasing fashion?	ROQ	–	Newly developed list of product attributes

Note *H* hypothesis; *CA* Cronbach's alpha for standardised items; *MIM* multiple rating items; *MC* multiple-choice question; *ROQ* rank order question

Results below the 0.5 threshold were obtained in two cases, i.e., "importance of consistency" and "non-supportive social environment". However, following Wieland et al. (2017), critical items were not omitted based on their importance for construct validity. The remaining constructs were operationalised by making use of rank order and multiple-choice questions. Following the conceptual development of hypothesis 1, regression analysis was used to test the proposed relationship. For hypotheses H2–H12, interaction moderation analysis was conducted in order to

test the moderating influence of the potential inhibiting factors on the original relationship between individuals' attitudes towards fair-trade fashion and their respective purchasing behaviour (H1).

7 Results

This study lends further support to the existence of an A-B gap in fair-trade fashion purchasing. On the one hand, participants are very positive towards fair-trade fashion (Ø construct value = 4.23 on 5 pt. scale). On the other hand, only 6.5% of the respondents purchase such fashion on a regular basis. Interestingly, 76.7% of participants have at least bought fair-trade fashion once. Setting this value into relation to the marginal market share of below 1% for fair-trade fashion could point to a limitation in sample representativeness. Still, the A-B gap is clearly apparent, allowing for further analysis.

Results from the moderation analyses are given in Tables 2, 3 and 4. Significant interaction effects could not be found in any of the models tested, as the non-significant values for the multiplication term IV × MV indicate. This shows that the inhibitors tested in this model do not influence how the attitudes of a person towards fair-trade fashion are translated into purchasing behaviour. Therefore, only hypothesis 1 (H1) is supported while all moderation hypotheses H2 to H12 need to be rejected. The results question the applicability of moderator models for the analysis of the A-B gap in fair-trade fashion purchasing. However, as a step towards the interaction models, the direct influence of the constructs on fair-trade fashion buying behaviour was analysed, i.e., the inhibitor-constructs were added to the regression model as additional independent variables, as Fig. 2 depicts. Finding significant direct effects of the inhibitor-constructs on the dependent variable would indicate that these inhibiting factors change a person's purchasing behaviour independent from that person's attitude towards fair-trade fashion. The results gained thereby offer valuable insights and are thus presented in the following.
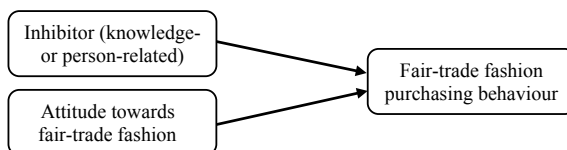

Fig. 2 Regression model with inhibitors as independent variables (authors' own figure)

7.1 Knowledge-Related Factors

The regression analysis for testing H2 did not yield any significant results. Construct values show, however, that consumers are aware of the social issues in conventional clothing production (Ø construct value = 3.6 on 5 pt. scale). Still, this awareness does not coincide with fair-trade fashion purchasing behaviour. Concerning H3, the results obtained show a significant positive correlation between individual knowledge about fair-trade seals for fashion and fair-trade fashion purchasing behaviour, as stated in Table 2. The best-known seal in this study was one that is also used for other consumer goods like fresh fruit. Thus, it seems that fair-trade fashion awareness is only part of a broader knowledge about the existence of fair-trade alternatives for consumer goods. Hence, further research should take a closer look at whether fair-trade fashion consumption is embedded in a more general inclination of consumers to opt for fair-trade alternatives in their purchasing behaviour.

The results of testing H5, i.e., the importance of a person's knowledge about the existing range of fair-trade fashion, support a similar argument. Again, a strong correlation between a person's knowledge about the existing range of fair-trade fashion and his or her purchasing behaviour is found. However, individuals can only make informed purchases if they are provided with all necessary information. In this study, 53.4% of respondents were unable to identify any brand or retailer for fair-trade fashion. Thus, most consumers are rather uninformed concerning this fashion alternative.

