

Retail Education Today

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■ Volume 32, Number 2

■ December 2012

Tentative Agenda for Spring 2013 ACRA Conference

This year's conference will be held at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center, a landmark Nashville hotel, resting on nine acres of indoor gardens under climate controlled glass atriums with an extraordinary selection of dining, shopping, and recreation options.

Wednesday, March 20

- Opening reception
- Registration

Thursday, March 21

- Breakfast
- Research presentations
- Lunch
- Industry panel
- Research presentations
- Dinner and line dancing at the Wild Horse Saloon

Friday, March 22

- Breakfast/Industry speaker
- Research presentations
- Lunch
- Visit to Tractor Supply Co.
- Evening free

Saturday, March 23

- Breakfast
- Research presentations
- Conference ends



Join us in the Music City! Nashville, TN: March 20-23, 2013

Registration

Registration materials have been emailed to the membership. *Mail or email your registration form to:*
Jane Swinney, 431 Human Sciences Bldg. Oklahoma State University, Stillwater OK 74078; or jane.swinney@okstate.edu

Send your payment to:
Susan Fiorito, 138 RBB 821 Academic Way Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306-111
Deadline: February 8, 2013

Accommodations and Conference Fee

Special room rates* of \$160 + taxes are available for attendees (same rate for doubles). For reservations: 615-883-2211 (reference "ACRA Group" or Group Code X-ACRA3 (*available until 2-18-13).



Conference fee is \$350 and includes one dinner, two luncheons, continental breakfast each day, and the Wednesday evening reception.

Conference Co-Chairs

Ann Fairhurst,
fairhurs@utk.edu
University of Tennessee

Youn-Kyung Kim,
ykim13@utk.edu
University of Tennessee

Visit to Tractor Supply Co.

Mr. Greg Sandfort, President and Chief Merchandising Officer will provide an introduction. We will also visit the Store Development Lab and discuss how to foster business to college partnerships.

Click [here](#) to learn about TSC!



▼ RET Call for Papers

Special Issues

RET will feature several special calls for papers this year! We have determined the following topics for the upcoming issues. Feel free to suggest a pertinent issue you would like to learn more about for future issues!

Graduate students are especially encouraged to submit for these calls. RET is indexed in Cabell's, offering a platform for students to publish in a refereed publication. Papers should be approximately 1000-4000 words and should be unpublished and non-copyrighted. Papers will undergo a double-blind referee process. The author(s) will retain copyright of their paper. The editor, along with at least one reviewer, will pursue a policy of timely and meaningful review of each paper. Papers should comply with APA guidelines.

February 2013 Issue: Retailing in a Global Marketplace

Deadline for submissions: January 15, 2013

Receding trade barriers have given way to a global marketplace, whereby retailers are no longer constrained to their home countries. More than ever before, retailers are exploring diverse economic and cultural consumer segments across nations. However, catering to a global marketplace introduces unique norms and challenges. In the February issue of Retail Education Today, we invite discourse related to challenges and opportunities of retailing in a global context. RET seeks research articles, teaching articles, and case studies.

May 2013 Issue: Technology in the Retail Industry

Deadline for submissions: April 1, 2013

Technology is playing a

critical role in gaining market share and attracting consumers in the current retail landscape. Consequently, retailers are increasingly utilizing and streamlining technology for a

topics relevant to faculty in the classroom and not exceed 1500 words. These papers will be reviewed by the RET editors for publication.



seamless customer experience across shopping channels. Educators are also devoting more time to technology in their classes, training tomorrow's retailers to effectively utilize technology to connect with customers. In the May issue of Retail Education Today, we invite discourse related to effective use of technology in the retail industry and related sectors. RET seeks research articles, teaching articles, and case studies.

The Buzz

Recently attended a retail-related industry or trade conference? Send us a 200-word synopsis of where you went, who was there, and what the major themes of the conference were!

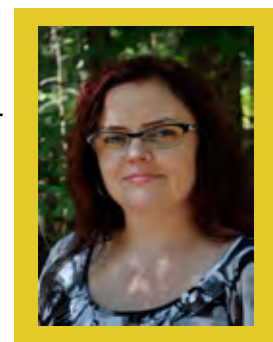
Feature Articles

We are always looking for feature articles about innovative teaching or leadership strategies relevant to the retail industry and its sectors. These papers should emphasize issues and

How to Submit to RET

All RET submissions should be made in Microsoft Word document and sent by email to the Editor (cosette.armstrong@okstate.edu) and Associate Editor (mmann@odu.edu).

