

CHATVIJIT, SASIKARN, M.S. Exploring the Effects of Scarcity, Impulse Buying, and Product Returning Behavior in the Fast Fashion Environment Among Female Fashion Conscious Consumers. (2012)

Directed by Dr. Jennifer Yurchisin. pp. 133

By nature, fashion is unpredictable. While other fashion retailers are struggle with lost profits from overstock and inflexibility of supply chains to follow quick trend changes, fast fashion retailers have turned these obstacles to their advantages over non-fast fashion retailers. The success of flexible supply chain management strategies results in a quicker response to new trends of fashion and a solution for strategic consumer behavior. Instead of delaying their purchase to take advantage of sale prices, consumers feel compelled to immediate purchase apparel products from fast fashion retailers because the availability of current designs are limited. Not only are the products available for a short amount of time due to frequent introduction of new designs, but also are scarce because of small batches of production and replenishment. Limited product availability has become a unique characteristic of the fast fashion retail environment. While several studies have thoroughly examined the success of the fast fashion environments, these previous studies have focused on the benefits of fast fashion from the retailers' perspective. There are few known studies that have examined consumer behavior in the fast fashion environment.

Therefore, the purpose of the current research was to investigate the relationships that may exist among fashion consciousness, attitude, perception of product scarcity, impulse buying behavior, post-purchase emotional response, and product return behavior within the context of the fast fashion environment. Data were collected from a

convenience sample of female undergraduate students. The final sample consisted of 175 female college students. Of these, approximately 56% were Caucasians and approximately 73% of participants were 18-21 years old. A series of regression analyses was employed to test all hypotheses. Results revealed that fashion consciousness had a positive influence on their attitude toward fast fashion retailers. We also found that fashion conscious values had a positive relationship with perceptions of scarcity within the fast fashion environment. In addition, we found that attitude toward fast fashion retailers and perceptions of scarcity were related to impulse buying behavior in the fast fashion environment. A significant relationship between impulse buying behavior and some negative post-purchase emotional responses was found. Lastly, results revealed that product return behavior in the fast fashion environment was positively influenced by some negative post-purchase emotional responses. Implications are provided. Limitations and future research directions are also discussed.

EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF SCARCITY, IMPULSE BUYING, AND PRODUCT  
RETURNING BEHAVIOR IN THE FAST FASHION ENVIRONMENT  
AMONG FEMALE FASHION CONSCIOUS CONSUMERS

By

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A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of The Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science

Greensboro  
2012

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APPROVAL PAGE

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the support and the help of several individuals who in one way or another contributed and extended their valuable assistance in the preparation and completion of this study.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Jennifer Yurchisin, who has been my guidance as I hurdle all the obstacles in the completion this research work. I am thankful for my committees, Dr. Nancy J. Nelson Hodges and Dr. Kittichai Watchravesringkan for their expert guidance.

My colleagues and staffs in the Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies Departments, thank you all for coordination, data collecting permissions, and moral supports. I also would like to thank my best friends, Michelle, who has been most supportive and helpful during my thesis. With all my heart, I wish all these people be successful and happy.

Finally, I would like to express my utmost gratitude to my parents who have been a biggest support with loves and encouragements. I will never able to accomplish without them. I am happy to make them proud. Last but not the least, Kevin Cook, my future husband for giving me the strength to plod on despite my constitution wanting to give up and throw in the towel, thank you so much. May Kevin and his family be happy.

Again, thank you.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background**

##### *Fast Fashion Environment*

By nature, fashion is unpredictable. Nevertheless, fashion manufacturers and retailers have attempted to overcome the volatile demands and quick trend changes since the 1980's by increasing the variety of merchandise and the frequency with which that merchandise is delivered to stores (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010; Tokatli, 2008). Unfortunately, the U.S. fashion industry is oversaturated due to overcapacity in stores and high competition in pricing (Parrish, 2010) and this has had a negative effect on the business of apparel firms and consumer behavior. While retailers attempted to stock their stores with the products most demanded by consumers, the retailers were often left with products that were less desired by consumers. In this way, retailers experienced overstock situations. Thus, early attempts to provide consumers with fashion products as they were in high demand actually resulted in lost profits for stores that utilized an inflexible mass production supply chain (Doeringer & Crean, 2006).

At the same time, consumers learned to wait for the inevitable price markdowns as retailers attempted to compete with one another on a price basis. When consumers delay purchase to take advantage of sale prices retailer profitability deteriorates because

retailers lose margins from merchandise sold at full price (Su & Zhang, 2008). A study estimated that the industry markdown ratio is approximately 50 percent (Sull & Turconi, 2008). The industry average of unsold stock is 17-20 percent of merchandise and retailers lose profits from all unsold items (Ferdows, Lewis, & Machuca, 2003). These problems, namely demand uncertainty and strategic consumer behavior, have been well documented within the retailing industry (Jin, Chang, Mathews, & Gupta, 2012). However, as electronic information systems have improved over time, retailers and manufacturers have been able to develop techniques to better manage both supply and demand of fashion products. Doeringer and Crean (2006) stated that consumers' quickly changing demands for new designs can be detected by swiftly tracking and identifying potential popular new design styles through daily proximity to fashion markets. Because monitoring consumers and trends can help apparel firms notice unexpected changes in fashion, they can reduce design lead times and have the products on shelves while they are still in vogue (Doeringer & Crane, 2006). Moreover, the capability of quick response to provide the latest fashion trends in small quantities at reasonable prices induces consumers to pay full price instead of waiting for sales (Choi, Lui, Lui, Mak, & To, 2010; Jin et al., 2012).

The competencies in response to uncertain demand not only result in consumer satisfaction but also reward retailers with higher profit margins when they meet demand in seasonal situations. Choi et al. (2010) stated that the concept of fast fashion is concentrated in response to changing demand and industry trends in fashion. However, the actual definition of the fast fashion concept varies slightly, depending on the aspect

that scholars or researchers focus on.

Fast fashion is compared to fast food production in terms of response and product characteristics because both are quickly supplied with products of acceptable quality and inexpensive price (Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011; Jin et al., 2012). The definition of fast fashion is presented as the strategy that reflects the response to emerging trends by enhancing design and product assortments quickly and effectively to increase product value and demand for short-cycle fashion products (Choi et al., 2010; Sull & Turconi, 2008). Therefore, product availability has become a competitive factor in getting new fashion products into stores before competitors while demand is at its peak. To achieve this goal, fast fashion retailers have to produce short-cycle fashion products close to and during the selling season (Choi et al., 2010). The lead-time reduction and quick response resulting from the aim to achieve product availability causes fast fashion retailers to redesign their supply chain management strategies (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010; Choi et al., 2010). Instead of focusing on cost efficiency for manufacturing, the supply chain management model of fast fashion emphasizes flexibility for frequent ordering, rapid production of fashionable products, and fast product replenishment (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010; Choi et al., 2010).

Behind the success of flexible and responsive supply chains are real-time data sharing and collaboration throughout the network (Tokatli, 2008). The fast fashion concept incorporates the perspectives of product value and the context of supply chain management and can be defined as a marketing approach to demand uncertainty that utilizes product availability strategies enabled by employing a combination of enhanced

product design, quick response and agile supply. As a result, many apparel retailers that adopted the fast fashion strategy have become successful in sales and in solving the problem of strategic consumer behavior. The fast fashion business model yields apparel retailers average profit margins of 16 percent while non-fast fashion retailers average profit margins of 7 percent (Sull & Turconi, 2008). In the U.K. apparel market, where mass demand favors high fashion design, fast fashion retailers account for 12 percent of the market because they have gained the reputation as preferred stores for young female consumers (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006).

The apparel retailers that utilize the fast fashion concept include Zara, H&M, Mango, United Colors of Benetton, Gap, Anthropologie, Forever 21, Topshop, Primark, Peacocks, Next, New Look, and Uniqlo (Baker, 2008; Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010; Cahon & Swinney, 2011; Reinach, 2005; Sull & Turconi, 2008, Tokatli, 2008). Overall, fast fashion retailers in the European market have increased sales and profits over 20 percent per year (Sull & Turconi, 2008). Zara's customers in London visit its stores 17 times a year on average versus four times annually for other store visits (Ferdows et al., 2003).

#### *Benefits of Fast Fashion from Retailers' Perspective*

The strategies of enhanced design, quick response, and agility that are employed by fast fashion retailers offer strong benefits to retailers and consumers. Because speed to marketplace is clearly a crucial requirement for fashion apparel products, fast fashion retailers outperform non-fast fashion retailers with their ability to rapidly provide the latest designs inspired by fashion shows and runways (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006). Zara's



collection designs surpass the competitors' designs because its products are adapted from existing high-fashion houses and are available in similar fabric at much lower prices (Ferdows et al., 2003). Instant reports of customer data from stores are combined with trend tracking from a network of trend spotters who travel around the world. They observe emerging trends happening on runways, in fashionable neighborhoods, in clubs, and in popular culture. The new fashions observed become the key components of enhanced design (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Sull & Turconi, 2008). Furthermore, current consumer data shortens lead times and the new style is produced to be sold during the same season. While haute couture and ready-to-wear designers symbolize a sense of superiority (Reinach, 2005), the simplified designs promote the dynamic lifestyle of the young generation yet maintain modernity. The benefit of enhanced design is that retailers can better meet the need of more specific markets that are more sensitive to price than haute couture consumers but less sensitive to price than mass market consumers. In addition, utilizing trend tracking instead of forecasting one year in advance yields time-saving in the design process and lowers the risks of unsuccessful designs. Therefore, fast fashion retailers can enjoy higher profit margins for a longer period of time because current styles arrive at stores during the highest point of demand.

Enhanced design, energized with quick response, results in greater product value for consumers. Quick response defines the characteristics of fast fashion supply, including short production, more frequent orders, and rapid replenishment of small batches of products based on the demand-driven system of sale information (Cachon & Swinney, 2011). The quick response system can be achieved by matching fashion items

with onshore supply to take advantage of speed to marketplace through the integration of real-time data sharing and collaboration within the supply chain (Jin et al., 2012). For example, Zara produces fashion items in-house and also outsources production with manufacturers in Spain, Turkey, and Portugal. In-house production helps Zara maintain flexibility for fast fashion product delivery because of geographical and cultural proximity to end consumers. Furthermore, sourcing the production of basic products from Far Eastern countries reduces costs due to cheap labor (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006; da Costa Soares, 2011). These sourcing options give Zara a suitable level of product availability in a short amount of time with cost effectiveness. In the extreme examples of Zara and Benetton, each firm and its suppliers have vertically integrated into partners within strong supply chains (Cachon & Swinney, 2011). Zara's use of real-time data sharing within its own production and distribution center, for example, allows their products to be manufactured within three to six weeks and delivered within 24-40 hours (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Tokatli, 2008). Meanwhile, vertical integration partnerships elevate the responsiveness of the supply chain (Richardson, 1996), resulting in a quick delivery system in small quantities. When enhanced design products are offered in limited supply, consumers hesitate to risk waiting for a sale if there is a chance that the items will stock out. Consequently, customers frequently visit and pay full price to retailers who translate emerging fashions into available products because of the value of exclusivity for new and limited fashion designs (Cachon & Swinney, 2011).

The demand for new options due to changes in lifestyle, media, and popular culture forces retailers to capture new trends and translate them into product designs

available to the store more quickly and frequently than ever (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010). Women update their outfits more often within each season because of magazines featuring their favorite celebrities introducing new styles of fashion (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006). In fact, this challenge adds pressure to retailers and increases the risk of markdowns for retailers and their suppliers. However, the number of seasons in response to demand for newness has freed fast fashion retailers from being dictated by the need to order six to twelve months before the season (e.g., fall, spring). Moreover, the stores have more merchandise options for consumers to choose from and this encourages consumers to make a purchase. Due to the support of quick response systems and agile supply, fast fashion retailers are capable of introducing new products with a low risk of carrying costs and markdowns on obsolete inventory (Jin et al., 2012).

Although fast fashion retailers are financially invested in enhancing design processes and information technology facilities, quick response systems and agile supply chains trade off low costs of error. Quick response empowers a retailer to save costs on carrying inventory because its manufacturers instantly receive information regarding which merchandise should be replenished and which should be discontinued (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006). Meanwhile, the retailer can make more sales when fashion items are requested because they are produced close to the market (Sull & Turconi, 2008). This flexible response requires real time supply in order to minimize lead times (Bruce, Daly, & Towers, 2004). This strategy of matching demand and supply enables faster retail turnover during the season (Clark, 2008). Use of real-time data can keep inventory low to meet market demand at the right time. Therefore, the chance of lost sales is low. The fast

fashion retailers with agile supply chains also significantly save money when they cancel orders for particular items with low sales and weak demand (Sull & Turconi, 2008). As a result, unsold items in a fast fashion environment represent less than 10 percent of stock and the items sold on discount account for only 15 percent of product sales (Ferdows et al., 2003; Sull & Turconi, 2008).

The most important benefit of fast fashion for retailers results from the strategies they employ to combat strategic consumer behavior, such as delaying purchase and waiting for discount sales. Zara is an outstanding example of a retailer successfully confronting this problem by utilizing four strategies: limiting the quantity of items, promoting affordable prices, offering the latest fashion designs, and renewing merchandise twice a week (Jin et al., 2012). As the product life cycle of fast fashion products is a month or less (Doeringer & Crean, 2006), consumers are hesitant to lose a chance to have an inexpensive product of the latest fashion design. In addition to the enhanced design value of fast fashion products, Zara's stores display only a few items on the sales floor and encourage consumers to make a purchase quickly (Ferdows et al., 2003). Limited product availability encourages people who want a product to immediately buy it, regardless of price or potential future price discounts.

#### *Benefits of Fast Fashion from Consumers' Perspective*

The fashion industry is centered on changes in consumer demand, lifestyle, and industry trends. In fast fashion, the target market prefers high fashion designs and current trends. Enhanced design combined with product availability strategies result in consumer benefits. First, fast fashion products are able to fulfill consumer desires for trendy

products at less expensive prices. According to Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010), after the introduction stage of a product, the specific groups of consumers, such as the fashion-forward or fashion leaders, often adopt the product. This results in public acceptance and mass conformity before the product's popularity declines. During the acceptance stage, the product is desirable for consumers, especially fashion conscious consumers. Therefore, consumers can enjoy the fast fashion products within the current fashion season without spending as much money as they would buying haute couture or designer collections.

Second, consumers have more options to choose from due to the frequent introduction of new items at fast fashion retailers. Zara's customers, for instance, are provided with 10,000 different items throughout the year (Ferdows et al., 2003), and H&M offers customers 2,000 to 4,000 designs annually (Jin et al., 2012). However, each design is exclusive because it is only available during a short period of time. Consumers can throw away previously purchased clothes as soon as new items are available on the sales floor. Typically, customers who shop at fast fashion retailers will not see the same items available for long. Zara always makes room for new items by moving unsold items after two or three weeks (Ferdows et al., 2003). This results in pressure for consumers to make a purchase rather than hoping to buy the items on sale. However, it also gives fashion conscious consumers the opportunity to have a wider variety of clothing and the chance to look forward to seeing new designs on a regular basis.

### *The Potential Drawbacks of Fast Fashion on Consumer Behavior*

Fast fashion retailers implement strategies that turn the challenges in fashion production into competitive advantages, and this result allows consumers to indulge themselves in fashionable products. This can result in higher profits for retailers. However, the nature of the economy and the nature of fast fashion might generate potentially negative consumer behavior, and this process may backfire for the retailer.

*Impulse Buying as a Result of Product Scarcity.* Fast fashion products are limited in quantity and have short life cycles. Styles are available for a limited time before the emergence of new trends. According to Tokatli (2008), the products available in fast fashion retail environments are presented within a climate of scarcity. Mittone and Savadori (2009) defined scarcity as the presence of limited resources and competition on the demand side. However, quantitative scarcity can arise due to changes in supply as well as demand. For example, the limited quantity of gemstones due to rarity limits possession and this creates a sense of exclusivity to the owners, whereas the ostentatious limit of apparel items on shelves creates a sense of demand popularity. Scarcity in time can only be due to the supply side because the vendor defines the time restriction from the outset in such cases as the limited sales time for seasonal products. Scarcity can be used as a potential strategy to increase the attractiveness of the product; however, its impact on consumer preference depends on the type of scarcity and product category (Gierl, Plantsch, & Schweidler, 2008).

According to Gierl and Huettl (2010), scarcity due to supply for clothing has positive effects on attitude toward the products. This statement is particularly true for

people, such as fashion conscious people, who place a high degree of importance on following fashion. The authors illustrated that being in possession of scarce conspicuous consumption products, like clothing is envied and signifies prestige for people who do not possess these products. In the fast fashion retail environment, fast fashion products are perceived as being limited in quantity due to supply because only small batches of each collection are replenished to the store. They are limited in time due to the shortened periods of each season. For example, some retailers, such as Zara, have a policy to renew merchandise every couple weeks to generate a quick turnover rate (Ferdows et al., 2003). This strategy also creates a sense of scarcity due to demand for customers who learn from future visits that desired items are no longer in the store due to quick turnover. Because fashion conscious individuals have a desire to wear the latest styles in an effort to be accepted by their peers (Rathnayake, 2011), not being able to buy the items that are in high demand represents a consumption failure.

To heighten the appearance of scarcity due to both supply and demand, fast fashion retailers intentionally display only limited merchandise on the shelves (Jin et al., 2012). These displays of product availability make people feel pressure to make an unplanned purchase immediately because the desired items are in limited supply or only available for a limited time. When consumers are tempted by their emotions to make a purchase in a fast fashion retail environment without planning or using rational control, they are engaging in what is known as impulse buying behavior (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2009; Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011; Verplanken & Sato, 2011). Impulse buying for fashionable items can be encouraged by multiple factors. The impact of scarcity is widely

known in the literature as a factor which encourages people to impulsively buy fashion products. According to Parker and Lehmann (2011), people seek out proof of social status by purchasing a product that specific other people purchase. Therefore, people consider scarce products more popular because they are more desirable than abundant products. Only a select group of people have the scarce products, so these become the sought-after products. Moreover, people interpret scarce products as having higher quality; thus they are more likely to choose scarcer products over other available products in order to consider themselves to be smart buyers (Parker & Lehmann, 2011). These perceptions expedite impulse buying behavior in the fashion marketing industry.

*Negative Post-Purchase Emotional Response and Product Returns.* When consumers make purchases with emotions, such as excitement to have scarce merchandise or fear of losing the chance to own the limited items, they may not utilize rational thinking to gauge such issues as budget, necessity, or usefulness of the merchandise. Verplanken and Sato (2011) stated that “the short-term emotion can have a relatively large impact on preferences at the expense of long term rational concerns” (p. 199). Fast fashion products’ limited availability may encourage consumers to impulsively overspend while shopping. Researchers have shown that consumers often experience feelings of guilt and anxiety after engaging in impulse buying, particularly after realizing that they have overspent in the process (Gardner & Rook, 1988; Kang & Johnson, 2009; Park & O’Neal, 2000; Rook, 1987). In this way, encouraging consumers to buy impulsively may have a negative impact on the profits of fast fashion retailers, especially those that have a liberal return policy.