Table 2 Regression results of knowledge-related factors incl. moderating variables (table compiled by authors)

Variables entered	Awareness of social issues				Knowledge about fair-trade seals for fashion			
	β	R^2	ΔR^2	n	β	R^2	ΔR^2	n
IV	0.274***	0.075	–	446	0.274***	0.075	–	446
IV	0.262***	0.081	0.006	446	0.277***	0.146	0.071	446
MV	0.077				0.270***			
IV	0.267***	0.081	0.006	446	0.230***	0.146	0.071	446
MV	0.078				0.269***			
IV × MV	0.027				0.010			
Variables entered	Knowledge about fair-trade fashion retailers/brands				Knowledge about existing range of fair-trade fashion			
	β	R^2	ΔR^2	n	β	R^2	ΔR^2	n
IV	0.274***	0.075	–	446	0.274***	0.075	–	446
IV	0.179***	0.216	0.141	446	0.215***	0.206	0.131	446
MV	0.388***				0.366***			
IV	0.158***	0.220	0.145	446	0.219***	0.207	0.132	446
MV	0.423***				0.366***			
IV × MV	−0.071				0.032			

Note *IV* independent variable; *MV* moderating variable; β standardised coefficients
***$p \leq 0.001$; **$p \leq 0.01$; *$p \leq 0.05$

7.2 Person-Related Factors

The regression models for H6 and H7 did not produce any significant results. Hence, this research proposes that a person's fair-trade fashion consumption behaviour is not influenced by how intense he or she perceives the social issues in fashion production as a moral concern or by how much this person sees himself or herself responsible for bringing change to the situation. It is noteworthy, though, that consumers do in fact find themselves quite responsible (Ø rank position = 2.78 on 1–7 ranking), opposing to what other scholars have found (Pereira Heath and Chatzidakis 2012).

However, the second statement by these two scholars concerning the influence of an individual's perceived self-efficacy is supported. Regression results show a small positive effect. Thus, the more a person believes in his or her capability to make purchasing decisions for oneself, the more fair-trade clothing does that person buy.

Surprisingly, another positive relationship was found between a person's need for consistency in his or her choice between conventional and fair-trade clothing and that person's fashion purchasing behaviour; see Table 3 for regression results. It seems that the wish to choose consistently is not a hindering factor but instead a characteristic of fair-trade fashion consumers. This supports what other scholars have proposed: the ethical consumer exists and is willing to sacrifice by giving up old consumption habits to follow his or her ethical beliefs.

The regression analysis for testing the influence of the importance an individual assigns to traditional product attributes on his or her buying behaviour yields strong

Table 3 Regression results of person-related factors incl. moderating variables (table compiled by authors)

Variables entered	Perceived moral intensity				Denial of responsibility			
	β	R^2	ΔR^2	n	β	R^2	ΔR^2	n
IV	0.274***	0.075	–	446	0.274***	0.075	–	446
IV	0.286***	0.069	−0.006	282	0.278***	0.077	0.002	439
MV	−0.066				0.011			
IV	0.281***	0.070	−0.005	282	0.278***	0.077	0.002	439
MV	−0.069				0.013			
IV × MV	−0.013				0.017			
Variables entered	Perceived self-efficacy				Importance of consistency			
	β	R^2	ΔR^2	n	β	R^2	ΔR^2	n
IV	0.274***	0.075	–	446	0.274***	0.075	–	446
IV	0.272***	0.083	0.008	446	0.286***	0.137	0.062	406
MV	0.092*				0.218***			
IV	0.265***	0.085	0.010	446	0.280***	0.139	0.064	406
MV	0.097*				0.222***			
IV × MV	0.036				0.054			

Note *IV* independent variable; *MV* moderating variable; β standardised coefficients
***$p \leq 0.001$; **$p \leq 0.01$; *$p \leq 0.05$

Table 4 Regression results of person-related factors incl. moderating variables (cont'd) (table compiled by authors)

Variables entered	Importance of traditional purchasing criteria				Non-supportive social environment			
	β	R^2	ΔR^2	n	β	R^2	ΔR^2	n
IV	0.274***	0.075	–	446	0.274***	0.075	–	446
IV	0.166***	0.238	0.163	446	0.220***	0.261	0.186	271
MV	−0.418***				−0.407***			
IV	0.166***	0.238	0.163	446	0.236***	0.264	0.163	271
MV	−0.418***				−0.407***			
IV × MV	−0.001				−0.061			
Variables entered	Fashion orientation							
	β	R^2	ΔR^2	n				
IV	0.274***	0.075	–	446				
IV	0.269***	0.088	0.013	446				
MV	−0.116*							
IV	0.273***	0.089	0.014	446				
MV	−0.113*							
IV × MV	0.025							

Note *IV* independent variable; *MV* moderating variable; *β* standardised coefficients
***$p \leq 0.001$; **$p \leq 0.01$; *$p \leq 0.05$

results. A direct effect is visible which triples more than the explanatory power of the overall model ($\Delta R^2 = 0.163$). This supports that for many participants traditional purchasing criteria do in fact outweigh ethical considerations.