Cosette
Armstrong
Editor



Manveer
Mann
*Associate
Editor*

▼ Position Announcements

Assistant/Associate Professor in Retail and Consumer Sciences, University of Tennessee

Position: tenure track, nine month salary commensurate with experience and qualifications.

Qualifications: Ph.D. required in retailing, consumer behavior, marketing, merchandising or closely related field.

Undergraduate and graduate teaching competence/aptitude essential. Success in research and ability to obtain research funding. Experience directing graduate research desirable.

Responsibilities: for teaching and research in retail and consumer sciences. Direct graduate student research. Enhance scholarship through excellent teaching and publishing in top-tier refereed journals. Seek funding opportunities. Maintain active relationships with industry professionals. Participate in planning and coordinating the undergraduate and graduate programs. Teach undergraduate and graduate courses. Advise graduate students. Available: August 1, 2013 Screening of applications begins January 7, 2013 and continue until position is filled.

Send letter of application, curriculum vitae, teaching philosophy and research/scholarly statements, three letters of reference and transcripts to: Dr. Heejin Lim, Search Chair, 1215 W. Cumberland Ave., Retail and Consumer Sciences, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996-1911, Phone: 865-974-2141, e-mail: hlim@utk.edu



Assistant/Associate Professor, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

The Apparel Merchandising & Management Department in the College of Agriculture at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (Cal Poly Pomona) invites applications for a tenure-track position at the rank of Assistant or Associate Professor to begin Fall 2013. Candidates with specializations in textile technology are especially welcomed to apply.

The Position: The new faculty member will develop and teach state-of-the-art undergraduate and graduate classes in one or more of the following areas: textiles, textile technology, digital design for textiles/apparel, emerging technologies and ecommerce for the apparel industry.

The position requires excellence in teaching and advising, professional and scholarly achievements, and a commitment to service to the university. The successful candidate will demonstrate leadership potential for the advancement of their area within the department.

Assistant Professor in Apparel Studies, University of Arkansas

Applicants whose work incorporates a global perspective and a commitment to diversity in higher

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education are particularly encouraged to apply.

Assistant Professor in Apparel Studies. There is a minimum expectation of 0.25 FTE dedicated to scholarly research in the workload, with no more than 4 courses per year. This is a 9-month, tenure-track, faculty position beginning August 2013 or until filled.

Job Description: We seek an outstanding individual to teach and conduct innovative research in Apparel Studies in relation to product development and functional design. The individual must develop a strong extramurally-funded research program that addresses the needs in accord with the focus of the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station. The successful candidate will also contribute to the instructional programs in Apparel Studies.

▼ The BuZZ

The University of Arkansas Apparel Studies Inaugural Symposium titled *The Business of Fashion in the New Global Economy: "It's Not Business as Usual"*

October 11, 2012

by Leigh Southward, School of Human Environmental Sciences, University of Arkansas

William T. Dillard, III, Vice-President Dillard's, Inc. was the keynote speaker and discussed the many changes in the retail business. Kathryn Miller, Sr. Product Development Manager, Ladies Sleepwear, WalMart opened the symposium by explaining all the steps that go into product development, from research to store delivery. Rick Helfenbein, President TellaS Ltd / Luen Thai USA, gave a presentation about sourcing and supply chain management. Mr. Helfenbein shared his experience as part of the Luen Thai team that was created to establish China's first Supply Chain City for the USA Apparel Industries. Supply Chain City is one of the largest, most efficient, state-of-the-art apparel manufacturing facilities in Asia. Mercedes Gonzalez, Director, Global Purchasing Companies, brought her passion for international retailing and stories of her 20 plus years in the industry to the audience of students, faculty, and business leaders.

Contribute to The BuZZ

Recently attended a retail-related industry or trade conference? Send us a 200-word synopsis of where you went, who was there, and what the BuZZ was!



▼ Ask the expert

Q: There is an increased push towards incorporating sustainability in our curriculum. We have started to offer a course focused on sustainability. But how might we engage students in the topic beyond the formal curriculum?



A: Extra-curricular activities related to sustainability are excellent entry points for students to participate in the dialogue at an engagement level they are comfortable with. For example, in response to a call I wrote on our undergraduate research network at Oklahoma State University, twelve students applied to research ways to turn old t-shirts into fabric yardage. As the semester progressed, most are still active in the project. Our common interest in apparel design has opened the door for rich informal discussions about sustainability and how it may apply in this context. We have formed a bond and plan to enter competitions, submit papers, and continue working together. Additionally, our department has united students to organize an Earth Day fashion show and other events to provide a public forum where sustainability awareness can be fostered in a fun and easily understandable format. Most cities have some type of recognition for Earth Day, and joining forces with community organizations expands and enhances the experience for all involved.