Although the return policy is a tool for retailers to learn about product defects and improve product quality, it can actually generate the negative consumer behavior of returning impulsively purchased merchandise. In 2004, the Center for Business Education and Research at Michigan State University reported that returned consumer products alone totaled \$35 billion annually (Miranda & Jegasothy, 2009). Return rates for clothing bought online, at 14 percent, are about twice as high as return rates for other products bought on a website (Barbaro, 2007). Victoria's Secret and H&M are examples of apparel retailers whose sales deteriorated due to returns because these retailers destroy all returned merchandise regardless of the salability of the returned items (Tarlow, 2011). Consumers' return behavior can become a severe problem for retailers (King, 2004; King, Dennis, & Wright, 2008). For fast fashion retailers, accepting returns for obsolete merchandise may be detrimental to the nature of these businesses.

### **Research Purpose and Objectives of the Study**

The fast fashion concept has been explored thoroughly in terms of product availability strategy, enhanced design, and supply chain management. Nevertheless, only limited literature has focused on consumer perspectives towards fast fashion products (Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011). As a result, little is known about the behavior of consumers with respect to fast fashion. Based on the results of past research, it seems likely that consumers' perceptions of product scarcity within fast fashion retail environments could potentially be encouraging impulse buying (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2009; Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011; Verplanken & Sato, 2011). However, not all consumers would be likely to perceive scarcity in fast fashion retail environments in a

similar manner. Consumers most susceptible to the influence of fashion product scarcity would possess particular characteristics, including both demographic and psychographic characteristics. Although several fast fashion retail chains (e.g., H&M, Zara) do sell clothing designed for male consumers, the main target market for these retailers is female consumers (Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011). Thus, it seems likely that female consumers would have more experience and be more affected than male consumers by fast fashion retailers' scarcity signals. In terms of psychographics, the behavior of female consumers who possess certain values and attitudes might be influenced to a greater extent than female consumers who do not possess those same values and attitudes by fast fashion retailers' practices.

According to Homer and Kahle (1988), consumers' values influence their attitudes and consequently drive their behavior. Framing the arguments within the so-called value-attitude-hierarchy (Homer & Kahle, 1988), individuals who possessed the value of fashion consciousness would be likely to also exhibit positive attitudes toward fast fashion retailers that offered them an opportunity to purchase up-to-date merchandise. Because female consumers tend to be more fashion conscious than male consumers (Gould & Stern, 1989), it seems likely that primarily female consumers would comprise the group of fashion conscious individuals who possessed positive attitudes toward fast fashion retailers. Compared to the female consumers who did not possess the value of fashion consciousness, the female consumers who possessed the value of fashion consciousness would be more aware of the impact of product scarcity and would be more perceptive to the cues used by fast fashion retailers (e.g., intentionally displaying a limited number of

products on the sales floor) (Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011; Jin et al.,2012). Their perceptions of scarcity coupled with their positive attitudes toward fast fashion retailers seems likely to encourage impulse buying behavior among fashion conscious individuals. Although fashion conscious individuals may be excited while shopping and purchasing impulsively, impulse buying can lead to post-purchase emotions, like regret and guilt (Gardner & Rook, 1988; Kang & Johnson, 2009; Park & O’Neal, 2000; Rook, 1987). These negative emotions and rational thoughts regarding their financial situation may result in a high rate of return behavior among fashion conscious consumers following their impulse buying episodes in fast fashion retail environments (Kang & Johnson, 2009). Because returns can be detrimental to the profits of fast fashion retailers (King, 2004; King et al., 2008), expanding the understanding of negative consumer behaviors within the fast fashion retail environment could offer insight to practitioners. Thus, the purpose of this research was to investigate the relationships that may exist among female consumers’ fashion consciousness, attitude, perceptions of product scarcity, impulse buying behavior, post-purchase emotional response, and product return behavior within the context of the fast fashion retail environment. This study was guided by the following research objectives:

1. To use the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy to examine consumer behavior within the fast fashion retail environment.
2. To investigate the effects of fashion consciousness, attitude toward fast fashion retailers, and perceptions of scarcity on impulse buying behavior in fast fashion environments.

3. To examine the impact of impulse buying behavior in fast fashion environments on post-purchase emotional response.
4. To explore the relationship between post-purchase emotional response and product return behavior in fast fashion environments.

### **The Significance of the Study**

Fast fashion retailers employ strategies to manage consumer behaviors such as delaying purchase and waiting for clearance sales (Choi et al., 2010; Jin et al., 2012). At the same time, the nature of the fast fashion business model may benefit retailers by maximizing profits (Sull & Turconi, 2008). If fast fashion retailers fail in managing product return behavior, the retailers have a strong chance of losing the competitive advantage for their fast fashion products. The strategies of frequent introduction of small quantities of the latest designs at affordable prices and the quick introduction of new products may create a sense of scarcity in the context of quantity and time (Tokatli, 2008). Perceptions of scarcity may drive impulse buying behavior, particularly among consumers who possess the value of fashion consciousness and display positive attitudes toward fast fashion retailers (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010; Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011; Gierl & Huettl, 2010). Unfortunately for these retailers, impulse buying can lead to negative post-purchase emotional response and subsequent return behavior (Gardner & Rook, 1988; Kang & Johnson, 2009; Park & O'Neal, 2000; Rook, 1987).

From a practical perspective, being aware of the possible drawbacks of the fast fashion retail environment can strengthen the understanding of consumer behavior and help retailers avoid negative outcomes. Theoretically, investigating consumer behavior in

fast fashion retail environments is important because it contributes to a greater understanding of apparel-related consumer behavior in general. Compared to the abundance of research on the benefits of the fast fashion business model to retailers, very little research has been conducted on the behavior of consumers within fast fashion retail environments (Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011). Furthermore, given that post-purchase consumer behavior is studied much less frequently than pre-purchase consumer behavior (Kang & Johnson, 2009), this study contributes to the field by providing a more complete picture of the entire consumer behavior process from purchase to disposition.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

The following are definitions of key terms used in this study:

#### **Terminology**

#### **Descriptions**

#### **Agility**

A real time supply that minimizes lead times, stimulates turnover rates, and reduces unsold orders (Bruce et al., 2004)

#### **Attitude**

An individual's "evaluation of the entity in question," with the "entity" being "some aspect of the individual's world, such as another person, a physical object, a behavior, or a policy" (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977, p. 889).

#### **Conspicuous consumption product**

A product that can satisfy social needs and can be used to impress products others by communicating wealth, social status, and power (Gierl & Huettl, 2010).

**Consumer strategic behavior**

The strategy of consumers to delay purchase and wait for discount sales (Choi et al., 2010).

**Enhanced design**

Product designs adapted from existing high-fashion houses or inspired by fashion shows, runways, and street fashion are produced to be sold in a similar fabric at much lower prices during the same season of style observations (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Ferdows et al., 2003; Sull & Turconi, 2008).

**Fast fashion**

The strategy that reflects the response to emerging trends by enhancing design and product assortments quickly and effectively to increase product value and demand for short- cycle fashion products (Choi et al., 2010; Sull & Turconi, 2008).

**Fashion consciousness**

The degree of consumer's involvement due to interest in fashion (Nam et al., 2007).

**Impulse buying**

A behavior of people who experience a sudden, often powerful and persistent urge to buy something immediately (Rook, 1987).

**Post-purchase emotional response**

Affective state occurring after a product is purchased (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991).

<b>Product return behavior</b>	A consumers' complaint behavior after they are dissatisfied with the product (Kang & Johnson, 2009).
<b>Quick response</b>	The characteristics of fast fashion supply, including short production, more frequent orders, and rapid replenishment of small batches of products based on the demand-driven system of sale information (Cachon & Swinney, 2011).
<b>Scarcity</b>	The presence of limited resources and competition on the demand side (Mittone & Savadori, 2009).
<b>Value</b>	Abstract cognitive structures that influence the formation of attitudes (Homer & Kahle, 1988).

### **Organization of the Study**

Through a review of the extant literature, this study generates a conceptual understanding of the interrelationships between fashion consciousness, attitude toward fast fashion retailers, perceptions of product scarcity, impulse buying behavior, post-purchase emotional response, and product return behavior in the fast fashion environment. After laying the groundwork for the study in Chapter I, Chapter II presents a more thorough discussion of the key variables in the study. Framed within the context of the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy, arguments are established for the existence of relationships among the value of fashion consciousness, attitude toward fast fashion retailers, perceptions of product scarcity, impulse buying behavior, post-purchase emotional response, and product return behavior in the fast fashion environment.

Chapter III offers a discussion of the methodology that was used to test the hypotheses developed in Chapter II. Included in Chapter III is information concerning the sample, procedures used, and development of the survey instrument. Chapter IV presents the findings from statistical tests of the hypotheses developed in Chapter II. Lastly, Chapter IV presents discussions of major finding, a conclusion, implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed the purpose of the study which included pertinent background information. The significance, objectives, and key terms were detailed. The next chapter will include a review of extant literature about the topics of interest.



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to the research objectives discussed in the previous chapter. The research objectives of the current study were: (1) to use the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy to examine consumer behavior within the fast fashion retail environment; (2) to investigate the effects of fashion consciousness, attitude toward fast fashion retailers, and perceptions of scarcity on impulse buying behavior in fast fashion retail environments; (3) to examine the impact of impulse buying behavior in fast fashion environments on post-purchase emotional response; and (4) to explore the relationship between post-purchase emotional response and product return behavior in fast fashion environments.

The literature review focused on the following topics: (I) how scarcity increases the desirability of products; (II) the effects of different types of scarcity on different product categories; (III) how different consumers perceive scarcity differently; (IV) the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy; (V) impulse buying as an effect of perceived scarcity; and (VI) post-purchase emotional response and return products after impulse buying behavior. This information was then utilized as a foundation in developing testable hypotheses. The following discussion will first investigate scarcity applied to apparel products.

### **Scarcity Increases the Desirability of Products**

Fashionable products, especially apparel merchandise, can be desirable for consumers for many reasons. Consumers are often enticed to purchase apparel products because those products have an attractive design, flattering fit, or affordable price. Consumers may also be interested in purchasing apparel products simply because those products are new and different from the products that were available during the previous week or month. Fast fashion retailers offer consumers all of these benefits.

For instance, H&M's apparel products appeal to consumers because of designs made by world famous designers and celebrities such as Karl Lagerfeld, Stella McCartney, Jimmy Choo, Madonna, and Kylie Minogue (Jin et al., 2012). In Forever 21's stores, consumers can enjoy large selections of products of different styles at surprisingly low prices. Barnes and Lea-Greenwood (2006) discussed Zara as an example of a retailer who offers consumers 20 seasons a year with newly desirable products. These strategies of increasing product desirability with enhanced designs, low prices, and newness may partially contribute to consumers' positive evaluations of fast fashion retailers. Another related strategy employed by fast fashion retailers that increases a product's attractiveness while presenting a low risk of profit loss for the retailer is the scarcity strategy.

In the apparel industry, it is widely accepted that scarcity strategies generate desirability for products (Bozzolo & Brock, 1992; Brock & Brannon, 1992; Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011; Lynn, 1992a; Mittone & Savadori, 2009). However, there is only limited research that focuses on scarcity in apparel products. By contrast, scarcity in

commodity products has been well studied. Commodity theory demonstrates how conditions that make a commodity unavailable result in increased perceived desirability among consumers (Brock & Brannon, 1992). This increased perceived desirability results in an enhanced motivation to own the product. While Brock and Brannon's (1992) study focused on commodity products, it seems likely that a similar positive relationship would be found between product scarcity and perceived desirability in a non-commodity, or fashion, product context.

Lynn (1992a) pointed out that people want to obtain scarce items because of a desire for status and social position. This idea refers to particular product categories that are capable of promoting the possessors' social status and self-esteem. Apparel products, particularly fashion apparel products as opposed to basic apparel products (e.g., white t-shirt), are commonly used to express aspects of a wearer's identity (e.g., personality traits, social group membership) (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009). Thus, fashion apparel products are subject to the effects of the scarcity principle in a manner similar to that of commodity products. By obtaining and wearing a scarce apparel product, therefore, a consumer would be able to express his or her particular position within a social hierarchy.

Typically, individuals who wear scarce products are believed to be members of a desirable social position. This relationship between possession of a scarce product and membership in an exclusive social group is based on the equation that usually exists between high price and product scarcity. Lynn (1992b) supported the idea that scarcity increases competition among consumers because scarce products are usually set at a higher price to reflect their uniqueness. For example, natural gemstones, such as

diamonds and rubies, are expensive to purchase because they are rare. Hence, a scarce product is assumed to be expensive and that increases the product's desirability because this condition can limit quantities purchased by other consumers. In the case of fast fashion apparel products, the scarce products may not be considered expensive, but rather average, by most consumers. However, as a result of mental shortcuts performed by consumers, most individuals continue to associate limited quantities with high prices (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009). This perception, referred to as a naïve economic principle, influences consumers to believe that scarce products have a higher status value (Lynn, 1992b). When consumers with limited economic knowledge infer that scarcity results from limited supply, they believe that scarce products are related to higher prices and associate this condition with wealth and high status (Mittone & Savadori, 2009).

When individuals purchase products that can be used to satisfy social needs and impress others by communicating wealth, social status, and power, this behavior is known as conspicuous consumption (Gierl & Huettel, 2010). Conspicuous consumption products can also signify conformity to exclusive social groups and can be used to avoid criticism (Gierl & Huettel, 2010). Consumers who purchase these products want other people to see them and value the products for their exclusivity. Apparel products are often used in the process of conspicuous consumption because they are publicly consumed. Individuals can use their appearance to communicate information about their social position, either actual or ideal social position, to other people. People then see these individuals wearing particular styles and brands and will associate these individuals with certain social groups (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009).

Apparel products in fast fashion environments can be perceived as conspicuous consumption goods because their enhanced designs from celebrity designers and high-fashion runways imply a high taste of possessors and can impress others. At the same time, frequently renewing merchandise in the store with an increase in the number of seasons enables fast fashion products to be scarce. Because of the shortened seasons and short life cycles of each product, the availability of the product is limited. Moreover, the limited supply replenished at each store to stimulate quick turnover rates of the products causes the product quantity to appear to be scarce. Fast fashion apparel products are perceived to be scarce and exclusive because there are few possessors, few resources, and there is a greater constraint associated with obtaining the product (Brock & Brannon, 1992). As a result, consumers may feel insecure because they may miss an opportunity to own the product. Consequently, consumers may need to revisit the store more often or make a quick decision to purchase the product before the merchandise is permanently out of stock.

The desire of consumers to purchase scarce apparel products that are associated with conspicuous consumption is supported by uniqueness theory, the snob effect, reactance theory, and downward social comparison theory (Gierl et al, 2008; Lynn 1992a; Lynn, 1992b; Mittone & Savadori, 2009; Verhallen & Robben, 1995). However, the literature also concludes that not all consumers should respond to scarcity with respect to apparel in the same manner. In fact, the value of scarcity's enhancement of desirability occurs only for some types of scarcity, people, and products (Gierl et al., 2008; Gierl & Huettl, 2010; Parker & Lehmann, 2011; Lynn, 1992b).

### **Effects of Different Types of Scarcity on Different Product Categories**

As already noted regarding the different types of scarcity discussed in the previous chapter, three types of scarcity in consumption were mentioned in the literature: limited quantity due to demand, limited quantity due to supply, and limited availability due to time (Gierl et al., 2008). Several researchers have studied the effects of these three types of scarcity on different product categories. Aggarwal, Sung Youl, and Jong Ho (2011) indicated that consumers are more likely to make an effort to obtain products that are scarce due to quantity (i.e., demand and supply) rather than those that are scarce due to time. Additionally, the authors (Aggarwal et al., 2011) found that scarcity had a stronger effect on consumer behavior when the scarce products were symbolic products as opposed to functional products. Because fashion apparel is a symbolic product that can communicate information about the wearer to perceivers (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009), it can be concluded that consumers will tend to make an effort to purchase scarce fashion apparel products when those products are limited to due quantity. These conclusions are consistent with those of other recent studies.

Gierl et al. (2008) compared the desirability of scarce conspicuous consumption goods and non-conspicuous consumption goods when they both were accompanied by the three different types of scarcity. In terms of the effects of limited quantity due to demand and due to supply, there were no differences found between conspicuous consumption goods and non-conspicuous consumption goods for either type of scarcity. Gierl et al.'s (2008) finding was similar to the one from Aggarwal et al. (2011). Gierl et al. (2008) also found that limited availability due to time increases product desirability of non-

conspicuous consumption goods more than conspicuous consumption goods. The authors (Gierl et al., 2008) reasoned that scarcity due to time had more of an impact than scarcity due to quantity on non-conspicuous consumption goods because non-conspicuous consumption goods are consumed in private. As a result, consumers are not concerned about being accepted by others based on their consumption patterns. Furthermore, in the context of the apparel industry, all products are limited in time by the very nature of the fashion cycle. Changes in designs and styles occur at least seasonally, so consumers' behavior may not be affected as much by time-related scarcity for the conspicuous apparel products (Gierl et al., 2008).

In the case of non-conspicuous consumption products, consumers still desire scarce non-conspicuous consumption products because they normally utilize naïve economic principles to evaluate scarce products as having higher quality (Folger, 1992; Lynn, 1992b). However, when these products are scarce due to limited time availability, individuals are not relying on information about other consumers' purchasing behavior to guide their own purchase behavior. Instead of competing against each other, consumers are competing against the time restrictions imposed by the retailer (Aggarwal et al., 2011).

Consumers generally tend to be less influenced by scarcity when they perceive that the situation is being manipulated by retailers alone. Verhallen and Robbon (1995) indicated that both limited quantity due to demand and supply can occur naturally through market forces. Both limited quantity due to demand and supply can be perceived to be caused by high market popularity and an inability for retailers to keep up with the

demand for the product. A small amount of merchandise left on the shelves can be attractive to consumers, particularly those who wish to purchase products that are desired by other consumers.

On the other hand, consumers may perceive products with limited editions or products restricted in volume per store (limited quantity due to supply) as being manipulated by marketing strategies. Consumers may have learned over time that a supply restriction is a tactic used by the retailer to increase sales immediately. The product being restricted may not actually be in short supply. When consumers learn about the retailer's manipulation, they may feel as though the retailer took advantage of them in order to make a sale. Because of the potential for retailer manipulation, scarcity due to market forces has a stronger effect on consumer behavior than non-market force scarcity (Lynn, 1992b; Verhallen & Robbon, 1995).