For the last two direct effects tested, significant results were again found. While fashion orientation has a small negative impact ($\Delta R^2 = 0.013$), a person's social network plays a very dominant role in the development of fair-fashion purchasing behaviour ($\Delta R^2 = 0.186$). These results support the notion that the symbolic function of fashion is indeed a very important purchasing criterion (Carrigan and Attalla 2001; Sudbury and Böltner 2011). As fair-trade fashion is not well known and thus does only convey intended information about the wearer to a few ethically interested people, it cannot fulfil the same communicative needs as conventional brand clothing. A person's apparel consumption behaviour is, therefore, strongly dependent on his or her social environment which can either be supportive or inhibiting to fair-trade fashion purchasing behaviour depending on their own ethical consumption orientation.

8 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to further our understanding of the A-B gap by analysing eleven factors regarding their influence on individual fair-trade fashion purchasing behaviour. Making use of self-reports, the results of this study are prone to the

Fig. 3 Inhibitors to fair-fashion consumption (authors' own figure)

social desirability bias, i.e., the tendency of survey respondents do not give purely honest answers but those that are in line with societal expectations. This response distortion is seen as a major problem in studies on ethical consumption (Auger and Devinney 2007). However, allowing for complete anonymity by conducting the survey online is likely to have minimised this effect.

Young German consumers are highly aware of the social problems in the fashion industry. Despite this, fair-trade fashion has not yet made it onto their consumption agenda as purchasing such fashion happens rather sporadically or not at all. This study has identified several reasons for this—Fig. 3 depicts these hindering factors and their relative importance. General knowledge levels on the fair-trade fashion available are very low and thus inhibit a corresponding purchasing behaviour. Therefore, fair-trade fashion brands and retailers as well as other interested parties like non-governmental organisations or consumer activist groups should shift their work from creating awareness about the issue to making the existing alternatives better known. Only if opting for the fair-trade alternative is not seen as an unbearable limitation in choice, quality or price will ethical fashion find its way into the shopping bags of the everyday consumer. This is additionally supported by the finding that for fashion consumers traditional product criteria come first.

Secondly, as apparel consumption is strongly influenced by a person's association with his or her social network, fair-trade fashion retailers should consider this in their communication strategy. By creating a brand for their goods, they may increase the signalling effect that wearing this fashion will have on a person's social surrounding. In addition, findings indicate that fair-fashion consumers aim to stick with their alternative consumption strategy—once a consumer has made the conscious decision to buy fair-trade fashion, he or she will do so repeatedly. Such strong commitment of individuals presents a great opportunity for retailers of fair-trade fashion. As social influences play a paramount role in apparel purchasing decisions, committed consumers will be a strong influence on the fair-trade fashion buying behaviour of their social environment.

References

Andorfer, V. A., & Liebe, U. (2012). Research on fair-trade consumption—A review. *Journal of Business Ethics, 106*(4), 415–435.

Arnold, D. G., & Hartman, L. P. (2005). Beyond sweatshops. Positive deviancy and global labour practices. *Business Ethics: A European Review, 14*(3), 206–222.

Auger, P., & Devinney, T. M. (2007). Do what consumers say matter? The misalignment of preferences with unconstrained ethical intentions. *Journal of Business Ethics, 76*(4), 361–383.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84*(2), 191–215.

Beierlein, C., Kemper, C. J., Kovaleva, A., & Rammstedt, B. (2013). Short scale for measuring general self-efficacy beliefs (ASKU). *Methods, Data, Analyses, 7*(2), 251–278.

Boulstridge, E., & Carrigan, M. (2000). Do consumers really care about corporate responsibility? Highlighting the attitude-behaviour gap. *Journal of Communication Management, 4*(4), 355–368.

Bray, J., Johns, N., & Kilburn, D. (2011). An exploratory study into the factors impeding ethical consumption. *Journal of Business Ethics, 98*(4), 597–608.

Carrigan, M., & Attalla, A. (2001). The myth of the ethical consumer—Do ethics matter in purchase behaviour? *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 18*(7), 560–578.

Carrington, M. J., Neville, B. A., & Whitwell, G. J. (2010). Why ethical consumers don't walk their talk. Towards a framework for understanding the gap between the ethical purchase intentions and actual buying behaviour of ethically minded consumers. *Journal of Business Ethics, 97*(1), 139–158.