Mary Ruppert-Stroescu, Department of Design,
Housing, and Merchandising,
Oklahoma State University

Special Issue on New Business Models for Sustainable Fashion

Greener Management International

Abstract submission: 31 January 2013

Selection of abstracts and notification of acceptance: 1-15 February 2013

Full paper submission: 1 May 2013

Revised paper submission: 15 September 2013

Final paper selection: 30 November 2013

BACKGROUND

There is a need to redefine dominant approaches to business in the fashion sector. Most industries are still characterised by a “dig it up-use it-throw it away” production system which prevents the achievement of sustainable development in any meaningful way (Wells 2008: 85). And decades of talk about corporate social responsibility (CSR), corporate citizenship, corporate sustainability and other related buzzwords have not radically changed this picture. For instance, the World Economic Forum (WEF 2010) summarises the limitations of current sustainability initiatives as follows:

Current trends towards sustainability are welcome but inefficient. The shifts ... are focused on incremental, rather than transformative, change. While they may improve sustainability at the margins, they are rooted in a model of consumption that is itself unsustainable. Working within the existing paradigm means that, despite best efforts, incentives for business investment are not sufficient. Collaboration across value chains is deficient. Public policy frameworks are neither ambitious enough nor adequately coordinated at the global level. The shifting consumer agenda is too limited.

A transformation of dominant business models is therefore needed in order to achieve systemic changes toward sustainability. Rather than perceiving sustainability solely as compliance and risk management, businesses have to recognise the value-creating potential of sustainable business models. However, so far, literature that bridges business model and sustainability thinking is relatively scarce. Stubbs and Cocklin (2008: 103) argue that “understanding of sustainable business models and how sustainable development is operationalized in firms is weak”. And Schaltegger et al. (2011: 12) argue that “Neither theoretical nor empirical research offers sufficient answers to the question what a sustainable business model might be”.

The purpose of the Special Issue is to explore the potentials for building business models for sustainability. The issue focuses on the fashion industry which has a high environmental footprint throughout the product life-cycle: for example, extensive use of pesticides and water in cotton production; dangerous chemicals in manufacturing processes; and huge volumes of waste created by consumers. Social issues are pertinent as well: one of the

major problems is the clandestine work in manufacturing processes that proliferates in developing countries. Child labour continues to be a reality in this sector, despite growing pressures to eliminate it. Fashion is also linked to serious health issues, such as bulimia, anorexia, as well as high stress levels for many consumers caused by the need to continuously renew their wardrobe with every new season.

On a more positive note, we can also witness the emergence of new and innovative business models in this industry: for example, experimentation with new types of materials; development of efficient recycling systems; and promotion of new consumption patterns.



This Special Issue welcomes contributions from academics and practitioners that examine the barriers and potentials for developing new and innovative business models that may ultimately promote systemic changes in the clothing and textile industry.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The Special Issue aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of the topic and, as such, is seeking presentations based on different approaches, whether reflexive, empiric, hands-on or applied theory. Theory papers should have between 4,000 and 6,000 words and case studies between 2,500 and 4,000 words. Papers must be submitted as per the editorial guidelines. These are available from Greenleaf Publishing at www.greenleaf-publishing.com/gmiguide.

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Educating Sustainable Development through Experiential Learning Methodology

By JiYoung Kim, School of Merchandising and Hospitality Management, Univeristy of North Texas

Teaching Sustainable Development in Business Courses

Education for sustainable development can be conceptualized based on the definition provided by the acclaimed Brundtland Report, which provides the basis for the most widely used concept of sustainable development: "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Higher education institution should equip students to think, live and act in favor of sustainable development, while giving them an understanding of the environmental, social and economic issues involved (Calder & Clugston, 2003). The definition of sustainable development involves the understanding of environmental, social and economic demands, which are overlapping concepts that can be mutually reinforcing. The scheme of sustainable development is possible at the confluence of three constituent parts.

Following the definition of sustainable development, a sustainable business is defined as entities which embed environmental and social performance in their competitive strategy. Sustainable strategies refer to the actions that meet the needs of the business and its stakeholders without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (Elkington, 1998). In order to achieve the goal as a sustainable business, a manager should be aware of the three interrelated dimensions-economic, social, and environmental, which are commonly referred to as the "Triple Bottom Line (TBL)" (Elkington, 1998). The three

components are also presented as; people, planet and profit. This view of the TBL represents the idea that business does not have just one single goal, adding economic value, but that it has an extended goal of adding environmental and social value (Elkington, 1998).