In the case of the fast fashion environment, consumers may not mind that the retailer is restricting supply at each store. While limited replenishment at each fast fashion store can be viewed as a retailer strategy, consumers may be attracted to the notion that the supply is limited. In theory, consumers tend to buy products under the condition of scarcity because it serves as a heuristic cue about the attributes possessed by the products (Folger, 1992; Gierl et al., 2008). For fashion products, consumers may assume that a limited quantity due to supply signifies that the products are unique and rare. Fashion consumers who are interested in appearing distinct and unlike other consumers may enjoy the fact that the fast fashion retailers do not stock large quantities of items. The limited quantity available of the product defines the value of the product to



other consumers such that consumers who do possess the product believe they will be envied by those who do not possess the product (Gierl & Huettl, 2010). As a result, consumers feel a sense of accomplishment and prestige when they purchase the product (Aggarwal et al., 2011). Consumers who desire unusual products may have a high need for uniqueness (Brock & Brannon, 1992). Uniqueness theory posits that consumers are attracted to scarce goods as a way to differentiate themselves and create a perception of personal distinction (Eisend, 2008; Mittone & Savadori, 2009). Consumers with a high need for uniqueness are less likely to buy products that many people own.

A conclusion that can be drawn from the discussion above is that consumers rely on market information as a heuristic cue. In the case of conspicuous consumption goods or symbolic products like apparel, consumers make their purchase decisions by relating to how they think other people will react to the product. Apparel products function to satisfy social needs (e.g., sense of belonging, acceptance, respect, leadership) and to communicate the status of the wearer (e.g., high social status, uniqueness, conformity). Therefore, consumers are more persuaded when the quantity of products is limited due to either high demand, in which case they believe the purchase will lead to acceptance by others, or rare supply, such that they believe that other consumers will perceive them to be distinct. In fast fashion retail stores, the apparel products are scarce due to both supply and demand because the inventory of each store is tightly controlled and changes frequently. Even the best-selling, most popular items may not be available indefinitely at every outlet that a fast fashion retail store operates. Regardless of whether a particular consumer perceives the scarcity in fast fashion retail stores to be related to supply or

demand limitations, the impact that scarcity has on the behavior of different types of consumers most likely varies by their level of fashion consciousness.

### **Different Consumers Perceive Scarcity Differently**

The ability of consumers to identify implicit scarcity signals may require certain prior knowledge or experience (Parker & Lehmann, 2011). For example, consumers who frequently shop at retail stores may be more familiar with different signals and messages of scarcity. Infrequent consumers may be only aware of scarcity through explicit signs like “limited edition,” “only 4 left,” or “only available until...” In addition, it is argued that people should be more persuaded by an implicit, as opposed to explicit, message of scarcity as a heuristic cue of market forces (Folger, 1992; Gierl et al., 2008). Therefore, it is assumed that different types of consumers may perceive scarcity at a retail store differently. Better knowledge of the traits and behaviors of consumers who notice scarcity signals in the retail environment without exposure to explicit signs can help retailers identify their target customers and can help researchers better understand the effect of scarcity on consumer behavior in different retail environments.

One such environment that requires additional research is the fast fashion retail environment. There is no study that provides consumer profiles of who perceives and reacts to implicit signals of scarcity in the fast fashion retail environment. To find out the traits of consumers capable of processing implicit scarcity signals in the fast fashion environment, discussion regarding existing consumer traits associated with fashion clothing consumption is necessary.

In the fast fashion environment, scarcity is demonstrated through implicit signals (Byun & Sterquist, 2008; 2011). In this context, scarcity results from fashion changes and a shortened product life cycle due to the introduction of new products almost weekly. Consumers who are familiar with the short lifecycle of fashion trends and the nature of product introduction in the fast fashion world would be alert and feel compelled to buy products before they are outdated (Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011). Quick turnover rates and a limited number of items of a popular style remaining on the shelf could be perceived as scarce due to high demand by consumers who know which styles are in vogue. The replenishment of only small batches of the latest fashion trends in each store could be interpreted as scarce due to limited supply by consumers who want to differentiate themselves from others. In order to understand and react to these implicit signals, however, consumers must be aware of and have an interest in fashion.

Fashion consciousness is a term used to express consumers' level of interest in and involvement with fashion (Nam et al., 2007). In general, female consumers tend to be more fashion conscious than male consumers (Gould & Stern, 1989). However, not all females are equally fashion conscious. Female consumers who are interested in fashion would be aware of the popularity of particular apparel items (Law, Zhang, & Leung, 2004) because they are motivated to spend time searching for information about new products (Law et al., 2005; Vieira, 2009). Fashion conscious individuals would want to shop in fast fashion retail stores because these stores are outlets in which they can purchase apparel items that represent up-to-date styles. In their quest to purchase latest fashion products, fashion conscious individuals would be susceptible to the product

scarcity strategy within in the fast fashion environment. However, different fashion conscious consumers may perceive the scarcity in different ways.

Researchers have used fashion consciousness as a concept to examine the levels of fashion interest manifested by a variety of consumers, including mature consumers (Nam et al., 2007) and among fashion fanatics, or those who are extremely passionate about following fashion (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010). Individuals who are fashion conscious tend to purchase fashionable items that have been accepted by the majority in order to strengthen their image and ability to be accepted by others (Rathnayake, 2011). In this way, fashion conscious individuals differ from those consumers who are considered to be fashion innovators and tend to take more risks in order to gain respect as opinion leaders in fashion (Cardoso, Costa, & Novais, 2010; Law et al., 2004). For example, fashion conscious consumers may be aware of new trends in wedding dresses like see-through styles. However, unlike fashion innovators, consumers with a high degree of fashion consciousness would be unwilling to try this new style that has not yet been accepted by their peers. Because fashion conscious consumers seek this type of social approval (Rathnayake, 2011), they would probably like to purchase apparel with mass appeal from fast fashion environments. Within the fast fashion environment, fashion conscious consumers most likely believe that the most popular items are those that are scarce. In other words, fashion conscious consumers most likely perceive scarcity in fast fashion environments as limitations due to demand.

However, some fashion conscious consumers may also be attracted to scarce items in fast fashion retail stores because these items are limited in supply. Iyer and

Eastman (2010) argued that fashion conscious consumers are conscious of their individual appearance, are competitive, and seek attention from others. According to Lynn (1992a), consumers who are attracted to scarcity want to own a scarce product because: (1) a sense of self-uniqueness; (2) a basis for downward comparisons with less fortunate non-possessors; and (3) power over those who want the available resources. As a means of gaining attention from others, some fashion conscious individuals may wish to purchase items that have been accepted by their peers but are not possessed by their peers. By doing so, the fashion conscious consumers may be envied by the members of their social group and, consequently, elevate their standing within their social group. Hence, these fashion conscious individuals may wish to purchase scarce items because they have a positive perception of the items that are scarce due to limitations in supply.

Past research on fashion conscious consumers suggests that these consumers may be attracted to product scarcity because of supply and demand in fast fashion retail environments. Compared to other consumers, fashion conscious consumers may be better able to perceive the signals that are used by fast fashion retailers. For fashion conscious consumers, actively seeking out and purchasing particular products is of utmost importance. Consumers who are highly fashion conscious spend a great deal of time learning about the popular styles and shopping for those styles. To stay up-to-date, fashion conscious consumers feel the need to replace items in their wardrobes on a regular basis (Walsh, Mitchell, & Thurman, 2001). The need to follow fashion takes up a large percentage of fashion conscious consumers' time. As such, it can be argued that the level of fashion consciousness that a female consumer displays has an impact on the way

in which that person lives her life. Because fashion consciousness influences ones' lifestyle, fashion consciousness can be conceptualized as a consumer value.

According to Richins and Dawson (1992), a consumer value is a guiding force in one's life. Richins and Dawson's (1992) conceptualization of a consumer value is based upon the work of Rokeach (1973). Rokeach (1973) explained that a value is "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (p. 5). For fashion conscious consumers, purchasing and wearing popular styles is imperative to their happiness and life satisfaction. Because fashion conscious consumers are highly involved with fashion, these consumers are willing to spend a significant amount of time and money acquiring the popular styles of apparel (O'Cass, 2004). In this way, fashion consciousness truly influences consumers' lives and, therefore, can be considered to be a consumer value. As a value, fashion consciousness may have an impact on consumers' attitudes about and behavior with respect to fast fashion retail stores.

### **The Value-Attitude-Behavior Hierarchy**

Among the literature pertaining to the fast fashion business model, only limited research has focused on consumer behavior in the fast fashion environment. The previous research related to consumer behavior in the fast fashion environment has focused on consumer preference in fast fashion brand extensions (Choi et al., 2010) and in-store hoarding behavior in the fast fashion retail environment (Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011). Little research has focused on consumers' impulse buying behavior in fast fashion environments despite the fact that the fast fashion business model seems uniquely

designed to encourage such consumption behavior. The implicit signals like “Buy now, it won’t be here tomorrow” sent by fast fashion retailers may accelerate consumers’ purchase decisions and behavior if the consumers are attuned to fashion and the scarcity signals (Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011).

When consumers are fashion conscious, they most likely have positive attitudes towards fast fashion retailers who are known to sell fashion-forward merchandise that they desire to purchase. Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) proposed that attitudes represent an individual’s “evaluation of the entity in question,” with the “entity” being “some aspect of the individual’s world, such as another person, a physical object, a behavior, or a policy” (p. 889). In the case of fast fashion retailers, a consumer can have a positive or negative evaluation of those types of retailers. That is to say, some consumers will tend to have positive attitudes towards and like fast fashion retailers and other consumers will tend to have negative attitudes towards and dislike fast fashion retailers. The differences in evaluations of fast fashion retailers may be due to differences in values possessed by consumers.

According to Homer and Kahle (1988), values, which are abstract cognitive structures, influence the formation of attitudes. Values, as previously discussed (Richins & Dawson, 1992; Rokeach, 1973), affect where a person chooses to go and what a person chooses to do with his or her time (Homer & Kahle, 1988; Kahle, 1980). In this way, it can be argued that values influence behavior. However, rather than having a direct influence on behavior, Homer and Kahle (1988) argue that values indirectly influence behavior through attitudes in their value-attitude-behavior hierarchy. Their value-attitude-

behavior hierarchy postulates that the values that people possess affect the way in which they evaluate particular people, situations, places, and other things. These evaluations, or attitudes, subsequently influence the choices that individuals make with respect to behavior, such as shopping and purchasing behavior. Previous researchers have utilized the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy to successfully predict consumers' behavior in a variety of shopping and purchasing situations, including mall shopping behavior (Cai & Shannon, 2012; Shim & Eastlick, 1998) as well as purchasing organic food (Grunert & Juhl, 1995) and other environmentally friendly products (Chan, 2001). With respect to fast fashion shopping behavior, consumers who possess the value of fashion consciousness would most likely have positive attitudes towards fast fashion environment and would, therefore, most likely shop and potentially purchase apparel in those environments.

Consistent with the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy, fashion conscious consumers would be likely to purchase in fast fashion environments. An additional variable unique to the fast fashion environment that also seems likely to have an impact on the apparel purchase behavior of fashion conscious consumers is product scarcity. When fashion conscious consumers perceive that the apparel products they want to purchase are in short supply, they may feel compelled to purchase these products quickly and without much consideration. In this respect, the value of fashion consciousness may indirectly influence not just consumers' purchase behavior, but also, more specifically, their impulse buying behavior in fast fashion retail environments.



### **Impulse Buying as an Effect of Scarcity**

Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (1968) proposed a model of stages in the consumer decision-making process comprised of 1) problem recognition, 2) information search, 3) alternative evaluation, 4) purchase decision, and 5) post-purchase evaluation. According to the authors, consumers first perceive a need and become motivated to purchase something when a difference exists between their ideal state (e.g., person who owns the product) and actual state (e.g., person who does not own the product). After recognizing that a problem exists, they are compelled to take actions by searching for information about the product they feel they need to purchase. After collecting product information from family members, friends, and the media, the consumers evaluate the alternatives they have available to them. Following the alternative evaluation, the consumers make a final decision and purchase the preferred product. The Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (1968) model ends with consumers evaluating the product as they use it.

The Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (1968) consumer decision-making model has proved to be useful in consumer behavior research, particularly studies related to apparel products (Lee & Burns, 1993; Van de Velde, Pelton, Caton, & Byrne, 1996). The model has, however, also been criticized as being overly rational (Pachauri, 2002). In reality, consumers do not always proceed through the model in the manner depicted. They do not always perform every step in the order indicated by Engel et al., (1968), and consumers do not always expend energy carefully evaluating every purchase. Consumers may purchase products quickly and with very little cognitive consideration in a process known as impulse buying (Solomon, 2004; Tauber, 1972).

Impulse buying is defined as “a consumer’s tendency to buy spontaneously, unreflectively, immediately, and kinetically” (Rook & Fisher, 1995, p. 306). Impulse buying is generally known as a quick purchase without rational making-decision. While consumers can purchase any product impulsively, some factors make the impulsive purchase of certain product categories more likely than other product categories by particular consumers. For instance, product categories with which consumers have strong emotional attachments are often those that are purchased impulsively (Ibrahim & Najjar, 2008; Jones, Reynolds, Weun, & Beatty, 2003; Weinberg & Gottward, 1982). As a result of the symbolic nature of apparel products, these products are often purchased impulsively by many consumers (Chen-Yu & Seock, 2002; Han, Morgan, Kotsiopoulos, & Kang-Park, 1991; Jones et al., 2003; Phau & Chang-Chin, 2004). Because apparel products are often purchased impulsively, it seems likely that fashion conscious consumers, who have a keen interest and attachment to up-to-date apparel products, would be particularly inclined to purchase apparel impulsively.

In addition to product categories, factors in the store environment are also likely to induce impulsive buying behavior. Consumers rely on the shopping environment for heuristic cues to help them choose a product (Bayley & Nancarrow, 1998; Chen-Yu & Seock, 2002). Scarcity can be viewed as a cue-based and an attention-based approach for consumers in the shopping environment (Folger, 1992; Gierl et al., 2008; Lynn, 1992b; Wu & Hsing, 2006). Because consumers utilize naïve economic principles to evaluate scarce products as being more expensive, of better quality, and conferring higher status (Folger, 1992; Lynn, 1992b), scarce products are more desirable and can cause emotional

stimulation that urges consumers to make a purchase without searching for product information or evaluating alternatives (Bayley & Nancarrow, 1998; George & Yaoyuneyong, 2010; Park et al., 2006; Rook & Gardner, 1993; Silvera, Lavack, & Kropp, 2008; Vernplanken & Sato, 2005). Consequently, impulse buying is likely to occur in the fast fashion environment because the heuristic cue of scarcity urges consumers to buy the products for fear of missing an opportunity to own them (Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011). While consumers may be excited to see new fashion items (Iyer & Eastman, 2010), the short product lifespan in fast fashion retailers is one of the factors that could influence impulse buying (Bayley & Nancarrow, 1998).

Based on past research, it seems likely that consumers, especially fashion conscious consumers, would purchase impulsively in fast fashion environments. While impulse buying can be beneficial for retailers because the practice allows them to sell new products immediately and at full price, impulse buying can be problematic for both consumers and, consequently, retailers (Bayley & Nancarrow, 1998; Silvera et al., 2008; Vernplanken & Sato, 2005). Consumers who experience emotional pleasure while buying impulsively are not likely to consider the consequences of their behavior (Rook, 1987) and are therefore more likely to overspend (Park et al., 2006). Overspending may cause a consumer to experience negative emotions, such as guilt and anxiety (Gardner & Rook, 1988). If consumers experience negative emotions following a buying trip, they may form negative post-purchase evaluations of the fast fashion retailer. This negative post-purchase evaluation has the potential to influence future consumer behavior, including product return behavior that can be detrimental to the profits of fast fashion retailers.

## **Emotional Response and Product Return Behavior after Impulse Buying Behavior**

### *Negative Evaluations and Emotions*

Although post-purchase evaluation is the final step in Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell's (1968) consumer decision-making model, more attention has been paid to researching apparel purchase than post-purchase evaluation and behavior (Kang & Johnson, 2009). Post-purchase evaluation refers to a comparing process before and after a consumer purchases a product (Kang & Johnson, 2009). Positive post-purchase evaluations occur when consumers' assessments regarding a product after the purchase exceed their expectations about the product before the purchase (Mitchell & Boustani, 1994; Oliver, 1980). If the outcome of actual purchase is lower than pre-purchase expectations, people will experience negative post-purchase evaluations (Ali & Ramay, 2011). Post-purchase evaluations of apparel products can be related to product performance (Chae, Black, & Heitmeyer, 2006; Kincade, Giddings, & Chen-Yu, 1998). However, product performance might not be the only basis for post-purchase evaluations. Rather than being a completely cognitive exercise in which attributes are assessed during product use, emotions unrelated to product use may also influence post-purchase evaluations, particularly in the context of impulse buying (Kang & Johnson, 2009).

Despite the fact that the act of purchasing impulsively may be associated with positive emotions (e.g., excitement, happiness), negative emotions (e.g., guilt, regret) are often experienced following impulse buying episodes (Park & O'Neal, 2000; Rook, 1987). Kang and Johnson (2009) argued that impulse buyers are more likely to experience post-purchase regret due to the lack of extensive consideration before making

a purchase. Because the positive emotions experienced in the store environment are often not sustained outside of the store environment, impulse buyers' post-purchase assessments may not exceed their pre-purchase assessments. As a result, impulse buyers often experience negative post-purchase evaluations (Gardner & Rook, 1988; Park & O'Neal, 2000). For this reason, impulse buying consumers tend to experience negative feelings in post-purchase evaluations.

Several different behavioral consequences can follow from negative post-purchase evaluations. Consumers can switch brands if products are associated with negative post-purchase evaluations (Bui, Krishen, & Bates, 2011). Consumers may hide the good and never use it and try to forget about it and the negative emotions associated with the experience (Mitchell & Boustani, 1994). Consumers can complain to retailers or others about their experience (Gilly & Gelb, 1982). In countries like the United States where retailers' policies allow consumers to return or exchange the product with few or no questions asked of the consumers, consumers can easily return items. Even when the product is in perfect working order, consumers in the United States have the option to return the product simply because they feel guilty or regret their purchase decision. Thus, returning behavior as an action of negative post-purchase evaluation has become a traditional solution for consumers in the U.S.