Center for International Development. (2018). Atlas of Economic Complexity. German Apparel Import 2016. http://atlas.cid.harvard.edu/explore/?country=61&partner=undefined&product=160&productClass=HS&startYear=undefined&target=Product&tradeDirection=import&year=2016. Last accessed January 28, 2019.

Chatzidakis, A., Hibbert, S., & Smith, A. P. (2007). Why people don't take their concerns about fair-trade to the supermarket. The role of neutralisation. *Journal of Business Ethics, 74*(1), 89–100.

Chatzidakis, A., Kastanakis, M., & Stathopoulou, A. (2016). Socio-cognitive determinants of consumers' support for the fair-trade movement. *Journal of Business Ethics, 133*(1), 95–109.

Crane, A., & Matten, D. (2010). *Business ethics: Managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

de Pelsmacker, P., & Janssens, W. (2007). A model for fair-trade buying behaviour. The role of perceived quantity and quality of information and of product-specific attitudes. *Journal of Business Ethics, 75*(4), 361–380.

Dickson, M. (2005). Identifying and profiling apparel label users. In R. Harrison, D. S. Shaw, & T. Newholm (Eds.), *The ethical consumer* (pp. 155–171). Thousand Oaks, London: SAGE.

Dickson, M. A. (1999). US consumers' knowledge of and concern with apparel sweatshops. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal, 3*(1), 44–55.

Dickson, M. A. (2001). Utility of no sweat labels for apparel consumers. Profiling label users and predicting their purchases. *Journal of Consumer Affairs, 35*(1), 96–119.

Dickson, M. A. (2016). Personal values, beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes relating to intentions to purchase apparel from socially responsible businesses. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal, 18*(1), 19–30.

Ferdows, K., Machuca, J. A. D., & Lewis, M. (2015). Zara: The world's largest fashion retailer, Case study (Reference no. 615-059-1).

Folkes, V., & Kamins, M. (1999). Effects of information about firms' ethical and unethical actions on consumers' attitudes. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 8*(3), 243–259.

Gallagher, M. W. (2012). Self-efficacy. In V. S. Ramachandran (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of human behavior* (2nd ed., pp. 314–320). Oxford: Elsevier Academic Press.

German Federal Statistical Office [Destatis]. (2017). "Jahresstatistik im Handel - Unternehmen, Beschäftigte, Umsatz und weitere betriebs- und volkswirtschaftliche Kennzahlen im Handel. Deutschland, Jahre, Wirtschaftszweige. https://www.genesis.destatis.de/genesis/online/data;jsessionid=9AE832BE1FC5DF5360C6A28BD2E8FFC4.tomcat_GO_1_1?operation=abruftabelleAbrufen&selectionname=45341-0001&levelindex=1&levelid=1503423746603&index=1. Last accessed August 22, 2017.

Harris, F., Roby, H., & Dibb, S. (2016). Sustainable clothing. Challenges, barriers and interventions for encouraging more sustainable consumer behaviour. *International Journal of Consumer Studies, 40*(3), 309–318.

Hassan, L. M., Shiu, E., & Shaw, D. (2016). Who says there is an intention-behaviour gap? Assessing the empirical evidence of an intention-behaviour gap in ethical consumption. *Journal of Business Ethics, 136*(2), 219–236.

Ingram, R., Skinner, S. J., & Taylor, V. A. (2005). 'Consumers' evaluation of unethical marketing behaviors. The role of customer commitment'. *Journal of Business Ethics, 62*(3), 237–252.

Jägel, T., Keeling, K., Reppel, A., & Gruber, T. (2012). Individual values and motivational complexities in ethical clothing consumption. A means-end approach. *Journal of Marketing Management, 28*(3–4), 373–396.

Joergens, C. (2006). Ethical fashion. Myth or future trend? *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal, 10*(3), 360–371.

Johnstone, M.-L., & Tan, L. P. (2015). Exploring the gap between consumers' green rhetoric and purchasing behaviour. *Journal of Business Ethics, 132*(2), 311–328.

Jones, T. M. (1991). Ethical decision making by individuals in organizations. An issue-contingent model. *The Academy of Management Review, 16*(2), 366.