Through education, students are being prepared to participate in business organizations that are key social institutions in sustainable development. It is critical to educate and prepare future employees of the business industry with deeper understanding on sustainability conceptualization and business strategies that integrate all three aspects of sustainable development. While it is widely agreed that sustainable development curriculum should be incorporated in higher education, there are challenges the educators should be prepared for when developing a related course. According to Pipjelin (2011), sustainable education can only be meaningful if students can apply it in practical business situations.

In other words, sustainable development curriculum should enable students to relate the theory to reality. Therefore, it is critical for sustainable business courses to provide students with learning experience that facilitate real life based learning, active knowledge sharing, and application of theory to business cases. In order to meet the objectives, the course is designed to enable students to 1) deeply engage in the subject matter by documenting, sharing, and discussing their sustainable lifestyles, and 2) apply theories in analyzing strategies and suggesting optimal solutions for businesses, based on the framework of experiential learning. In this paper, the definition, model and design of experiential learning will be presented, followed by the



detailed course plan suggested based on the experiential learning framework.

Experiential Learning in a Web-based course

Experiential learning is defined as “the sense making process of active engagement between the inner world of the person and the outer world of the environment ... Active engagement is one of the basic tenets of experiential learning: experiential learning undoubtedly involves the ‘whole person’, through thoughts, feelings and physical activity” (Beard & Wilson, 2006, p.2). In experiential learning theory, learning is defined as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p.41). In experiential learning, the instructor provides learning activities in which a combination of concrete experiences and guided reflection enable the learner to acquire higher-level abstract concepts (Kolb, 1984). In other words, experiential learning involves an experience that is used as a vehicle to engage students in concrete applications of their learning to achieve student learning outcomes, where the major goal is the acquisition of higher-level abstract concepts and values.

According to the CLEAR Model for Experiential Learning (n.d.), stages of development of experiential learning are as follows.

1. Student Learning Outcomes (SLO).

Determine student learning outcomes based upon a three level SLO model and the context of the course.

2. Foundational knowledge. Provide access to the necessary foundational knowledge through lectures and readings. Students must have acquired a foundation of assessed knowledge to bring into the experience.

3. Learning spaces. Assess and develop a learning space for the experiential learning. This might be a physical classroom or virtual space where the experience will occur.

4. Concrete experiences. Develop the concrete experience(s) that will facilitate the SLOs. These can range from very simple “think-pair-share” to competitive simulations.

Ideally, the learner becomes “attached to,” “wraps around,” and “becomes emotionally engaged” with the content through this process. The experience involves student activities that evoke senses and feelings as well as require a wide range of skills representing multiple forms of intelligence (Gardner, 1983). While the experience could occur on an individual level, social learning in a small group can be most effective.

5. Guided reflection. Through guided reflection, students make new generalizations, come up with conclusions or form hypotheses based upon the experience. Students engage in reflection that will generate emerging thoughts that tie the foundational knowledge to the experience which results in the acquisition of a higher level concept or value (Ash & Clayton, 2009). These activities facilitate the students in making meaning from the experience.

6. Application to new situations. In the application stage, students are given activities to apply their learning in new situations or circumstances by solving new problems or developing a new product. In this process the student must have opportunities to wrestle with the dialectics between their prior beliefs and understanding and the new knowledge generated from the experience.

7. Learning assessment. The results are assessed using measures of SLOs. A rubric or other tool to assess this new learning can be applied.

8. Evaluation of experience. The final stage is to evaluate the experiential learning experience from multiple perspectives including time, space, level of effort, cost, etc.

Experiential Course Plan for Sustainable Development Strategy Course: Web-based

The objective of the Sustainable Development Strategies course is to prepare students with the knowledge that enables them to adapt and apply fundamental business tools for the pursuit of sustainable development in business operation. In order to achieve this goal, the course is designed to:

1. Emphasize the importance of sustainable

development of products and services in the current world.

2. Cover key theories underlying the concept of sustainability.
3. Consider the new opportunities and risks for sustainable development in various business industries.
4. Analyze case studies to evaluate the different strategies employed in the development of sustainable business strategies.