#### *Product Return Behavior as a Response to Negative Emotions*

Returns represent an estimated 12% of the cost of apparel products (D'Innocenzio, 2011). However, the major reasons for product returns have not been extensively studied in the apparel context (Kang & Johnson, 2009). Kang and Johnson

(2009) mentioned that consumers evaluate their post-purchase decision based on product-related variables, consumers' personal characteristics, and store-related variables. Of these variables, product-related variables, such as fit, have been investigated most frequently (e.g., Kincade et al., 1998). While studied less frequently, consumers' personal characteristics, such as fashion consciousness and impulse buying behavior, as well as store-related variables, like scarcity strategies, appear to have an impact on apparel return behavior.

Fashion conscious individuals tend to be less inhibited by financial realities (Phau & Lo, 2004). Consequently, they are more likely to exhibit impulsive purchasing behavior (Phau & Lo, 2004). Furthermore, when these fashion conscious individuals are shopping in fast fashion environments, the scarcity signals associated with the apparel products can create strong emotional reactions within these consumers who are looking to obtain merchandise in order to fulfill their desires. This circumstance can encourage impulse buying behavior. When consumers make purchases with emotions, such as excitement to have scarce merchandise or fear of losing the chance to own the limited items, they may not utilize rational thinking to gage such issues as personal budget.

When these individuals arrive at home with their purchases, they may realize that they do not have the funds to support their purchases. Future financial realities may lead to rational reassessment of the purchase and product return behavior. Economists state that at the time of impulse purchasing, the value of the impulse outweighs the cost. Afterward the costs outweigh the benefits and this can lead to regret (Bayley & Nancarrow, 1998). Feelings of regret can be a reason for consumers' product returns

from impulse buying in fast fashion environments (D’Innocenzio, 2011). Even though there is no report of product returns in fast fashion retailers being published, scarcity and its effects may influence fashion conscious consumers to return products after impulsively buying apparel in fast fashion environments.

### **Conclusion and Research Gap**

Fast fashion retailing represents an extremely successful form of apparel retailing. Fast fashion retailers are among the most profitable, even during the current economic recession. These retailers have been studied with respect to their business practices much more frequently than with respect to consumer behavior. From what is known about fast fashion retailers, it seems likely that their success has been achieved by appealing to the right consumers (i.e., young, female, fashion conscious) with the right product strategies (i.e., limited amounts of the most popular fashion items).

While the financial success of fast fashion retailers suggests that consumers are frequently purchasing the scarce merchandise, little is known about the amount of product returns being taken by fast fashion retailers. If consumers who frequently purchase also frequently return products, the profits of these retailers may be reduced. Thus, understanding the drivers of return behavior is of vital importance to fast fashion retailers who can use this information to design the best return policies for their customers and their company.

Additionally, understanding product return behavior in fast fashion environments adds to the knowledge base in the field of apparel and textiles. Researchers have tended to emphasize the pre-purchase steps in the Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (1968)

consumer decision-making model at the expense of the post-purchase steps. The result is that far less is known about post-purchase apparel consumer behavior than pre-purchase apparel consumer behavior. Studies on return behavior contribute to a more complete understanding of apparel consumption behavior.

### **The Conceptual Model**

The conceptual model that was examined in the current study is portrayed in Figure 1. Drawing on the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy (Homer & Kahle, 1988), the value of fashion consciousness was expected to influence consumers' impulse buying behavior through their attitude towards fast fashion retailers as well as their perceptions of scarcity within the fast fashion environment. In the figure, the impact of impulse buying on post-purchase emotions was also examined. Negative post-purchase emotions following impulse purchases were anticipated to lead to return behavior among consumers of fast fashion apparel products.

### **Hypothesis Development**

#### *Hypothesis 1: Fashion Consciousness and Attitude toward Fast Fashion Retailers*

Homer and Kahle's (1988) value-attitude-behavior hierarchy predicts that values that consumers possess have a positive influence on their attitudes toward venues of consumer behavior. In the case of fast fashion retailers, consumers who possess the value of fashion consciousness are expected to have a positive attitude toward fast fashion retailers where they can purchase the up-to-date styles that they desire (see Figure 2). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was written as follows:



H1: Fashion consciousness is positively related to attitude toward fast fashion retailers.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model for the Study

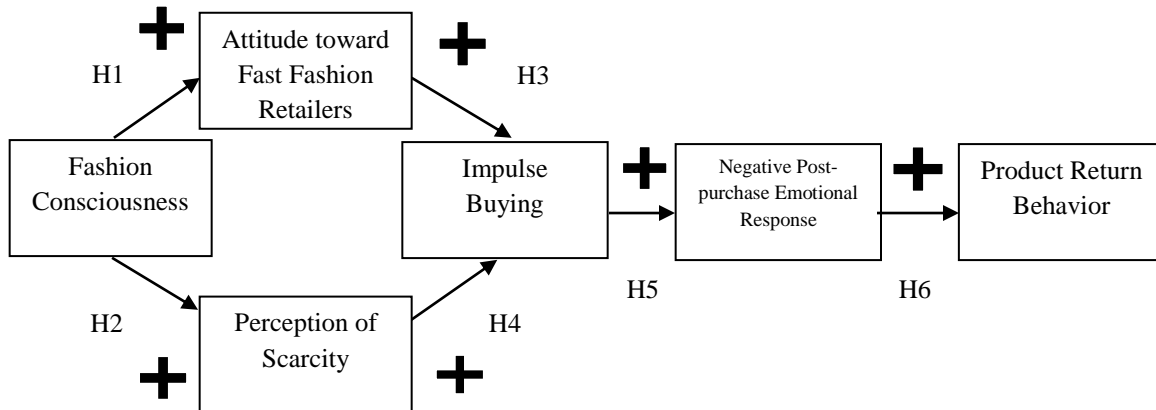
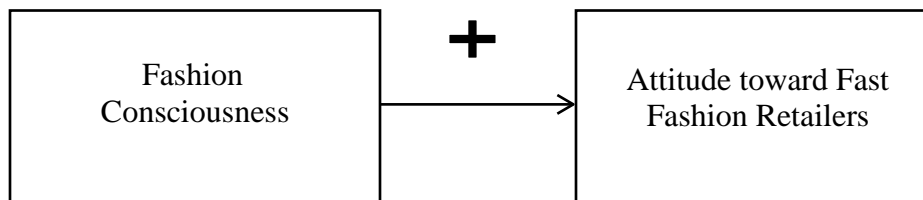


Figure 2: The Hypothesized Relationship between Fashion Consciousness and Attitude toward Fast Fashion Retailers



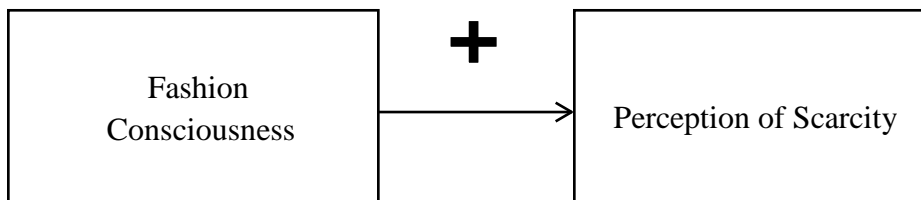
Hypothesis 2: Fashion Consciousness and Perception of Scarcity

Fashion conscious consumers may be attracted to product scarcity in fast fashion retail environments because of supply (Iyer & Eastman, 2010) and demand (Rathnayake, 2011). Because of their knowledge of and interest in fashionable apparel products, fashion conscious individuals are particularly perceptive to signals of scarcity in fast fashion environments and should respond positively to such signals of scarcity (see Figure 3).

Hence, Hypothesis 2 was written as follows:

H2: Fashion consciousness is positively related to perception of scarcity in fast fashion retail environments.

*Figure 3: The Hypothesized Relationship between Fashion Consciousness and Perception of Scarcity in Fast Fashion Retail Environments*

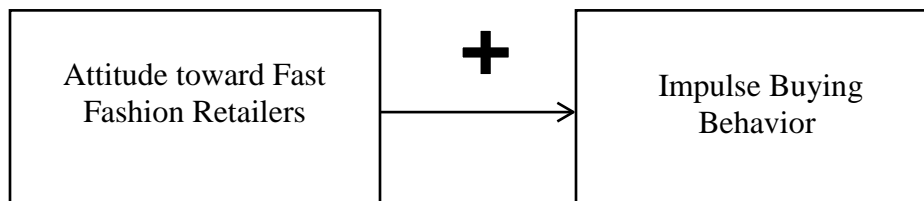


*Hypothesis 3: Attitude toward Fast Fashion Retailers and Impulse Buying Behavior in Fast Fashion Retail Environments*

The value-attitude-behavior hierarchy (Homer & Kahle, 1988) predicts that consumers' attitudes toward fast fashion retailers would influence their behavior with respect to those retailers. In other words, when consumers have positive evaluations of fast fashion retailers, they should be more inclined to spend time shopping in and purchasing from fast fashion retailers. Because fashion conscious consumers would be more attuned to the scarcity signals in fast fashion retail environments, these consumers would feel pressure for immediate purchase (Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011). In this way, these consumers, who have positive attitudes toward fast fashion retailers, would also be driven to engage in impulse buying within fast fashion environments. Based on this reasoning, Hypothesis 3 was developed. It reads:

H3: Attitude toward fast fashion retailers is positively related to impulse buying behavior in fast fashion retail environments.

*Figure 4: The Hypothesized Relationship between Attitude toward Fast Fashion Retailers and Impulse Buying Behavior*

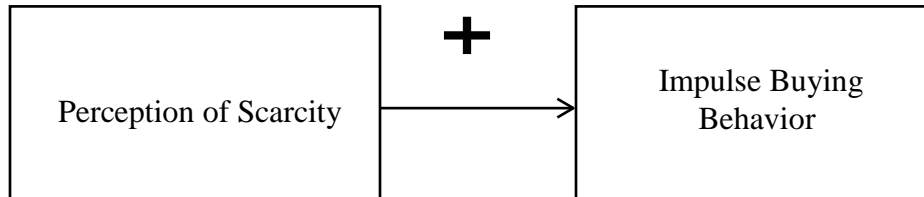


*Hypothesis 4: Perception of Scarcity in Fast Fashion Retail Environments and Impulse Buying Behavior in Fast Fashion Retail Environments*

Consumers who are highly fashion conscious are likely to be knowledgeable about the most up-to-date styles. Because they have a strong desire to actively participate in the fashion system by purchasing and wearing contemporary apparel while it is at the height of its popularity, fashion conscious consumers keenly understand the importance of purchasing the items that they desire as soon as possible (Bayley & Nancarrow, 1998). These consumers know that the items they want to purchase will not be available in large quantities or for an extended period of time, so they are likely to purchase the items immediately when they see them without much thought about the consequences of their actions (Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011). In other words, fashion conscious consumers are likely to be impulse buyers within fast fashion environments. Hence,

H4: Perception of scarcity in fast fashion environments is positively related to impulse buying behavior in fast fashion retail environments.

*Figure 5: The Hypothesized Relationship between Perception of Scarcity and Impulse Buying Behavior in Fast Fashion Retail Environments*

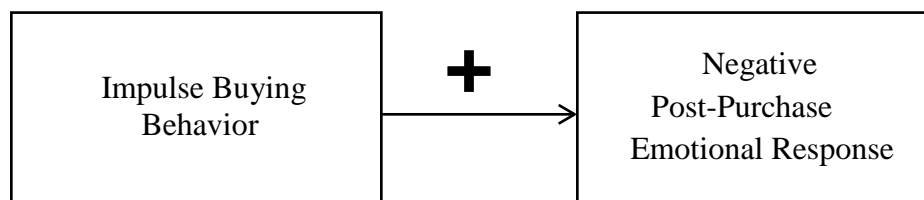


*Hypothesis 5: Impulse Buying Behavior in Fast Fashion Retail Environments and Post-Purchase Emotional Response*

When consumers purchase impulsively, they typically do so without thought to the consequences of their actions (Rook, 1987). In many cases, this type of reckless behavior can lead to overspending (Park et al., 2006) as well as negative emotional reactions when consumers get the products home (Kang & Johnson, 2009; Park & O’Neal, 2000; Rook, 1987). Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was written as follows:

H5: Impulse buying behavior in fast fashion environments is positively related to negative post-purchase emotional response.

*Figure 6: The Relationship between Impulse Buying Behavior in Fast Fashion Retail Environments and Negative Post-Purchase Emotional Response*

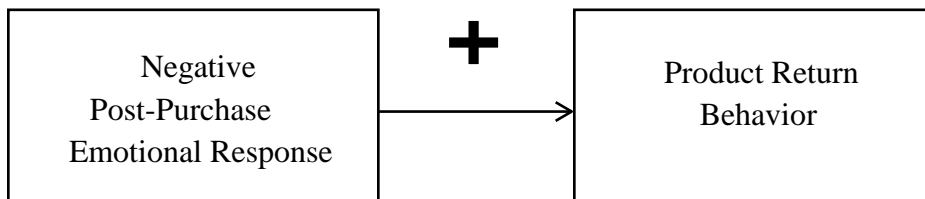


*Hypothesis 6: Post-Purchase Emotional Response and Product Return Behavior in Fast Fashion Retailers*

In situations in which consumers are dissatisfied with their purchases, they can often return those products to the store from which they were purchased. Consumers who experience negative emotions, such as regret or guilt, following episodes of impulse buying are likely to feel dissatisfaction with their purchase, even if the product purchased during the episode is fully functioning (Bayley & Nancarrow, 1998). Fashion conscious individuals who tend to purchase impulsively in fast fashion environments may later feel dissatisfied as a result of their behavior. To remedy their negative emotional state, these consumers may feel compelled to return the unwanted merchandise to the fast fashion retailer (D’Innocenzio, 2011). As a result of this logic, Hypothesis 6 was developed as follows:

H6: Negative post-purchase emotional response is positively related to return behavior in fast fashion retail environments.

*Figure 7: The Hypothesized Relationship between Negative Post-Purchase Emotional Response and Product Return Behavior in Fast Fashion Retail Environments*



## **Chapter Summary**

Throughout this chapter, relevant information about the major constructs in the present study was presented. Past research was used to develop a conceptual model and testable hypotheses. The next chapter will offer readers an overview of the methodology and details about the procedure used to collect data to test the hypotheses.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the proposed methodology, including: (1) Sample and Procedure; (2) Questionnaire Development; (3) Measures; (4) Statistical Analysis; and (5) Chapter Summary.

As noted in Chapter I, the four major research objectives guiding the study were:

1. To use the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy to examine consumer behavior within the fast fashion retail environment.
2. To investigate the effects of fashion consciousness, attitude toward fast fashion retailers, and perceptions of scarcity on impulse buying behavior in fast fashion environments.
3. To examine the impact of impulse buying behavior in fast fashion environments on post-purchase emotional response.
3. To explore the relationship between post-purchase emotional response and product return behavior in fast fashion environments.

Details are provided below about the methodology that was employed to accomplish these objectives.

#### **Sample and Procedure**

Data were collected from a convenience sample of 175 female undergraduate students attending the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in Spring 2012. After

permission was obtained to collect data from the University's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A), the students were recruited through various classes within the Department of Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies (CARS) with the permission of instructors (i.e., CRS 221: Culture, Human Behavior, and Clothing; CRS 231: Introduction to Apparel and Related Industries; CRS 255: Consumer Behavior in Apparel and Related Industries; CRS 321: Social Psychology of Dress; CRS 463: Global Sourcing of Apparel and Related Consumer Products; CRS 481: Contemporary Professional Issues in Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies; RCS 261: Introduction to Consumer Retailing; and RCS 361: Fundamentals of Retail Buying and Merchandising).

A female student sample, primarily from the CARS department, was deemed appropriate for several reasons. First, students tend to be homogeneous in nature which is desirable for theory testing (Vishwanath, 2005). Second, the age range of the majority of undergraduates, 18-21, falls within the age range of individuals who are most likely to shop at fast fashion retailers (Byun & Sternquist, 2008). As such, these individuals were likely to have experience with and knowledge concerning the nature of the products in and the implicit scarcity signals used by fast fashion retailers. Furthermore, college students list clothing shopping as one of their favorite and most frequent activities (Park et al., 2006), which may be a result of the fact that, compared to older consumers, young consumers tend to place more emphasis on the use apparel products to create their identities and seek social acceptance among their peers (Ibrahim & Najjar, 2008; O'Cass, 2004; Solomon & Rabolt, 2009). Because of their interest in apparel, college students, in general, are exposed to a great deal of fashion information (Gam, 2011). Therefore, any



of the college undergraduates enrolled in the CARS courses, regardless of their majors, were likely to have at least a basic knowledge of current fashion and apparel retailers. However, given that the majority of the students enrolled in the CARS courses are likely to be majoring in one of the CARS degree programs (e.g., apparel design, retail merchandising), the sample of participants was likely to contain individuals who were highly fashion conscious (Park et al., 2006). Thus, participants were expected to display a range of the degree to which they believe they are fashion conscious. Finally, although fast fashion retailers, such as Zara and H&M, sell apparel for both males and females, the market for fast fashion retailers is predominantly female (Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011). The majority of undergraduates enrolled in the CARS courses are also female (Michelman, 2002). Hence, male students were excluded from participation in the study because the likelihood that many of the male undergraduates enrolled in the CARS courses would have experience purchasing and potentially returning merchandise to fast fashion retailers and would be able to respond to the items on the questionnaire for the study was low. Furthermore, given the fact that female consumers tend to exhibit more fashion consciousness than male consumers (Gould & Stern, 1989) and a focus of the study was the value of fashion consciousness, examining the responses of exclusively female participants was deemed appropriate.

Participants were asked to voluntarily participate in the survey during a regularly scheduled class meeting time. Those students who agreed to participate were first provided with two identical consent forms to read and sign (see Appendix B for a copy of the consent form). They returned one signed copy to the researcher and kept the other one

for their personal records. After receiving the signed copy of the consent form, the researcher distributed the questionnaire for them to complete.

Some students were taking more than one of the above courses during the semester. These students were directed by the researcher not to complete the questionnaire a second time.

### **Questionnaire Development**

The questionnaire was developed using past literature to obtain measurement items for the variables being studied. A copy of the questionnaire containing all of the measurement items is contained in Appendix C. The questionnaire contained items to assess the following variables: fashion consciousness, perception of scarcity in fast fashion environments, perceived low price, attitude toward fast fashion retailers, impulse buying behavior in fast fashion environments, post-purchase emotional response, and product return behavior in fast fashion environments. The questionnaire also contained items to assess demographic characteristics.

The first section of the questionnaire began with a brief description of fast fashion retailers and the names and logos of some popular fast fashion retailers with which the participants may have been familiar because they have outlets near to the university (within 90 miles and/or in neighboring states with large metropolitan areas) or have internet websites on which products may have been purchased. Next, participants were asked to indicate whether they have ever made a purchase from a fast fashion retailer's store or website. If participants had not made any purchases from any fast fashion retailers, they were directed not to respond to the remaining items in the first section of

the questionnaire and could continue to the second section of the questionnaire.