KPMG, IFH, & BTE. (2015). Fashion 2025—Studie zur Zukunft des Fashion-Markts in Deutschland. http://www.mitteldeutschland.com/sites/default/files/uploads/2016/01/28/kpmgfashion2025-studiezurzukunftdesfashion-marktsindeutschland.pdf. Last accessed August 14, 2017.

Lu, L.-C., Chang, H.-H., & Chang, A. (2015). Consumer personality and green buying intention. The mediate role of consumer ethical beliefs. *Journal of Business Ethics, 127*(1), 205–219.

Niinimäki, K. (2010). Eco-clothing, consumer identity and ideology. *Sustainable Development, 18*(3), 150–162.

Papaoikonomou, E., Ryan, G., & Ginieis, M. (2011). Towards a holistic approach of the attitude behaviour gap in ethical consumer behaviours. Empirical evidence from Spain. *International Advances in Economic Research, 17*(1), 77–88.

Pereira Heath, M. T., & Chatzidakis, A. (2012). 'Blame it on marketing'. Consumers' views on unsustainable consumption. *International Journal of Consumer Studies, 36*(6), 656–667.

Rode, J., Hogarth, R. M., & Le Menestrel, M. (2008). Ethical differentiation and market behavior. An experimental approach. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 66*(2), 265–280.

Sen, S., & Bhattacharya, C. B. (2001). Does doing good always lead to doing better? Consumer reactions to corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Marketing Research, 38*(2), 225–243.

Shaw, D., & Clarke, I. (1999). Belief formation in ethical consumer groups. An exploratory study. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 17*(2), 109–120.

Shaw, D., Hogg, G., Wilson, E., Shiu, E., & Hassan, L. (2006). Fashion victim. The impact of fair-trade concerns on clothing choice. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, 14*(4), 427–440.

Shaw, D., Shiu, E., Hassan, L., Bekin, C., & Hogg, G. (2007). Intending to be ethical. An examination of consumer choice in sweatshop avoidance. *Advances in Consumer Research, 34,* 31–38.

Shaw, D., & Tomolillo, D. (2004). Undressing the ethical issues in fashion. A consumer perspective. In M. Bruce, C. Moore, & G. Birtwistle (Eds.), *International retail marketing: A case study approach* (1 Aufl., pp. 141–154). s.l.: Elsevier Professional.

Singhapakdi, A., Vitell, S. J., & Franke, G. R. (1999). Antecedents, consequences, and mediating effects of perceived moral intensity and personal moral philosophies. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 27*(1), 19–36.

Sudbury, L., & Böltner, S. (2011). Fashion marketing and the ethical movement versus individualist consumption. Analyzing the attitude behaviour gap. *European Advances in Consumer Research, 9,* 163–168.

Szmigin, I., Carrigan, M., & McEachern, M. G. (2009). The conscious consumer. Taking a flexible approach to ethical behaviour. *International Journal of Consumer Studies, 33*(2), 224–231.

TransFair e.V. (2016). Wandel durch Handel - Jahres- und Wirkungsbericht 2015/16. https://www.fairtrade-deutschland.de/fileadmin/DE/newsimport/Presse2016/2016_pressemappe_jahres_pk/transfair_jahres_wirkungsbericht_2015_2016.pdf. Last accessed August 21, 2017.

Wieland, A., Durach, C. F., Kembro, J., & Treiblmaier, H. (2017). Statistical and judgmental criteria for scale purification. *Supply Chain Management: An International Journal, 22*(4), 321–328.

Marlene M. Hohn is a Ph.D. candidate and research assistant at the Chair of Supply Chain and Operations Management at ESCP Business School, Berlin Campus. She graduated from Otto-von-Guericke Universität Magdeburg and Europa-Universität Flensburg, Germany. Her main research interests include sustainable supply chain and operations management with a focus on social sustainability.

Christian F. Durach is full Professor and owner of the Chair of Supply Chain and Operations Management at ESCP Business School, Berlin Campus. Before joining ESCP Business School, he was the Head of the Kühne Foundation Center for International Logistics Networks at the Technische Universität Berlin, and worked for companies and ministries such as SIGARMS (USA) and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (GER). He graduated from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (Worcester, MA, USA) and the Technische Universität at Berlin (Berlin, GER).

His main research interests and activities are related to supplier management and supply chain risk management. He has published several peer-reviewed journal articles (Emerald Outstanding Paper Award, 2018) and is a Senior Associate Editor of the International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management (Emerald Best Reviewer Award, 2017), as well as Editorial Review Board Member of the Journal of Business Logistics.