Following the model for developing experiential learning course, three levels of SLOs are developed:

1. Define the key theories underlying the concept of "sustainability"
 - 1.1. Compare the differences between various sustainability theories
 - 1.1.1. Differentiate ethics, social responsibility, corporate citizenship and sustainability
 - 1.1.2. Explain framework of sustainability
 2. Understand the importance of sustainability in the current society
 - 2.1. Describe the concept of "sustainable lifestyle" as an individual
 - 2.1.1. Explain the drivers of sustainable lifestyle
 - 2.1.2. Learn to communicate sustainability
 - 2.2. Consider the new opportunities and risks for sustainable development as a society
 - 2.2.1. Identify possible impact of globalization
 - 2.2.2. Determine market response to sustainability
 3. Recognize sustainability issues in the industry
 - 3.1. Explain the concept of sustainable development strategies and tactics
 - 3.1.1. Assess possible market response to sustainable business models
 - 3.1.2. Identify opportunities to integrate social and environmental development in competitive retail and product development strategy
 - 3.2. Learn to use sustainability analysis system

3.2.1. Apply various sustainable business models

3.2.2. Demonstrate decision making skills in the development and application of sustainable development strategies and tactics

Based on the SLOs created, the course schedule follows the strategic framework for sustainable development process that develops experiential understandings of the role and responsibility of various social institutions (e.g. individual, community, business). This course requires extensive research, reflection, integration and application of theories. After establishing a foundation of knowledge through intensive readings and group discussion, experiential projects follow in order to achieve concrete experience, guided reflection and application. In particular, the course projects (sustainable ME and TBL Analysis) along with the case study and class discussion, not only provide an opportunity for students to experience, apply and learn the subject matter but also stimulate active engagement to the topic. Figure 1 presents the core experiential elements that are integrated within the course throughout the semester.

Sustainable ME Project: Experience Sustainable Self and Engage in Sustainable Society

Through this individual project, students make two personal commitment of their choice to be mindful of sustainability on the personal scale. A personal commitment may take the shape and form of the students' choosing; for example, reduce water pollution, eco-consumption, green gardening, being active in a sustainable organization, etc.

In order to satisfy the SLOs (i.e. living the sustainable lifestyle and understanding the sustainable society) as well as the key element of experiential learning framework (i.e. engagement, collaboration and reflection), the commitment should meet the following three criteria:

1. A commitment that can evolve throughout the semester:

The commitment can start from a personal

level effort, yet has to evolve throughout the semester to reach broader audience and inspire others. Therefore, students should have a clear understanding on the community level of sustainable development, and how they can influence society members through suggesting various innovative strategies. For example, students can start reducing waste by recycling water bottles, then try bringing shopping bags to grocery stores to reduce plastic waste, and finally promote recycling in their apartments by talking to the manger and neighbors. Students may learn how they can move on to the next step (i.e. evolve) as they start their sustainable ME journey.

2. A commitment that comes with weekly



Figure 1. Overall flow of the course based on experiential learning method

actions that students can update:

The project should involve constant hands-on experience that can be shared with other students.

3. An experience worth sharing:

The project should inspire not only the fellow students in the class but the general public.

Students are required to submit their personal commitment at the beginning of the semester and keep posting their experience on a personal blog. The weekly posts should include the following:

1. Details on the daily/weekly activities
2. Research: Relevant information should be collected to improve the understanding on the project. For example, research on the level of sustainability awareness in their community, process for waste recycling, and public policy and regulations should accompany the student's plan to promote recycling.
3. Reflection: Students should provide their feelings and thoughts.
4. Evaluation: Students should discuss area of improvement and action plan for next week

or month.

Application of course readings and incorporation of additional research are a requirement, as the core principle of experiential learning is to capture the higher level abstract knowledge through hands-on projects. For active engagement, students read each other's posting and follow up on the progress. This allows students to emotionally engaged in the subject matter and understand how the concept of sustainability is closely related to our daily lives.

Triple Bottom Line Analysis: Construct Sustainable Business

Based on the understanding of the Triple

Bottom Line (TBL), teams of students identify specific firms in different business sectors to

analyze their current practices and to propose a new business strategy that fully accomplishes the TBL concepts. Each team is divided into three departments: market research, product development, and marketing. All departments each research the current business strategy of the target company; their target consumers, supply chain, product design and marketing strategy. They share the research among the departments and discuss the current situation of the business. Other teams observe and learn. Multiple presentations are held to present each department's and team's research results. After current practices are identified, the market research department starts their research by using secondary research (e.g. news paper, articles, data available on the web) as well as primary research (focus group interview, one-to-one interview, survey) in order to learn the target market's perception towards sustainability and the business' current sustainability practice. The market research department presents the result for more discussion. Based on their research, marketing department develops a marketing strategy that enhances the TBL of the business and also presents their plan to

other departments. After discussion, feedback and revision on the marketing plan, product development department develops a strategy to better satisfy the TBL based on the new marketing strategy.