Participants who had made purchases from fast fashion retailers completed the additional items in the first section of the questionnaire. These items were multiple-choice items where participants selected the name(s) of the fast fashion retailer(s) from where they had purchased products, how often they usually purchase products from fast fashion retailers, and the types of products that they had purchased (e.g., shirt, skirt, pants) from fast fashion retailer(s).

The second through eighth sections of the questionnaire contained items used to measure the variables in the study. All participants, regardless of previous purchasing behavior, were directed to complete sections two, three, four, and five. These sections contained items to assess fashion consciousness, perception of scarcity, and attitude. Participants who had not previously purchased products from fast fashion retailers were not able to complete the sixth, seventh, and eighth sections of the questionnaire because these items pertained to impulse buying behavior, post-purchase emotional response and product return behavior. These participants were directed to skip the sixth, seventh, and eighth sections of the questionnaire and continue to the ninth section. Participants who had previously made purchases from fast fashion retailers were directed to complete the sixth, seventh, and eighth sections of the questionnaire before they completed the ninth section. The ninth and final section of the questionnaire contained items to assess demographic characteristics.

## Measures

All of the multi-item scales used for this study were based on those used in previous research. The items on the questionnaire in sections two through eight were five-point Likert-type scale items, with responses ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Section ninth contained categorical items to assess demographic characteristics of participants. See Table 1 for a list of the items and their source and Appendix C for the items used on the questionnaire.

*Table 1: Measures and Sources*

Variable	# of Items	Source of Items	Scale
Fashion Consciousness	15 Section 2, #5-7; Section 2, #5-8; Section 2, #9-19	Wells & Tigert (1971); Schnaars & Schiffman (1984); Rathnayake (2011)	5-point Likert-type
Perception of Scarcity	10 Section 3, #20-29	Byun & Sternquist (2008; 2011)	5-point Likert-type
Perceived Low Price	5 Section 4, #30-34	Byun & Sternquist (2008)	5-point Likert-type
Attitude toward Fast Fashion Retailers	3 Section 5, #35-37	Yoo, Park, & MacInnis (1998)	5-point Likert-type
Impulse Buying Behavior	9 Section 6, #38-46	Rook & Fisher (1995)	5-point Likert-type
Negative Post-Purchase Emotional Response	15 Section 7, #47-61	Gardner & Rook (1988)	5-point Likert-type
Product Return Behavior	3 Section 8, #62-64	Johnson & Rhee (2008)	5-point Likert-type

### *Fashion Consciousness*

Participants' level of fashion consciousness was assessed using items from scales previously developed and validated by Wells and Tigert (1971), Schnaars and Schiffman (1984), and Rathnayake (2011). Wells and Tigert (1971) and Schnaars and Schiffman (1984) conducted their research with consumers in the United States. While the reliability coefficients of their four- and three-item scales, respectively, were not reported, the authors did report that the scales displayed an acceptable level of reliability (Schnaars & Schiffman, 1984; Wells & Tigert, 1971). However, the research on which these scales were based was conducted in the previous century. An updated version of the fashion consciousness scale was developed by Rathnayake (2011). Rathnayake's (2011) 11-item scale had a reliability of 0.83, but this scale was used only with consumers in Sri Lanka. It is not yet known how the scale applies to consumers in the United States. Therefore, to assess participants' level of fashion consciousness in the present study, items drawn from both the updated version as well as the older versions were used. Repetitive items and items that did not seem to apply to the current research context were eliminated. The resulting items included, "I usually have one or more outfits that are of the very latest style," "I am very aware that some clothes are more fashionable than others," and "I am not very bold when it comes to fashions (reverse coded)."

### *Perception of Scarcity in Fast Fashion Environments*

For consumers' perception of scarcity in fast fashion environments, 10 items previously used by Byun and Sternquist (2008; 2011) were adopted for use in the questionnaire. Byun and Sternquist (2008; 2011) assessed scarcity in terms of limited

quantity due to time restrictions, due to supply, and due to demand. The use of this scale seemed appropriate given fashion conscious individuals' likelihood to desire products because they are up-to-date and popular with their peers but also unique among their peers. The six items used to assess scarcity due to time available had a reported reliability of 0.88, and the four items used to assess scarcity due to supply and demand had a reported reliability of 0.80 (Byun & Sternquist, 2008). Some examples of items from the scale include, "This store introduces new fashion styles quickly," and "The products that I was interested in were almost out of stock."

#### *Attitude toward Fast Fashion Retailers*

To assess participants' attitude toward fast fashion retailers, a three-item scale adapted from Yoo, Park, and MacInnis' (1998) study on store attitudes was used. The three items used to assess consumers' attitudes had a reported reliability of 0.93 (Yoo et al., 1998). The items from this scale on the questionnaire included, "I think fast fashion retailers are good," "I dislike fast fashion retailers (reverse coded)," and "I have a favorable opinion of fast fashion retailers."

#### *Impulse Buying Behavior in Fast Fashion Environments*

To measure participants' impulse buying behavior in fast fashion environments, Rook and Fisher's (1995) scale was utilized on the questionnaire. The scale was framed in the context of fast fashion buying. Rook and Fisher's (1995) scale contains nine items and has a reported level of reliability of 0.88. Examples of items from the scale include, "I often buy things spontaneously," and "I often buy things without thinking."

### *Negative Post-Purchase Emotional Response*

To assess participants' emotional response to their fast fashion purchases, a fifteen-item scale adapted from Gardner and Rook's (1988) study on impulse buying was used. The emotions included in the scale reflect both positive emotions, such as pleasure, and negative emotions, such as guilt and shame. The reliability of the items on the scale was not reported in the study. However, similar post-purchase emotional response scales have been used effectively in studies of post-purchase satisfaction (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). On the questionnaire, the participants were asked to think about their most recent purchase experience from a fast fashion retailer. They were then asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements describing their feelings after their purchase. The negative emotions were coded with higher numbers indicating a higher level of agreement with the statements. The items pertaining to positive emotions were reverse coded so that higher numbers on the questionnaire were translated into lower levels of agreement with the statements. In other words, participants who indicated lower levels of agreement with the positive statements were indicating that they evaluated their post-purchase experience less positively and more negatively.

### *Product Return Behavior in Fast Fashion Retail Environments*

This study adopted a measure of product return behavior similar to the one used by Johnson and Rhee (2008). Their three-item scale had a reported level of reliability of 0.80. For the present study, participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements concerning their return behavior in fast fashion retail environments. The items included, "I frequently return the items that I purchase from fast fashion

retailers,” “I return most of the items that I purchase from fast fashion retailers,” and “I do not usually return items that I purchase from fast fashion retailers.”

#### *Perceived Low Price*

Although not hypothesized in the conceptual model, participants were asked to rate their perceptions of the prices charged at fast fashion retailers. This variable was used as a control variable to ensure that participants’ perceptions of the price of the apparel items sold by fast fashion retailers did not affect their impulse buying behavior, as found by Byun and Sternquist (2008). Typically the items that are purchased impulsively are low-priced items (Stern, 1962). Hence, the price of the items sold by fast fashion retailers, which is comparably low, may have a stronger impact on participants’ impulse buying behavior than the other variables included in the conceptual model. Therefore, perceived low price was assessed in this study. The variable was measured with a scale originally used by Byun and Sternquist (2008). The scale contained five items and had a reported level of reliability of 0.87. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements about the price of products sold in fast fashion retailers, such as “It is affordable,” and “It meets my budget for clothing shopping.”

#### *Demographic Characteristics*

Demographic information was obtained related to participants’ 1) gender, 2) age, 3) ethnicity, 4) year in school, 5) major, 6) personal income, and 7) work status. With the exception of the item related to major, participants were asked to select the category that best described them in the multiple-choice style items in this section. Participants were directed to write the name of their major on the line next to the item. Data related to



gender, ethnicity, year in school, work status, and major was nominal (categorical) data.

Data related to age and personal income was ordinal data.

### **Statistical Analysis**

Data obtained in this study was entered in SPSS for statistical analysis.

Descriptive analyses (e.g., frequency, means, and modes) were run on data related to demographic information. The reliability of each multi-item scale was assessed prior to subsequent analyses. A series of single and multiple regression analyses were employed to test all hypotheses. Single and multiple regression analyses were appropriate for this study because the technique allowed the impact of one (i.e., single) or more than one (i.e., multiple) independent variable on one dependent variable to be examined.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented information on the proposed methodology. The data collection procedure was discussed. The items used on the questionnaire were provided. Details on the statistical analysis were also mentioned. The results of these statistical analyses are presented in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter consists of three major sections: participant characteristics, descriptive statistics, and hypotheses testing. The first section begins with an overview of participants' characteristics. Then, descriptive information about variables related to fashion consciousness, perception of scarcity in fast fashion environments, attitude toward fast fashion retailers, impulsive buying behavior in fast fashion environments, post-purchase emotional response, and product return behavior in fast fashion environments is presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with the results of hypotheses testing.

#### **Participant Characteristics**

A total of 183 completed surveys were returned. However, eight surveys were discarded from the analyses because they were completed by male participants. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 175 usable questionnaires. This sample was collected from number undergraduate classes (e.g., Contemporary Issues in Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies; Global Sourcing of Apparel and Related Products; Social Psychology of Dress) offered in the Department of Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies (CARS) in the Bryan School of Business and Economics at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

The demographic characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 2. The descriptive analysis of the survey results revealed that 73.3% of participants' age was 18-21 years old. The degree majors represented among students were Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies (58.8%), Theatre (4%), Business Administration (2.9%), Communication Studies (2.9%), Psychology (2.9%), and other majors (20.6%). In terms of ethnicity, Caucasians were the majority group (56%); the respondents also included African-Americans (25.1%), Asians (5.1%), Asian-Americans (2.3%), Hispanic-Americans (1.7%), and other ethnicities (5.1%). As for annual family household incomes, the majority of participants had annual incomes of less than \$5,000 (56%), followed by \$5,001 to \$10,000 (21.7%). Although some participants did not indicate their grade level, participants of all grade levels were represented in the sample, with sophomores (26.9%) and juniors (25.1%) composing slightly over 50% of the sample. Lastly, the majority of participants' work status was part-time job (57.7%). While 4.6% of participants' work status was full time, approximately 31% of participants did not work.

In addition, the participants' shopping behaviors at fast fashion retailers are reported in Table 3. Approximately half of the participants (52%) reported that they purchased merchandise from both fast fashion retailers' websites and brick-and-mortar stores. Only 3.4% of participants indicated that they had purchased merchandise from fast fashion retailers' websites only. Participants reported that they mostly purchased products from Forever 21 (88.6%), H&M (69.1%), and Gap (62.9%), followed by Anthropologie (34.9%), Zara (20.6%), Topshop (13.7%), Benetton (12.6%), Mango (6.9%), Primark

(2.9%), Uniqlo (2.9%), Next (2.3%), and New Look (2.3%). The amount of money spent by participants every three months in fast fashion retailers ranged from \$0 to \$1,000, with an average of \$278.24. Clearly, the participants had enough experience with fast fashion retailers to adequately complete the questionnaire.

*Table 2*

*Demographic Characteristics of the Sample*

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percent
Age		
18-21 years old	129	73.7
22-25 years old	38	21.7
26-30 years old	3	1.7
31-35 years old	3	1.7
36-40 years old	1	0.6
Over 40 years old	1	0.6
Total	175	100
Major		
Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies	103	58.9
Theatre	7	4
Business Administration	5	2.9
Communication Studies	5	2.9
Psychology	5	2.9
Other	36	20.6
Total	161*	92.2*
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	98	56.0
African-American	44	25.1
Asian	9	5.1
Asian-American	4	2.3
Hispanic-American	3	1.7
Other	9	5.1
Total	167*	95.4*

table continues

Table 2 Continued

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percent
Annual Personal Income		
Under \$5,000	98	56
\$5,001-10,000	38	21.7
\$10,001-20,000	13	7.4
\$20,001-30,000	7	4
\$30,001-40,000	5	2.9
Over \$40,000	1	0.6
Other	2	1.1
Total	164*	93.7*
Year at School		
Freshman	31	17.7
Sophomore	47	26.9
Junior	44	25.1
Senior	39	22.3
Other	6	3.4
Total	167*	95.4*
Work Status		
Full-time	8	4.6
Part-time	101	57.7
Do not work	54	30.9
Total	163*	93.1*

\*The total percentage is less than 100% due to missing data.

Table 3

*Shopping Behavior of the Sample*

Shopping Behavior Variable	Frequency	Percent
Channel of Shopping		
In store only	70	40
Online only	6	3.4
Both channels	91	52
None	8	4.6
Total	175	100

table continues

Table 3 Continued

Shopping Behavior Variable	Frequency	Percent
<b>Retailer Patronized</b>		
Forever 21	155	88.6
H&M	121	69.1
Gap	110	62.9
Anthropologie	61	34.9
Zara	36	20.6
Topshop	24	13.7
Benetton	22	12.6
Mango	12	6.9
Primark	5	2.9
Uniqlo	5	2.9
Next	4	2.3
New Look	4	2.3
Peacocks	0	0
Total	559*	319.7*
<b>Products Purchased</b>		
Shirt	160	22.1
Pants	107	14.7
Skirt	122	16.9
Jacket	99	13.7
Accessories	137	18.9
Shoes	99	13.7
Total	724*	100
<b>Shopping Frequency</b>		
Never	8	4.6
Once a week	9	5.1
Two to three times a month	51	29.1
Once a month	60	34.3
Two to three times a year	40	22.9
Once a year	6	3.4
Once every two years	1	0.60
Total	175	100

\*The total number exceeds 175 or 100% because participants were allowed to check more than one response.

## **Preliminary Analyses**

### *Exploratory Factor Analysis*

A principal components factor analysis using Varimax rotation was executed on each multiple-item scale. Multiple-item scales were purified based on several considerations including the magnitudes of the factor loadings on each item, average variance extracted, and construct reliabilities (Fomell & Larcker, 1981). For each analysis, Eigenvalues greater than 1.0 helped determine the number of factors for each scale. Following Kim and Chen-Yu's (2005) suggestion, items with factor loadings of at least 0.50 on one factor and less than 0.30 on other factors were retained.

For fashion consciousness, the sample revealed one underlying factor with an Eigenvalue exceeding 1.0. This factor consisted of ten items from the questionnaire (see Table 4 for a list of the scale items composing this factor). The fashion consciousness factor had an Eigenvalue of 6.03 and explained 40.18% of the variance.

For scarcity, the sample revealed three underlying factors with an Eigenvalue exceeding 1.0. The first factor represented scarcity due to time and was renamed “Perceived Scarcity—Limited Availability due to Time.” The factor consisted of five items from the questionnaire (e.g., “Fast fashion retailers’ products are not available for very long”). The perceived scarcity—limited availability due to time factor had an Eigenvalue of 3.63, explained 36.31% of the variance, and had an alpha value of 0.76. The second factor consisted of two items from the questionnaire (i.e., “I think that products that I would be interested in at fast fashion retailers would be almost out of stock,” and “Fast fashion retailers only carry a limited number of products per size, style,

and color”). This factor was renamed “Perceived Scarcity—Limited Availability due to Supply.” This factor had an Eigenvalue of 1.54 and explained 15.41% of the variance. The third factor also consisted of two items from the questionnaire (i.e., “I believe that products that would be of interest to me at fast fashion retailers would often be scarce in my size,” and “I imagine that I would be able to mostly get my first preference in my size at fast fashion retailers”). This factor captured scarcity due to demand, and it was renamed “Perceived Scarcity—Limited Availability due to Demand”. It had an Eigenvalue of 1.07 and explained 10.71% of the variance.

EFA revealed a one-factor solution for attitude toward fast fashion stores. This factor consisted of three items (e.g., “I think fast fashion retailers are good”). The attitude toward fast fashion retailers factor had an Eigenvalue of 2.20 and explained 73.19% of the variance.

For impulse buying, the sample revealed a one-factor solution consisting of nine items from the questionnaire (e.g., “I buy things according to how I feel at the moment when I am shopping with fast fashion retailers”). The impulse buying factor had an Eigenvalue of 5.17 and explained 57.43% of the variance.

For negative post-purchase emotional response, the sample revealed two underlying factors with an Eigenvalue exceeding 1.0. The first factor consisted of nine items from the questionnaire (e.g., “After I made my purchase, I felt guilty”). This factor had an Eigenvalue of 6.61 and explained 44.07% of the variance. This factor seemed to capture the negative emotions, so it was renamed “Negative Post-Purchase Emotional Response—Negative Emotions.” The second factor consisted of four items from the



questionnaire (e.g., “After I made my purchase, I felt carefree” (reverse coded)). This factor had an Eigenvalue of 2.62 and explained 17.45% of the variance. Because all of the items in this factor were the positive emotions that had to be reverse coded to make them negative emotions, this second factor was renamed “Negative Post-Purchase Emotional Response—Reversed Positive Emotions.”

EFA revealed a one-factor solution for the product return variable. This factor was composed of three items from the questionnaire (e.g., “I frequently return the products that I purchase from fast fashion retailers”). The factor had an Eigenvalue of 1.86 and explained 62.02% of the variance.

Although perceived low price was not included in the conceptual model, the variable was used as a control variable to examine whether the low price of the items in the fast fashion retailers had a direct effect on impulse buying behavior. Because perceived low price was a multi-item scale, the items were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis. The EFA revealed a one-factor solution for all five items from the questionnaire (e.g., “It is affordable”). The factor has an Eigenvalue of 4.17 and explained 83.32% of the variance.