The entire process not only facilitates discussion among the departments within each team, but also benefits other teams while they observe and give feedback. This project allows students to apply the course concept to a real business context, to experience the process of developing a sustainable business strategy, and to engage in cooperative learning.

Discussion

The class is designed to enhance experiential learning on the important subject of sustainable development in the business industry. By following the steps outlined in the model of experiential learning, students learn to incorporate the core theory and knowledge of sustainable development through:

- 1) Engaging in hands-on experience
- 2) Engaging in other's experience through reading the blogs
- 3) Active discussion with peers
- 4) Applying the knowledge on real business cases

The course enables students to apply the concept of sustainable development to the current business industry and society through the incorporation of readings, theory, cases, and experiential projects. The two projects, in particular, lead students to not only get emotionally engage in the subject matter through the application of the course concept to their own personal lives but also be critical in analyzing and proposing sustainable business strategy.

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▼ Special Issue Contribution

Labeling for Sustainability

By Gwendolyn Hustvedt and Rod Runyan,

School of Family and Consumer Sciences, Texas State University San Marcos

Apparel manufacturers and retailers are facing increasing pressure from competitors and consumers, to examine the life cycle of their products and account for the sustainability of their supply chain. These pressures come from a concern that sustainability helps provide some form(s) of competitive advantage (Berns, Townend, Khayat, Balagopal, Reeves, Hopkins & Kruschwitz, 2009), and those who adopt

sustainable practices might gain some level of first-mover benefits. However, does a focus on supply chain sustainability actually lead to a competitive advantage? Do customers make consumption decisions based on a retailer's sustainability practices? And if so, what types of practices are important in the consumer's decision process?

The initial choice made by apparel retailers adopting a sustainability focus is to follow the lead of food retailers and utilize labeling for organic production of the fibers used in their products. Although demand for home softgoods and apparel made with organic cotton reached 5 billion US dollars in 2010, a 20% increase from 2009 (Organic Trade Association, 2012), the high price of organic cotton means that merely swapping out conventional cotton for organic cotton is unsustainable from a product pricing perspective. Thus as expected, cheaper alternatives to organic cotton appeared. One example is a rayon fiber made from bamboo pulp, and marketed as a low-cost, "eco-friendly" cotton substitute labeled as "bamboo" rather than rayon. Lawsuits by the FTC in 2009 against companies selling mislabeled rayon and warning letters to 78

retailers in 2010 highlight the "greenwashing" risk of low-cost sustainability solutions (Federal Trade Commission, 2010). This highlights one of the impediments to apparel retailers' adoption of a sustainable supply chain as a strategic focus: a clear understanding of the meaning of sustainability as translated into a business strategy (Berns, et al., 2009). A lack of understanding of the core principle behind

such a strategy leads to a confused consumer base. It is therefore imperative for retailers of apparel to know if sustainable clothing supply chains are important, and what attributes of sustainability reflect that importance. From a strategic perspective, it is helpful to know if the importance of these attributes depends on the retail venue where the products are sold,

given that consumer preferences often change based on format (Keen, Wetzels, de Ruyter, & Feinberg, 2004).

Apparel attributes and sustainability

Life cycle analyses estimate that for a typical clothing item, such as a T-shirt, approximately 60% of the carbon associated with the life cycle of the product will be emitted after the clothing is purchased by consumers (Allwood, Laursen, Rodriguez, & Bocken, 2006). This is due to the carbon emitted either by the electricity or natural gas used for hot/warm water washing and drying in a dryer. While it might take a more coordinated strategy to explain to consumers why the care instructions might matter more in the sustainability of their fashion than the fiber content label, it would definitely avoid the risk of selling a mislabeled product and serve to further educate consumers about the complexity of the apparel life cycle. Retailers such as Marks & Spencer and manufacturer/brands such as Levi's take this approach to sustainability



for their apparel products, emphasizing sustainable care over fiber content.

Previous research into consumer use of attributes in the evaluation of apparel has identified aesthetic attributes as the most important in consumer decision-making (Eckman, Damhorst, & Kadolph, 1990). However, in their review of 21 studies conducted over 20 years, Eckman et al. (1990) found that while styling was the most important attribute, price and brand name were next most important after styling. This study also found that, as an attribute care was equal in importance to country of origin. Beginning around the turn of the century, research into the consumer use of apparel attributes began to include sustainability attributes in studies (Dickson, 2001; Kim & Damhorst, 1998). The results have been mixed, but most recent studies suggest that, for consumers who care about sustainability, information provided on the labeling about sustainable fiber production or socially responsible manufacturing can lead them to pay a somewhat higher price for the product (Hustvedt & Bernard, 2008; Hyllegard, Yan, Ogle, & Lee, 2012). Most of this research, however, does not compare the importance that consumers place on sustainability attributes with the care related attributes that might serve as an alternate focus for sustainability strategies. These studies also do not examine the difference between consumer interest in sustainability attributes based on retail venue. Are consumers at discount retailers as interested in sustainability attributes as online or department store consumers?