*Table 4*

*Factor Loadings for Scale Items*

Factor	Factor Loading
<b>Fashion Consciousness</b>	
When I must choose between the two, I usually dress for fashion not for comfort.	0.60
.	Table continues

Table 4 Continued

Factor	Factor Loading
I have more stylish clothes than most of my friends.	0.61
I usually have one or more outfits that are of the very latest style.	0.64
I enjoy looking through fashion magazines.	0.56
An important part of my life and activities is dressing fashionably.	0.86
I am usually aware of my motives when I buy clothes.	0.64
I am more fashionable/style-conscious than the average person.	0.82
I would say I am very fashion-conscious.	0.80
I take great care in choosing the clothes I wear.	0.71
I am very conscious of the fashion of the opposite sex.	0.63
<b>Perception of Scarcity in Fast Fashion Environments</b>	
<i>Limited Availability due to Time</i>	0.78
Fast fashion retailers rapidly turn over their merchandise.	0.50
Fast fashion retailers' products are not available for very long.	0.86
Fast fashion retailers introduce new fashion styles quickly.	0.80
Fast fashion retailers' products are fresh in terms of fashion trends.	0.87
Fast fashion retailers' products move fast.	
<i>Limited Availability due to Supply</i>	
I think that products that I would be interested in at fast fashion retailers would be almost out of stock.	0.56
Fast fashion retailers only carry a limited number of products per size, style, and color.	0.58
<i>Limited Availability due to Demand</i>	
I believe that products that would be of interest to me at fast fashion retailers would often be scarce in my size.	0.87
I imagine that I would be able to mostly get my first preference in my size at fast fashion retailers.*	0.76
<b>Attitude</b>	
I think fast fashion retailers are good.	0.86
I dislike fast fashion retailers. *	0.84
I have a favorable opinion of fast fashion retailers.	0.87
<b>Impulse Buying</b>	
I often buy things spontaneously from fast fashion retailers.	0.73
"Just do it" describes the way I buy things at fast fashion retailers.	0.84
I often buy things without thinking at fast fashion retailers.	0.83

table continues

Table 4 Continued

Factor	Factor Loading
“I see it, I buy it” describes my behavior in fast fashion retail environments.	0.82
“Buy it now, think about it later” describes the way I act in fast fashion retail environments.	0.78
Sometimes I feel like buying things on the spur-of-the-moment when I am shopping with fast fashion retailers.	0.80
I buy things according to how I feel at the moment when I am shopping with fast fashion retailers.	0.69
I carefully plan most of my purchases at fast fashion retailers. *	0.43
Sometimes I am a bit reckless about what I buy at fast fashion retailers.	0.80
<b>Negative Post-Purchase Emotional Response</b>	
<i>Negative Emotions</i>	
After I made my purchase, I felt bored.	0.79
After I made my purchase, I felt mischievous.	0.53
After I made my purchase, I felt frustrated.	0.84
After I made my purchase, I felt depressed.	0.83
After I made my purchase, I felt miserable.	0.87
After I made my purchase, I felt shameful.	0.87
After I made my purchase, I felt regret.	0.78
After I made my purchase, I felt angry.	0.83
After I made my purchase, I felt guilty.	0.61
<i>Reversed Positive Emotions</i>	
After I made my purchase, I felt pleasure.*	0.58
After I made my purchase, I felt excited.*	0.61
After I made my purchase, I felt content.*	0.65
After I made my purchase, I felt carefree.*	0.75
<b>Product Return Behavior</b>	
I frequently return the products that I purchase from fast fashion retailers.	0.87
I have returned most of the products that I have purchased from fast fashion retailers.	0.86
I usually do not return products that I purchase from fast fashion retailers.*	0.61

table continues

Table 4 Continued

Factor	Factor Loading
<b>Perceived Low Price</b>	
It is reasonably priced.	0.94
It is affordable.	0.95
It meets my budget for clothing shopping.	0.94
It is inexpensive.	0.86
The price is lower than comparable fashion stores.	0.86

\* Item was reverse coded.

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, and ranges) for the variables. The means of the majority of the constructs were close to or above the midpoint (i.e., 3.00). The means for three constructs: product return behavior (MReturn = 1.87), negative post-purchase emotional response--reversed positive emotions (MRevPostEmotions = 2.01), and negative post-purchase emotional response--negative emotions (MNegativeEmotions = 1.61), had means that were lower than 3.00. The standard deviations for all variables ranged from 0.64 (MLimitTime = 4.28) to 0.95 (MLimitDemand = 2.99), suggesting substantial variances in the responses.

To ensure the reliability of the variables, Cronbach's alpha was calculated. Cronbach's alpha is a widely used measure for assessing the reliability of a psychometrically developed scale (Peter, 1979). In addition, Cronbach's alpha was used to examine the internal consistency of the measures. The value of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranges from 0 and 1, where 0 indicates a completely unreliable measure and 1 indicates a completely reliable measure. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) recommended

that the reliability of all latent constructs should exceed the benchmark of 0.70 as an indication of acceptable measures.

Table 5 shows the reliability of all measures used in the study. Overall, information from Table 5 indicates that most of the measures were reliable because their alpha values exceeded 0.70. The values for Cronbach's coefficients for these variables ranged from 0.94 (negative post-purchase emotional response—negative emotions) to 0.76 (perception of scarcity—limited due to time) for these variables. The alpha value for three constructs: perception of scarcity--limited due to supply ( $\alpha = .524$ ), perception of scarcity--limited due to demand ( $\alpha = 0.613$ ), and product return behavior ( $\alpha = .672$ ), were lower than 0.70. Although these three constructs exhibit a marginal level of reliability, investigators (Cortina, 1993) have demonstrated that the alpha coefficient is influenced by the number of items in the scale. Because these scales contain less than 10 items, a Cronbach's alpha level slightly lower than 0.70 does not indicate that the items represent an unreliable measure. Furthermore, given the exploratory nature of the study, alpha levels exceeding 0.50 are acceptable (Nunally & Bernstein, 1994).

### **Hypotheses Testing**

A series of single and multiple regression analyses was performed for testing all hypotheses. Before the hypotheses were tested, a single regression model was created to examine the effect of perceived low price on impulse buying behavior. According to the single regression model, perceived low price did not have a significant direct effect on impulse buying behavior ( $\beta = -0.16$ ,  $t$ -value =  $-0.47$ ,  $p < 0.64$ ). Hence, the low price of the products sold by fast fashion retailers is not a significant predictor of impulse buying

behavior, suggesting that the variables in the conceptual model are worthy of further investigation. Thus, hypothesis tests were conducted using regression analyses.

*Table 5*

*Descriptive Statistics of Variables*

Variable	Number of Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Range	Reliability
Fashion Consciousness	10*	4.03	0.65	1.60-5.00	0.88
Scarcity					
<i>Limited due to Time</i>	5*	4.28	0.64	2.20-5.00	0.76
<i>Limited due to Demand</i>	2	2.99	0.95	1.00-5.00	0.61
<i>Limited due to Supply</i>	2	3.81	0.73	2.00-5.00	0.52
Attitude	3	4.00	0.71	2.00-5.00	0.81
Impulse Buying	9	3.22	0.88	1.00-5.00	0.90
Negative Post-Purchase Emotional Response					
<i>Reversed Positive Emotions</i>	4	2.01	0.68	1.00-4.00	0.83
<i>Negative Emotions</i>	9*	1.61	0.83	1.00-4.13	0.94
Product Return Behavior	3	1.87	0.81	1.00-5.00	0.67
Perceived Low Price	5	4.29	0.28	1.80-5.00	0.95

\*Presents number of items after some items were excluded.

The first regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between fashion consciousness and attitude toward fast fashion retailers. The second set of regression analyses was conducted to examine the relationships between fashion consciousness and the three factors corresponding to perception of scarcity (i.e., limited due to time, limited due to supply, limited due to demand). The third regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between attitude toward fast fashion retailers

and impulse buying behavior. The fourth set of regression analyses was conducted to examine the relationship between the three factors corresponding to perception of scarcity (i.e., limited due to time, limited due to supply, limited due to demand) and impulse buying behavior. The fifth set of regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between impulse buying behavior and the two factors of negative post-purchase emotional response (i.e., reversed positive emotions and negative emotions). The sixth set of regression analyses was conducted to examine the relationships between the two factors corresponding to negative post-purchase emotional response (i.e., reversed positive emotions and negative emotions) and product return behavior.

*Hypothesis 1: The Relationship between Fashion Consciousness and Attitude toward Fast Fashion Retailers*

The first single regression analysis was performed using consumers' attitude toward fast fashion retailers as a dependent variable and fashion consciousness as an independent variable. This analysis was performed to test the hypotheses concerning the relationship between fashion consciousness and attitude toward fast fashion retailers (Hypothesis 1). The regression model itself was significant and indicated that consumers' attitude toward fast fashion retailers was associated with fashion consciousness ( $F_{(1, 173)} = 4342.10, p < .000$ ). The model accounted for roughly 96% of the variance explained ( $R^2 = 0.96$ ).

Hypothesis 1 predicted that fashion consciousness would have a positive relationship with attitude toward fast fashion retailers. Results revealed that fashion consciousness was significantly related to attitude toward fast fashion retailers ( $\beta = 0.98$ ,

$t$ -value = 65.90,  $p < 0.000$ ). Therefore, H1 was supported. That is, fashion consciousness was positively related to attitude toward fast fashion retailers.

*Hypothesis 2: The Relationship between Fashion Consciousness and Perception of Scarcity*

The second set of single regression analyses was performed using perception of scarcity—limited availability due to time, perception of scarcity—limited availability due to supply, and perception of scarcity—limited availability due to demand dependent variables and fashion consciousness as an independent variable (see Table 6). These analyses were performed to test the hypothesis concerning the relationship between fashion consciousness and perception of scarcity (Hypothesis 2).

The regression model containing fashion consciousness and perception of scarcity—limited availability due to time was significant and indicates that fashion consciousness was associated with perceptions of scarcity—limited availability due to time ( $F_{(1, 173)} = 7197.28$ ,  $p < .000$ ). The model accounted for roughly 98% of the variance explained ( $R^2 = 0.98$ ).

Similarly, the regression model containing fashion consciousness and perceptions of scarcity—limited availability due to supply was significant and indicates that fashion consciousness was associated with perception of scarcity—limited availability due to supply ( $F_{(1, 174)} = 5197.58$ ,  $p < .000$ ). The model accounted for roughly 97% of the variance explained ( $R^2 = 0.97$ ).

Lastly, the regression model containing fashion consciousness and perception of scarcity—limited availability due to demand was significant and indicates that fashion



consciousness was associated with perception of scarcity--limited availability due to demand ( $F_{(1, 174)} = 1185.95, p < .000$ ). The model accounted for roughly 87% of the variance explained ( $R^2 = 0.87$ ). The  $R^2$  coefficient (0.87) suggests that the variable (fashion consciousness) included in the regression equation did not fully account for participants' perception of scarcity—limited due to demand.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that fashion consciousness was positively related to perception of scarcity. Results revealed that fashion consciousness was significantly related to perceptions of scarcity in terms of (a) limited availability due to time ( $\beta = 0.99, t\text{-value} = 84.84, p < .000$ ) (b) limited availability due to supply ( $\beta = 0.98, t\text{-value} = 72.09, p < .000$ ) and (c) limited availability due to demand ( $\beta = 0.93, t\text{-value} = 34.44, p < .000$ ) (see Table 6). Therefore, H2 was supported. Fashion consciousness was related to the three factors of perceptions of scarcity. That is, fashion consciousness was positively related to participants' perception of scarcity in fast fashion retail environments.

*Table 6*

*Multiple Regression Results for Fashion Consciousness and Perception of Scarcity*

Fashion Consciousness	Beta ( $\beta$ ) Coefficient	t-value	p-value
Perception of Scarcity			
Limited availability due to time	0.99	84.84	0.00
Limited availability due to supply	0.98	72.09	0.00
Limited availability due to demand	0.93	34.44	0.00

*Hypothesis 3: The Relationship between Attitude toward Fast Fashion Retailers and Impulse Buying Behavior*

The third single regression analysis was performed using impulse buying behavior as a dependent variable and attitude toward fast fashion retailers as an independent variable. This analysis was performed to test the hypothesis concerning the relationship between attitude toward fast fashion retailers and impulse buying behavior (Hypothesis 3). The model significantly explained that attitude toward fast fashion retailers was associated with impulse buying behavior ( $F_{(1, 165)} = 2223.93$ ,  $p < .000$ ) and accounted for roughly 93% of the variance explained ( $R^2 = 0.93$ ).

Hypothesis 3 proposed that attitude toward fast fashion retailers was positively related to impulse buying behavior. Results revealed that attitude toward fast fashion retailers was significantly related to impulse buying behavior ( $\beta = 0.97$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 47.16$ ,  $p < .000$ ). Therefore, H3 was supported. That is, participants' attitude toward fast fashion retailers was positively related to their impulse buying behavior in fast fashion retail environments.

*Hypothesis 4: The Relationship between Perception of Scarcity and Impulse Buying Behavior*

The fourth multiple regression analysis was performed using impulse buying behavior as a dependent variable and the three factors of perception of scarcity as independent variables. The model significantly explains that perception of scarcity was associated with impulse buying behavior ( $F_{(3, 166)} = 746.56$ ,  $p < .000$ ) and accounted for roughly 93% of the variance explained ( $R^2 = 0.93$ ).

Information about the multiple regression results was used to test Hypothesis 4. Hypothesis 4 predicted that perception of scarcity was positively related to impulse buying behavior. Results revealed that the relationship between impulse buying behavior and perception of scarcity using (a) limited availability due to time ( $\beta = 0.62$ ,  $t$ -value = 5.11,  $p < .000$ ) and (b) limited availability due to supply ( $\beta = 0.33$ ,  $t$ -value = 2.70,  $p < .01$ ) were significant. Perceptions of scarcity--limited availability due to demand was not significant ( $\beta = 0.02$ ,  $t$ -value = 0.32,  $p < 0.75$ ). Therefore, H4 was partially supported. That is, perception of scarcity in terms of limited availability due to time and supply was positively related to participants' impulse buying behavior in fast fashion retail environments.

*Hypothesis 5: The Relationship between Impulse Buying Behavior and Negative Post-Purchase Emotional Response*

The next two single regression analyses were performed using negative post-purchase emotional response as a dependent variable (i.e., reversed positive emotions and negative emotions) and impulse buying behavior as an independent variable (see Table 7). The model of impulse buying behavior significantly explained that negative post-purchase emotional response--reversed positive emotions was associated with impulse buying behavior ( $F_{(1, 163)} = 547.71$ ,  $p < .000$ ) and accounted for roughly 88% of the variance explained ( $R^2 = 0.88$ ). Negative post-purchase emotional response—negative emotions was also significantly related to impulse buying behavior ( $F_{(1, 164)} = 521.86$ ,  $p < .000$ ) and accounted for roughly 87% of the variance explained ( $R^2 = 0.87$ ).

We employed information from multiple regression results from Table 7 to test Hypothesis 5. Hypothesis 5 proposed that impulse buying behavior was positively related to negative post-purchase emotional response. Results revealed that impulse buying behavior was significantly related to negative post-purchase emotional response—negative emotions ( $\beta = 0.87$ ,  $t$ -value = 22.84,  $p < .000$ ) (see Table 7). Negative post-purchase emotional response--reversed positive emotions was also positively related to impulse buying ( $\beta = 0.88$ ,  $t$ -value = 23.40,  $p < .000$ ). Therefore, H5 was supported. Impulse buying behavior in fast fashion environments was positively related to negative post-purchase emotional response in terms of reversed positive emotions and negative emotions.

*Table 7*

*Multiple Regression Results of Impulse Buying Behavior and Negative Post-Purchase Emotional Response*

Impulse Buying Behavior	Beta ( $\beta$ ) Coefficient	t-value	p-value
Negative Post-Purchase Emotional Response			
Reversed positive emotions	0.88	23.40	0.00
Negative emotions	0.87	22.84	0.00

*Hypothesis 6: The Relationship between Negative Post-Purchase Emotional Response and Product Return Behavior*

The sixth multiple regression analysis was performed using product return behavior as a dependent variable and negative post-purchase emotional response—reversed positive emotions and negative post-purchase emotional response—negative emotions as independent variables. The model significantly explained that negative post-purchase emotional response—reversed positive emotions and negative post-purchase emotional response—negative emotions were both associated with product return behavior ( $F_{(2, 162)} = 600.99, p < .000$ ) and accounted for roughly 88% of the variance explained ( $R^2 = 0.88$ ).

Hypothesis 6 proposed that negative post-purchase emotional response was positively related to product return behavior. Negative post-purchase emotional response—reversed positive emotions was significantly related to product return behavior ( $\beta = 0.58, t\text{-value} = 7.65, p < .000$ ). Negative post-purchase emotional response—negative emotions was also significantly related to product return behavior ( $\beta = 0.45, t\text{-value} = 6.81, p < .000$ ). Based on such results, it was concluded that negative post-purchase emotional response was positively related to product return behavior, supporting H6. That is, participants who reported experiencing negative emotions following impulse buying behavior tended to return products to fast fashion retail environments. The results of all hypotheses testing are summarized in Table 8.

### **Post-Hoc Analysis**

While the current study illustrates that the value of fashion consciousness indirectly influences female consumers' impulse buying behavior in fast fashion retail environments, some previous literature suggests that a direct relationship between fashion consciousness and impulse buying behavior may exist (Han et al., 1991). A direct relationship between fashion consciousness and impulse buying behavior was not hypothesized in the current study because additional literature exists which refutes such as relationship (Cinjarevic, Tatic, & Petric, 2011). A decision was made to run a post-hoc analysis to examine the direct impact of fashion consciousness on impulse buying behavior in fast fashion retail environments.

A single regression model was used to test this relationship. The results indicated that the model fit the data well ( $F_{(1, 165)} = 2197.92, p < .000$ ) and accounted for roughly 93% of the variance explained ( $R^2=0.93$ ). Fashion consciousness was positively and significantly related to impulse buying behavior ( $\beta = 0.96, t\text{-value} = 46.88, p < .000$ ). So, in addition to the indirect effect of the value of fashion consciousness on impulse buying behavior through attitudes toward fast fashion retail environments, the value of fashion consciousness also directly influences impulse buying behavior among young, female consumers.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented statistical findings related to hypotheses addressed in Chapter II. In the next chapter, a discussion of conclusions related to these findings is addressed. Implications are provided. The thesis is then concluded with a discussion of

limitations and future research directions

*Table 8*

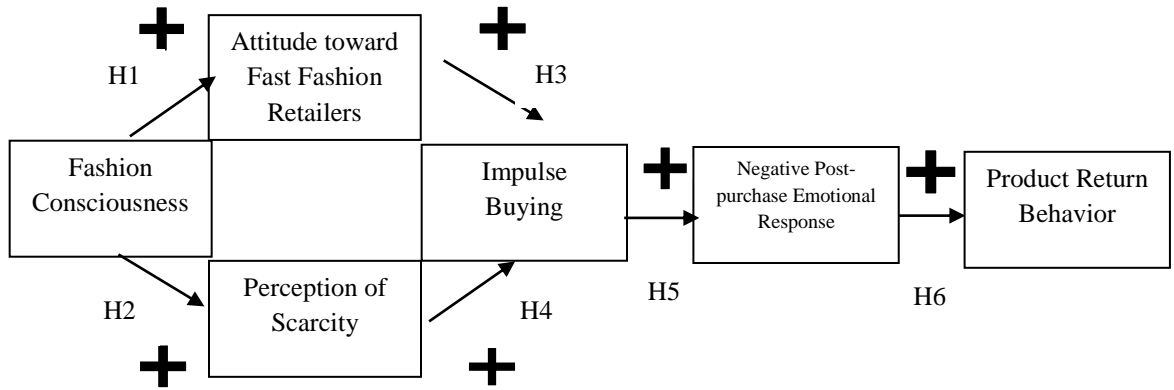
*Summary of the Results of Hypotheses*

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	<u>Hypothesis</u>	<u>Results</u>
H1	Fashion consciousness is positively related to attitude toward fast fashion retailers.	Supported
H2	Fashion consciousness is positively related to perception of scarcity attitudes toward using an innovative product.	Supported
H3	Attitude toward fast fashion retailers is positively related to impulse buying behavior.	Supported
H4	Perception of scarcity is positively related to impulse buying behavior.	Partially Supported
H5	Impulse buying behavior is positively related to negative post-purchase emotional response.	Supported
H6	Negative post-purchase emotional response is positively related to product return behavior.	Supported

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Figure 8: The Results of Hypothesis Testing on the Conceptual Model of the Study





## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The overall objective of this study was (1) to use the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy to examine consumer behavior within the fast fashion retail environment; (2) to investigate the effects of fashion consciousness, attitude toward fast fashion retailers, and perceptions of scarcity on impulse buying behavior in fast fashion environments; (3) to examine the impact of impulse buying behavior in fast fashion environments on post-purchase emotional response; and (4) to explore the relationship between post-purchase emotional response and product return behavior in fast fashion environments. All hypotheses have been tested and their results have been reported in the previous chapter. In this chapter, a discussion of the findings is provided. Then implications of this study are presented. Finally, the limitations pertaining to the study are identified, followed by brief suggestions for future research directions.