Methodology

An online survey of 514 consumers was conducted in 2007 using a panel of 585 (88% completion rate) consumers purchased from Zoomerang, Inc. The instrument, which was developed specifically for this study and pretested with university students, focused on consumer willingness to pay for sustainability attributes. Among the variables reported elsewhere (Hustvedt, Peterson & Chen, 2008; Peterson, Hustvedt & Chen, 2012), it included a section on purchasing habits and attribute

preference at the beginning. Participants were asked to rate the importance of 11 separate attributes, as well as choose which attributes were the most and least important (seen in Table 1). Additionally, participants were asked to indicate all retail venues at which they shopped for apparel for themselves, rather than for others. We then created three separate groupings of consumers based on similarity of retail format (Levy & Weitz, 2011). We labeled as "Traditional," those who indicated that they purchased apparel for themselves in department and specialty stores. Participants who purchased apparel from either mail catalogs or online were labeled "Non-store" and finally, participants who purchased from retailers such as Wal-mart or Target were grouped together as "Discount." Any given participant could be a member of none, one or several of these groups and any statistical comparison would be made using the members who were not in the group, rather than members of another group. So, for example, someone who purchases discount, specialty brands online (from a site like bluefly.com) would likely be a member of all three groups. Finally, participants were asked to rate the frequency they purchased various types of organic products (seen in Table 2).

Results

The respondents who completed the survey (n=514) were more likely to be female (70%) and well educated (34% with a bachelor's or higher degree) than the average American (51% female, 15% bachelor's or higher) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The sample was also less ethnically diverse than the United States as a whole, with 87% of the sample identifying as White, compared with 74% of Americans that year.

When asked which of the attributes of natural fiber products were the most important, assuming the products were the "color and style of your liking", 47% of participants chose price and 25% chose machine washable as the most important attribute. When asked to go on and name a second most important attribute, 29% (who did not choose it the first time) chose machine washable and 22%

chose durability. The least important attributes were brand (32%) and organic (30%), however the second least important attributes broke down across brand, organic, animal welfare, and country of origin (fiber and apparel). We tested for differences in attribute means using Hotelling's *t*, utilizing SPSS statistical package 20 (SPSS, 2011). When asked to rate each attribute on a 1 to 5 scale (1=not at all important, 5=very important), the price attribute and the machine washable attribute were both given top rating (see Table 1).

While price (3.82), machine washing (3.82) and durability (3.77) were not significantly different, each successive attribute was significantly less important than the preceding attribute beginning with shrink-resistance. The exception is animal-friendly (2.86), environmental-friendly (2.84) and country of origin of apparel (2.78), which were not significantly different from each other and country of origin of fiber (2.75), which was statistically equal with country of origin of apparel but less important than animal-friendly (2.86) and environmental-friendly (2.84).

When examined based on purchase venue, several differences emerge. For example, consumers who purchase apparel for themselves in department or specialty stores (Traditional, *n*= 346) considered country of origin (fiber and apparel), organic and environmentally-friendly attributes to be significantly less important than those who did not shop the Traditional stores. Consumers who shop by mail or online (Non-store, *n*=201) however, found these attributes to be equally

important with those who did not shop the Non-store formats. Non-store consumers did find found brand to be significantly less important than consumers not shopping online or by mail but they found shrink resistance to be a significantly more important attribute. Finally, consumers who shopped in discount retailers such as Wal-mart or Target (Discount, *n*=359) rated machine wash-ability and price to be significantly more important attributes and brand to be a significantly less important

attribute than consumers who did not shop at discount.

In terms of purchases of organic products, the consumers as a whole reported buying organic food and skin care products on an ordinal 1 to 6 scale (1=never, 2=less than 10% of the time, 3=10 to less than 40% of the time, 4=40 to less than 60% of the time, 5=60 to less than 90% of the time,

6=more than 90% of the time) more frequently than organic apparel and bath & bedding products (see Table 2). When consumers in the Traditional group were compared with consumers who did not shop at department or specialty stores, they reported buying all organic products except for bath & bedding products with significantly more frequency than non-Traditional consumers, based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of frequency distribution. Non-store consumers, on the other hand, purchased vegetables with significantly less frequency than consumers who did not shop online or via catalog. Discount consumers purchased all of the listed organic products with the same frequency as consumers who did not shop at discount retail establishments.