#### **Discussion of Major Findings**

The current research extensively explored both pre-purchase and post-purchase factors of consumer behavior in the fast fashion environment. Because the focus of the study included a more extensive range of consumer behavior, the present study expanded knowledge of consumer behavior with respect to fast fashion retail environments. The study extended the work of Byun & Sternquist (2011) to include not only pre-purchase

variables but also post-purchase variables that impact consumer behavior in fast fashion retail environments. By applying the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy to an examination of fast fashion consumer behavior, additional variables, such as the value of fashion consciousness, that were previously unexplored in research were shown to have a significant impact on consumers' attitudes and subsequent behavior. Moreover, by drawing on additional research concerning impulse buying and product return behavior, the current research extended previous studies by examining the potential drawbacks of the fast fashion retail environment on consumer behavior.

*Objective 1: Using the Value-Attitude-Behavior Hierarchy to Examine Consumer Behavior within the Fast Fashion Retail Environment*

The relationship between values, attitudes, and behavior was explained by the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy (Homer & Kahle, 1988). According to Homer and Kahle (1988), values directly affect the formation of attitudes, which then influence behavior. In examining the relationship between consumer behavior and the fast fashion retail environment, results revealed that fashion consciousness, which can be conceptualized as a consumer value, has a positive influence on a fashion conscious consumer's attitude toward the fast fashion environment. The results of the current research support the previous study of O' Cass (2004), who found that fashion conscious consumers favor spending time and money acquiring fashionable products from clothing retailers who are known to sell fashion-forward merchandise. Because fashion conscious consumers are highly involved with up-to-date fashion (O' Cass, 2004; Walsh et al.,

2001), the positive attitude toward the fast fashion retail environment exhibited by fashion conscious individuals reflects the importance that these individuals place on being able to acquire these products in order to experience happiness and life satisfaction.

An exploration of consumer behavior within the fast fashion retail environment using the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy revealed that fashion consciousness is positively related to perceptions of scarcity in the fast fashion retail environment. The result supports Byun and Sternquist's (2011) finding that fashion conscious individuals were driven by perceived scarcity due to supply and due to demand in the fast fashion retail environment. Fashion conscious consumers tend to purchase fashionable items that have been accepted by the majority (Rathnayake, 2011). Therefore, in this current research, the positive relationship found between fashion consciousness and perceptions of scarcity may be due to an awareness of the popularity of particular items that leads fashion conscious consumers to find the scarce product to be attractive (Law et al., 2004). Therefore, the result is also consistent with Iyer and Eastman's (2010) research because possession of a scarce product can fulfill fashion conscious consumers who are competitive and seek attention from others. That is, purchasing a product with a perception of scarcity provides a sense of social approval and self-uniqueness (Lynn, 1992a).

Fashion conscious consumers in this current study were not only attracted to scarcity due to supply and due to demand in the fast fashion environment, but also were attracted to scarcity due to time, which is referred as perceived perishability in Byun and

Sternquist's (2008, 2011) studies. However, Byun and Sternquist's (2011) study concludes that perceived perishability has a stronger influence on consumers who possess high-fashion innovativeness. Given that fashion conscious consumers, like fashion innovators, are sensitive to new trends of fashion (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010), it can be explained that consumers who possess the value of fashion consciousness will also be driven by product availability that is limited due to time in the fast fashion environment. Both fashion innovators and fashion conscious consumers understand that the popularity of styles changes quickly so they need to react in a timely fashion in order to find the right product in the right size in fast fashion retail environments.

Based on the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy, the values influence where a person chooses to go and what a person chooses to do with his or her time (Homer & Kahle, 1988). The need to follow fashion leads fashion conscious consumers to frequently visit the fast fashion retailers and to be aware of scarcity in this environment. For this reason, the results of hypothesis testing for relationship between fashion consciousness and attitude toward the fast fashion retail environment (H1) and for relationship between fashion consciousness and a perception of scarcity (H2) were supported.

The post-hoc analysis investigating the direct relationship between fashion consciousness and impulse buying behavior suggests that, in addition to being conceptualized as a value that influences behavior via attitudes, fashion consciousness could also be conceptualized as an attitude that directly influences behavior. Thus,

support for both the work of Cinjarevic et al., (2011) and Han et al. (1991) was found in the current study. By conceptualizing fashion consciousness as a value, however, additional explanatory power is provided to the model that is not provided if fashion consciousness is conceptualized as an attitude that directly influences behavior in fast fashion retail environments. Clearly, more work needs to be done with respect to the concept of fashion consciousness both within and outside of fast fashion retail environments. The use of more advanced statistical techniques, such as structural equation modeling, could provide insight regarding the most effective conceptualization of fashion consciousness from a theoretical and practical standpoint.

*Objective 2: Investigating the Effects of Fashion Consciousness, Attitude toward Fast Fashion Retailer Environments, and Perceptions of Scarcity on Impulse Buying Behavior in Fast Fashion Retailer Environments*

According to Homer and Kahle (1988), attitudes influence the choices that individuals make with respect to behavior, such as shopping and purchasing behavior. When the effect of attitude toward fast fashion retail environment was examined, the result showed a significant relationship between attitude toward the fast fashion retail environment and impulse buying behavior. That is, those who have a positive attitude toward the fast fashion retail environment were likely to purchase products from the fast fashion retailers impulsively. It can be explained that the product categories available in the fast fashion retailers, to which consumers have strong emotional attachments, are often those that are purchased impulsively (Ibrahim & Najjar, 2008; Jones et al., 2003;

Weinberg & Gottward, 1982). Moreover, it seems likely that fashion conscious consumers, who have a keen interest and attachment to up-to-date apparel products, would be particularly inclined to purchase apparel impulsively. Therefore, the result was consistent with previous studies about the existence of a relationship between impulse buying behavior and apparel products as well as those studies in which the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy was used to predict consumers' behavior based on their attitude. In sum, consumers who possessed the value of fashion consciousness tended to have positive attitudes towards fast fashion environments and, therefore, tended to buy impulsively in those environments.

Consumers' perception of scarcity in fast fashion environments and impulse buying behavior in fast fashion environments were also examined in the current research. The result revealed that consumers' perceptions of scarcity in those environments may display a positive relationship with impulse buying behavior in fast fashion retailers. Such a result lends support for previous studies, indicating that perceived scarcity can motivate an urge to take possession of an item in fast fashion retail environments (Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011). While scarcity can be viewed as a heuristic cue of products as being high demanded (Folger, 1992; Gierl et al., 2008; Lynn, 1992b; Wu & Hsing, 2006), participants in the current study did not seem to be motivated to purchase these products because they were popular and were in high demand, despite the fact that a positive relationship was found between fashion consciousness and perceptions of scarcity—limited availability due to demand. It seems to be the case that impulse buying is likely to

occur because the heuristic cue of scarcity urges consumers to buy the products for fear of missing an opportunity to own them (Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011). In this sense, it is the retailer who is controlling the amount available (i.e., limited availability due to supply) or the length of time that the products are available (i.e., limited availability due to time). While demand-related scarcity can have an impact on consumers' behavior, the impact of supply-related and time-related scarcity seemed to be a stronger predictor of impulse buying behavior in fast fashion environments in the current study. This finding is interesting, given the fact that previous researchers (Lynn, 1992b; Verhallen and Robbon, 1995) have found that scarcity due to market forces has a stronger effect on consumer behavior than non-market force scarcity. Perhaps given the time-dependent nature of fashion, a special place is reserved in the minds of consumers for fast fashion retailers' product replenishment strategies.

The positive relationship found between perceived scarcity and impulse buying behavior within the context of the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy helps to extend the theory to include additional variables. Attitudes are presumed to be composed of both affective, or emotional, and cognitive, or belief, components (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005). If perceived scarcity is conceptualized as the cognitive component of one's attitude toward fast fashion retail environments, then the attitude construct in the current study (Yoo et al., 1998) could be conceptualized more specifically as the affective component of one's attitude toward fast fashion retail environments. Previous researchers (de Dreu & van Lange, 1995) have found that values indirectly influence behaviors through cognitions.

Thus, the findings from the current study may also lend support to the work of these researchers. Further refinement of the concepts and constructs using additional data and more advanced statistical techniques is necessary in the future.

*Objective 3: Examining the Impact of Impulse Buying Behavior in Fast Fashion Environments on Post-Purchase Emotional Response*

In examining the effect of impulse buying behavior in the fast fashion environments on post-purchase emotional response, the results showed that impulse buying behavior was related to negative post-purchase emotional response with respect to negative emotions and reversed-coded positive emotions. The result of the current research supported previous work that found that impulse buying behavior produced negative post-purchase emotional responses in consumers (Gardner & Rook, 1988; Kang & Johnson, 2009; Park & O'Neal, 2000; Rook, 1987). Due to the lack of extensive consideration before making a purchase, impulse buyers are likely to experience post-purchase regret (Kang & Johnson, 2009). It is widely known that emotions are the main drivers in pre-purchase evaluations in the shopping environment (George & Yaoyuneyong, 2010; Park et al., 2006; Vernplanken & Sato, 2005). The result of this study confirms that emotions are also involved in the post-purchase process. The finding that negative emotions follow consumers' impulse buying behavior in the fast fashion environment is a significant contribution to the literature regarding consumer behavior in the fast fashion environment.



*Objective 4: Exploring the Relationship between Post-Purchase Emotional Response and Product Return Behavior in Fast Fashion Environments*

An exploration of the relationship between post-purchase emotional responses on product return behavior in fast fashion environments revealed that negative post-purchase emotional response was positively related to return behavior in fast fashion retail environments. This result supported the work of previous researchers (Kang & Johnson, 2009) who also found that consumers return products when they experience negative post-purchase emotions. The current study, however, was the first to examine the impact of negative emotions on product returns in fast fashion retail environments. The results of the current study lend support to those of previous research in which feelings of regret were found as a reason for consumers' product returns from impulse buying (D'Innocenzio, 2011). Additionally, in the current study, other negative post-purchase emotional responses besides guilt and regret seemed to be equally important reasons for consumers' product returns from impulse buying in fast fashion environments. This may be because, in the current research, 68.6% and 87.4% of the participants reported that they patronized H&M and Forever 21, respectively. These two fast fashion retailers are known for offering low-priced merchandise compared to other fast fashion retailers. A low-priced purchase from these fast fashion retailers may not cause guilt or regret from overspending, in particular. Instead, participants' negative emotions may have been caused by other sources of unhappiness or displeasure, perhaps product quality or fit. Results from the current study provide further support for Kang and Johnson's (2009) idea that negative post-purchase emotional responses may be because consumers are not

satisfied with product-related variables rather than simply the effect of impulse buying behavior.

### **Conclusion**

This research was among the first to apply the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy to examine consumer behavior within the fast fashion retail environment. The value of fashion consciousness had a positive influence on consumers' attitude toward fast fashion environments. In addition, fashion conscious values also had a positive relationship to perceptions of scarcity within the fast fashion retail environment. The effects of attitude toward fast fashion retail environments and perceptions of scarcity on impulse buying behavior were also examined. Attitude toward fast fashion retail environments and perceptions of scarcity were related to impulse buying behavior in fast fashion retail environments. A significant relationship between impulse buying behavior and negative post-purchase emotions was found. Concerning the relationship between the negative post-purchase emotional responses and product return behavior, product return behavior in the fast fashion retail environment was positively influenced by negative post-purchase emotional responses.

### **Managerial and Theoretical Implications**

The current study provides insight for both academicians and practitioners. Theoretically, the results of the current study contribute to a greater understanding of apparel-related consumer behavior in general. More specifically, the current study extends the knowledge base pertaining to the behavior of consumers within fast fashion retail environments (Byun & Sternquist, 2008; 2011). Furthermore, the current study

contributes to the field by providing a more complete picture of the entire consumer behavior process from purchase to disposition in one retail context. The current study offers support for the use of the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy with respect to purchase within the fast fashion retail environment. Moreover, the findings of the current study demonstrate that emotional responses following purchase lead to disposition decisions regarding fast fashion merchandise. Thus, in one study, the formation of a theory of fast fashion consumer behavior from acquisition to disposal begins.

In terms of managerial implications, this current study offers suggestions that can be employed by fast fashion retailers. The results of the current study clearly indicate that consumers' perceptions of scarcity, particularly in terms of limited availability in terms of time and supply, are an antecedent of impulse purchase behavior. Fast fashion retailers could use this information to design marketing strategies to emphasize these features of product scarcity and drive sales of full-price merchandise (Choi et al., 2010; Jin et al., 2012). Because the results showed that people who possess the value of fashion consciousness tend to have a positive attitude toward fast fashion retail environments and depend on scarcity signals to make purchase decisions, fast fashion retailers could directly approach this target consumer with advertising and offers based on the characteristics of these consumers. A fashion retailer may induce fashion conscious consumers to patronize its store or website quickly by convincing her that the retailer can only provide the most fashionable and trendiest products for a limited time.

In the current study, the availability of fast fashion apparel products that was restricted due to time seemed to increase product desirability. In this way, the current

study yielded different results from research utilizing conspicuous consumption goods (e.g., Gierl et al., 2008) that concluded that limited availability due to time had less of an impact than scarcity due to supply or demand on the purchase of conspicuous consumption goods. Even though apparel products are considered to be conspicuous consumption products, the effects of different types of scarcity on this product category may not be similar to other types of conspicuous consumption product categories. As a result, consumer behavior in relation to apparel products should be paid more attention by practitioners to understand its nature in different retail environments. In the context of the fast fashion environment, marketers may gain different insights from the current study than from existing research in terms of consumers' behavior.

The fear of missing an opportunity to own a desired product may result in impulse buying behavior among fashion conscious individuals (Byun & Sternquist, 2008). As most fashion purchases are not necessities, fashion retailers often use techniques to encourage consumers to buy impulsively. However, given that impulse buying behavior is one characteristic that is associated with frequent product return behavior (Kang & Johnson, 2009), fast fashion retailers may need to find a solution to prevent product returns due to impulse buying. Furthermore, as the life cycle of the apparel products in fast fashion retail stores is only about one month (Doeringer & Crean, 2005), retailers need to limit the length of time in which consumers are able to return the products. Otherwise, fast fashion retailers will be left with stock of old, unwanted merchandise that is no longer on trend and, therefore, is no longer salable or profitable. At the same time, the ease of product returns could be another factor that increases

impulse buying (Bayley & Nancarrow, 1998). Therefore, fast fashion retailers must carefully design their return policies.

Impulse buying behavior can cause negative post-purchase evaluation in fast fashion environments, resulting in customer dissatisfaction. Participants in the current study returned products to fast fashion retailers after they experienced negative post-purchase emotions. Fast fashion retailers need to understand the causes of the return behavior, whether consumer-related or product-related, to better meet the needs of their target market. Consumers' negative feelings from previous-purchase disappointment may lead to reluctance to repurchase merchandise from fast fashion retailers. Fast fashion retailers have to be aware of this potential problem and find marketing strategies to increase customers' satisfaction even after their purchases. In this way, customers may feel motivated to revisit and repurchase merchandise from fast fashion retailers.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

As with any research project, the current study had several limitations that could lead to future research projects. The participants in the current study were all females. While less common, some fast fashion retailers do sell clothing for both men and women. In the future, researchers could compare the responses of males and females to examine differences in consumer behavior related to demographic characteristics.

In this current exploratory study, undergraduate students were asked to recall their emotions following purchases at fast fashion retailers. Furthermore, participants were asked to indicate the frequency of return behavior in fast fashion retail environments. While undergraduates are members of the target market in terms of age for fast fashion

retailers (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006), the responses of individuals from a non-student sample would offer important insight to fast fashion retailers. Additionally, in the future, an examination of actual emotional responses and return behavior would be beneficial for a more complete understanding of post-purchase consumer behavior. Researchers could perform a follow-up study with individuals who made purchases in fast fashion retail stores to investigate their post-purchase emotional responses and actual product return behavior.

Although beyond the scope of the current study, a comparison of in-store and online consumers could be conducted in the future. In the current study, the majority of the participants purchased items either exclusively in bricks-and-mortar stores or using a combination of bricks-and-mortar stores and store websites. Impulse buying behavior and product return behavior may differ in different channels. Future researchers could examine the differences between pre-purchase and post-purchase variables within offline and online fast fashion retail stores to identify strategies to improve profits and reduce product return behavior across channels.

Future research also needs to investigate the role of cultural differences on the impact of emotions after impulse buying behavior. Due to the fact that some cultures consider shopping to be an expression of self-identity or wealth (Bayley & Nancarrow, 1998), people in those cultures might have positive emotions after their impulse purchases. However, people may feel negative emotions after their impulse buying if their culture considers impulse buying as socially inappropriate and immature. This factor

may contribute to a better understanding of consumers in different countries by international apparel companies that operate fast fashion retail stores in various countries.

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APPENDIX A  
PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FROM IRB



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA  
**GREENSBORO**

**OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE**  
2718 Beverly Cooper Moore and Irene Mitchell Moore  
Humanities and Research Administration Bldg.  
PO Box 26170  
Greensboro, NC 27402-6170  
336.256.1482  
Web site: [www.uncg.edu/orc](http://www.uncg.edu/orc)  
Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #216

**To:** Jennifer Yurchisin  
Cons, Apparel, And Ret Stds  
210 Stone Building

**From:** UNCG IRB

**Date:** 4/03/2012

**RE:** Notice of IRB Exemption

**Exemption Category:** 2.Survey, interview, public observation

**Study #:** 12-0127

**Study Title:** Exploring the Effects of Scarcity, Impulse Buying, and Product Returning Behavior in the Fast Fashion Retail Environment

This submission has been reviewed by the above IRB and was determined to be exempt from further review according to the regulatory category cited above under 45 CFR 46.101(b).