Table 1: Importance of Apparel Attributes

Attribute	Mean	SD
Price	3.82 ^a	0.67
Machine washable	3.82 ^a	0.68
Durability	3.77 ^a	0.68
Shrink resisitant	3.70 ^b	0.70
Wrinkle-free	3.32 ^c	0.94
Animal-friendly	2.86 ^d	1.28
Environment-friendly	2.84 ^{de}	1.19
Country of origin of apparel	2.78 ^{de}	1.24
Country of origin of fiber	2.75 ^c	1.25
Designer/store brand	2.29 ^f	1.19
Certified organic	2.16 ^g	1.30

Means sharing letters down the column are not significantly different based on a t-test.

Discussion

As the focus on sustainability increases, more studies examine consumer behavior related to sustainability. The results outlined in this study serve as a reminder that while much of the recent research in sustainability and apparel products has focused on consumer willingness to pay for various sustainable product attributes, such as organic certification, consumers are first and foremost interested in the price and the performance attributes of a product.

The results point to several differences in attributes important to consumers, based on the retail venue these consumers prefer. Non-store and Discount consumers find brand to be less important than do consumers who shop other venues. Additionally, Discount consumers

However, low consumer interest in sustainability attributes of apparel such as organic or environmentally-friendly production should not stymie the retailer interested in increasing the sustainability of their products. The importance that the consumers in this study placed on performance attributes such as machine wash-ability and durability point to a strategy that has worked well for a number of retailers and apparel brands. While Wal-Mart, with the introduction of organic cotton apparel into their Sam's Club stores in 2004 (Gunther, 2006), stands as an important leader in sustainable apparel, retailers who discover that their consumers do not place importance on this attribute should consider that the consumer use phase of the apparel life cycle actually represents 60-80% of the environmental impact of apparel products (Allwood, et al., 2006).

The Plan A program by Marks & Spencer focused on shifting all apparel products towards care that includes cold water wash (Marks & Spencer, 2007). Levi's has also recently revised apparel labeling to emphasize that reducing laundering frequency and wash water temperature are both direct paths to sustainability for their products (Levi Strauss & Co, 2009). The interest of Traditional group

consumers, in organic foods and skin care, suggests that these consumers are looking for a personal benefit in their apparel attributes, the sort of benefit that lower utility bills due to more sustainable product care, might provide.

Apparel retailers should perhaps take a step back, consider what sustainability means within the strategic plan, and how adopting a sustainable supply chain helps achievement of a competitive advantage. Although today, many consumers do not put high levels of importance on sustainably-produced apparel (e.g. organic fibers, sustainable practices, etc.), marketplace trends point to

Table 2: Frequency of Organic Product Purchase

Product	Median	1 = Never	2 = Less than 10% of the time	3 = 10 to less than 40% of the time	4 = 40 to less than 60% of the time	5 = 60 to less than 90% of the time	6 = More than 90% of the time
Vegetables	2	37 %	30 %	13 %	11 %	5 %	4 %
Fruits	2	36	31	11	13	6	4
Dairy	2	45	28	10	8	5	4
Meat	2	44	27	9	10	4	5
Skin Care	1	53	28	9	5	3	2
Apparel	1	54	27	9	5	2	3
Bath & Bedding	2	46	26	11	9	6	3

find price to be more important, compared to non-Discount consumers. These findings are somewhat intuitive. For example, given the sharp disappointment that can be created by a product that shrinks, Non-store consumers, who cannot personally evaluate the product, placed importance on that as opposed to other attributes. The lack of importance placed by Traditional consumers on the country of origin (fiber and apparel), organic and environmentally-friendly attributes serves to reinforce the decision by many department and specialty stores not to highlight these attributes in their products.

this changing in the near future (Berns, et al., 2009). Thus being a leader in the field creates first-mover advantages which can provide sustainable, long-term benefits (Peteraf, 1993).

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▼ Meet the Board



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As Vice President of ACRA, Rod continues to be committed to the growth of the organization, strengthening the research focus of the organization, and raising the profile of ACRA in the scholarly community, just as he did while serving the past two years as ACRA Secretary.



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As Secretary of ACRA Jane is committed to continuing the growth in the organization she has seen during her 5 years as a member. She wants to encourage graduate students to make membership in the organization a priority arena for sharing their research work.



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