**Study Description:**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships that may exist among fashion consciousness, attitude, perceptions of product scarcity, impulse buying behavior, post-purchase emotional response, and product return behavior within the context of the fast fashion retail environment.

**Investigator's Responsibilities**

Please be aware that any changes to your protocol must be reviewed by the IRB prior to being implemented. The IRB will maintain records for this study for three years from the date of the original determination of exempt status.

**CC:**  
Sasikarn Chatvijit, International Program Center  
ORC, (ORC), Non-IRB Review Contact

Oral Recruitment Script:

- Hello. I am Sasikarn Chatvijit, a masters' student in the Department of Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I am asking you if you would like to be in a research study. Completion of this research study is part of the requirements of my degree. With this research project, I am trying to find out more about consumer behavior in fast fashion retail environments. I am interested in finding out more about your purchasing and returning behavior in fast fashion apparel retail environments.
- You have been picked for this study because you are currently an undergraduate student enrolled in the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Undergraduate students represent a large portion of the target market for fast fashion retailers.
- If you decide that you would like to participate in the study, you will be asked to read and sign a consent form that will further explain the study, the procedures, and your rights as a research participant. After you read and sign the consent form, you will be asked to participate in a written survey. The survey will take place during this class period in this classroom. The survey will last approximately five to ten minutes. During the survey, you will be asked to read and respond to a series of questions. The items on the questionnaire will assess your personality traits, emotions, purchasing behavior, and returning behavior. The questionnaire also contains items that will be used to assess your demographic characteristics.
- There will be no payments made for participating in this study.
- There are no benefits to you of being in this study. The benefits to society of your participation in this study may include providing guidance to fast fashion apparel retailers so that they can remain financially successful. Additionally, your participation will add to our understanding of apparel consumer behavior in fast fashion retail environments.
- Minimal risks are associated with your participation in this study. Although it is very unlikely, you may experience discomfort while discussing your emotions or purchasing and returning behavior. If any of the questions asked cause you any discomfort, you may skip those questions. You may also request that the interview be stopped at any time after starting. If you decide that you do not want to be in the study after you start, you are free to leave whenever you like without penalty or unfair treatment.
- Your participation is completely voluntary and your grade will not be affected in any way by your decision to participate. Your name will not appear on the completed questionnaire. The signed consent forms and completed questionnaires will be collected and stored in two separate envelopes. Your privacy will be protected by storing all consent forms and completed questionnaires in a locked file cabinet in a locked office on the UNCG campus. The data will be analyzed on a password-protected computer. The data will be kept on a CD, and the CD will be stored in the locked file cabinet in the locked office on the UNCG campus. You will remain anonymous. In any manuscripts that are published from this research, you will not be identified. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.
- You should ask any questions you have before making up your mind.
- If you would like to participate, you will now be asked to read and sign the consent form before completing the questionnaire. If you have already completed the questionnaire in another class, please do not complete the questionnaire again. If you do not wish to participate or have already completed the questionnaire, please remain seated and work on something quietly while your classmates complete the consent form and questionnaire.

APPROVED IRB

APR 03 2012

APPENDIX B  
CONSENT FORM



**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO**  
**CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT: LONG FORM**

Project Title: Exploring the Effects of Scarcity, Impulse Buying, and Product Returning Behavior in the Fast Fashion Retail Environment

Project Director: Sasikarn Chatvijit under the direction of Dr. Jennifer Yurchisin

Participant's Name:

**What is the study about?**

This is a research project. Fast fashion retailers are among the most popular apparel retailers in the United States today. Studying consumer behavior in fast fashion retail environments can help retailers continue to remain financially successful as well as contribute to our general understand of apparel consumers in general. The purpose of the research is to investigate the relationships that may exist among fashion consciousness, attitude, perceptions of product scarcity, impulse buying behavior, post-purchase emotional response, and product return behavior within the context of the fast fashion retail environment.

**Why are you asking me?**

The reason you are being asked to participate is because you are currently enrolled in an undergraduate course at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Undergraduate consumers represent a large portion of the target market for fast fashion apparel retailers.

**What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire will take approximately five to ten minutes to complete. While completing the questionnaire, you will be asked to read and respond to several items that will assess your personal traits, emotions, and behavior. You will also be asked to read and respond to a series of demographic questions at the end of the questionnaire.

**Is there any audio/video recording?**

There will be no audio or video recording.

**What are the dangers to me?**

The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. Although it is very unlikely, you may experience discomfort while discussing your emotions or purchasing and returning behavior. If any of the questions asked cause you any discomfort, you may skip those questions. You may also stop completing the questionnaire at any time after you start.

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated or if you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research Compliance at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351. Questions, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study can be answered by Sasikarn Chatvijit who may be contacted at (336) 334-5250 or [s\\_chatvi@uncg.edu](mailto:s_chatvi@uncg.edu) or Jennifer Yurchisin who may be contacted at (336) 256-0272 or [jlyurchi@uncg.edu](mailto:jlyurchi@uncg.edu).

**Are there any benefits to me for taking part in this research study?**

There are no benefits to you for taking part in this research study.

UNCG IRB  
Approved Consent Form

Valid 4/3/12 to 4/2/15

**Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?**

The research may benefit society because the results may provide guidance to fast fashion apparel retailers so that they can remain financially successful. Furthermore, studying consumer behavior in fast fashion retail environments adds to our understanding of apparel consumer behavior in general.

**Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?**

There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study.

**How will you keep my information confidential?**

Confidentiality will be maintained by storing all consent forms and completed questionnaires in two separate envelopes in a locked file cabinet in a locked office on the UNCG campus. The data from the questionnaires will be analyzed on a password-protected computer. The data will be kept on a CD, and the CD will be stored in the locked file cabinet in the locked office on the UNCG campus. Your responses will remain confidential. You will not be asked to write your name on the questionnaire that you complete. In any manuscripts that are published from this research, no identifying information will be used. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

**What if I want to leave the study?**

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state.

**What about new information/changes in the study?**

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

**Voluntary Consent by Participant:**

By signing this consent form you are agreeing that you read, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by Sasikarn Chatvijit.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

UNCG IRB  
Approved Consent Form

Valid 4/3/12 to 4/2/15

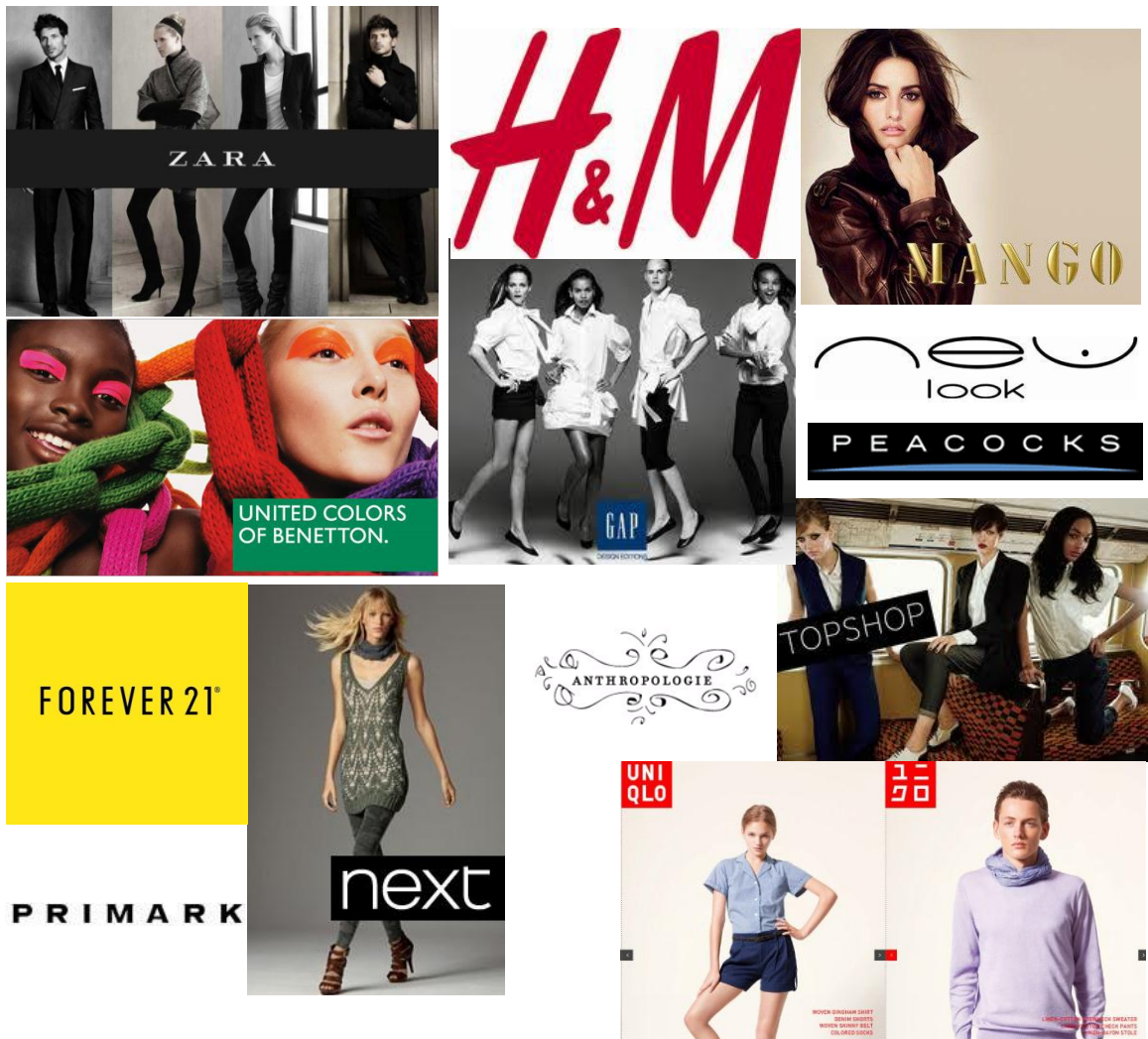
APPENDIX C  
QUESTIONNAIRE

## Section I: Your Behavior in Fast Fashion Retail Environments

Please read the description of fast fashion retailers below:

A fast fashion retailer is a type of clothing retail brand that offers product designs adapted from existing high-fashion houses or inspired by fashion shows, runways, and street fashion in similar fabric at much lower prices. Fast fashion retailers' products are available during the same season as the high-fashion styles. Products available for purchase are frequently renewed and up-to-date at this type of retailer.

Examples of this type of retailer are Zara, H&M, Mango, United Colors of Benetton, Gap, Anthropologie, Forever 21, Topshop, Primark, Peacocks, Next, New Look, and Uniqlo.



Now, please read the following items. Choose (X or ✓) the options that best describe your experience.

1. Have you ever purchased anything from any fast fashion retailers either online or from a store (check all that apply)?

- Yes—in store       Yes—online       No

2. If yes, please indicate which one(s).

- Zara     H&M     Mango     United Colors of Benetton  
 Gap     Forever 21     Topshop     Anthropologie  
 Primark     Peacocks     Next     New Look  
 Uniqlo     Other (indicate: \_\_\_\_\_)

3. If yes, how often do you usually purchase products from fast fashion retailers?

- Once a week                                       Two to three times a year  
 Two to three times a month                       Once a year  
 Once a month                                       Once every two years

4. If yes, what type(s) of product(s) have you purchased from fast fashion retailers?

- shirt                                       accessories (e.g., jewelry, scarf, purse)  
 pants                                       shoes  
 skirt                                       other (describe: \_\_\_\_\_)  
 jacket

## Section II: Your Personal Clothing Style

Read through the following items. Select (X or ✓) the circle below each statement that accurately corresponds with how strongly you believe each statement describes yourself.

**5. When I must choose between the two, I usually dress for fashion not for comfort.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**6. I have more stylish clothes than most of my friends.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**7. I usually have one or more outfits that are of the very latest style.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**8. I enjoy looking through fashion magazines.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**9. An important part of my life and activities is dressing fashionably.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**10. I am very aware that some clothes are more fashionable than others.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**11. I am usually aware of my motives when I buy clothes.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**12. I usually notice that some people are more fashionable than others.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**13. I am not very bold when it comes to fashions.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**14. I am more fashionable/style-conscious than the average person.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**15. I would say I am very fashion-conscious.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**16. I take great care in choosing the clothes I wear.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**17. I take a long time to decide about the clothes I wear.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**18. I am very conscious of the fashions of the opposite sex.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**19. I look in the mirror throughout the day.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Section III: Your Beliefs about Products in Fast Fashion Retail Environments**

Read the following statements. Mark (X or √) the box under each statement that accurately describes your knowledge of and/or experiences with fast fashion retailers.

**20. New styles are introduced on a frequent basis at fast fashion retailers.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**21. Fast fashion retailers rapidly turn over their merchandise.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**22. Fast fashion retailers' products are not available for very long.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**23. Fast fashion retailers introduce new fashion styles quickly.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**24. Fast fashion retailers' products are fresh in terms of fashion trends.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**25. Fast fashion retailers' products move fast.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



**26. I think that products that I would be interested in at fast fashion retailers would be almost out of stock.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**27. Fast fashion retailers only carry a limited number of products per size, style, and color.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**28. I believe that products that would be of interest to me at fast fashion retailers would often be scarce in my size.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**29. I imagine that I would be able to mostly get my first preference in my size at fast fashion retailers.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Section IV: Your Beliefs on Price of Products in the Fast Fashion Retailers**

**30. It is reasonably priced.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**31. It is affordable.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**32. It meets my budget for clothing shopping.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**33. It is inexpensive.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**34. The price is lower than comparable fashion stores.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Section V: Your Thoughts about Fast Fashion Retailers**

Read the statements that follow. Select (X or √) the box below each statement that most closely represents your degree of agreement with the statement.

**35. I think fast fashion retailers are good.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**36. I dislike fast fashion retailers.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**37. I have a favorable opinion of fast fashion retailers.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Now, if you have never purchased anything from a fast fashion retailer like the ones described on page 1, please skip the next three sections and continue with Section IX.

If you have purchased anything from a fast fashion retailer in the past, please complete Section VI, VII and VIII before you complete Section IX.

**Section VI: Your Shopping Habits at Fast Fashion Retailers**

Read the statements that follow. Select (X or √) the box below each statement that accurately corresponds with how strongly you believe each statement describes your experience with purchasing products at fast fashion retailers.

**38. I often buy things spontaneously from fast fashion retailers.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**39. “Just do it” describes the way I buy things at fast fashion retailers.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**40. I often buy things without thinking at fast fashion retailers.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**41. “I see it, I buy it” describes my behavior in fast fashion retail environments.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**42. “Buy it now, think about it later” describes the way I act in fast fashion retail environments.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**43. Sometime I feel like buying things on the spur-of-the-moment when I am shopping with fast fashion retailers.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**44. I buy things according to how I feel at the moment when I am shopping with fast fashion retailers.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**45. I carefully plan most of my purchases at fast fashion retailers.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**46. Sometimes I am a bit reckless about what I buy at fast fashion retailers.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Section VII: Your Beliefs about Your Fast Fashion Product Purchases**

**Think about the last time you purchased a product from any fast fashion retailers either online or at a store. If you never purchased products from any fast fashion retailers, skip this part.**

**Select (X or √) the box below each statement that accurately corresponds with how strongly you believe each statement describes your emotions after you purchased a product from a fast fashion retailer.**

**47. After I made my purchase, I felt pleasure.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**48. After I made my purchase, I felt excited.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**49. After I made my purchase, I felt content.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**50. After I made my purchase, I felt carefree.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**51. After I made my purchase, I felt anxious.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**52. After I made my purchase, I felt guilty.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**53. After I made my purchase, I felt powerful.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**54. After I made my purchase, I felt bored.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**55. After I made my purchase, I felt mischievous.**

Strongly  
Disagree

Somewhat  
Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat  
Agree

Strongly  
Agree

**56. After I made my purchase, I felt frustrated.**

Strongly  
Disagree

Somewhat  
Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat  
Agree

Strongly  
Agree

**57. After I made my purchase, I felt depressed.**

Strongly  
Disagree

Somewhat  
Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat  
Agree

Strongly  
Agree

**58. After I made my purchase, I felt miserable.**

Strongly  
Disagree

Somewhat  
Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat  
Agree

Strongly  
Agree

**59. After I made my purchase, I felt shameful.**

Strongly  
Disagree

Somewhat  
Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat  
Agree

Strongly  
Agree

**60. After I made my purchase, I felt regret.**

Strongly  
Disagree

Somewhat  
Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat  
Agree

Strongly  
Agree

**61. After I made my purchase, I felt angry.**

Strongly  
Disagree

Somewhat  
Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat  
Agree

Strongly  
Agree

**Section VIII: Your Product Return Behavior in Fast Fashion Environments**

**Think about your behavior after you purchased a product from any fast fashion retailers either online or at a store. If you never purchased products from any fast fashion retailers, skip this part.**

**Select (X or √) the box below each statement that accurately corresponds with how strongly you believe each statement describes your product return behavior with respect to fast fashion retailers.**

**62. I frequently return the products that I purchase from fast fashion retailers.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**63. I have returned most of the products that I have purchased from fast fashion retailers.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**64. I usually do not return products that I purchase from fast fashion retailers.**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**65. If you have ever returned any products to a fast fashion retailer, please indicate the reason(s) for your returns (check all that apply):**

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>did not fit</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>changed mind</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>quality not as expected</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>purchased multiple sizes and colors</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>other (describe: _____)</b>	

**Section IX: Demographic Characteristics**

**Please choose the option that best describes you:**

**66. Gender**

- Male  Female

**67. Age**

- 18 -21 years old  22 – 25 years old  
 26 - 30 years old  31- 35 years old  
 36 – 40 years old  over 40 years old

**68. Your ethnicity**

- Caucasian  African-American  
 Hispanic/Latino  Asian-American  
 Asian  Other (describe: \_\_\_\_\_)

**69. College year level**

- Freshman  Sophomore  
 Junior  Senior  
 Graduate  Other

**70. Your major**

**71. Personal income (per year):**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under \$5,000     | <input type="checkbox"/> \$30,001-\$40,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,001-\$10,000  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$40,001-\$50,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,001-\$20,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Over \$50,000     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,001-\$30,000 |  |



**72. How much did you spend on clothing in the past 3 months?**

**73. Employment Status**

- Full-time (40+ hours/week)
- Part-time (less than 40 hours/week)
- I do not work