Ethically Minded Consumer Behavior of Apparel: An Examination of Antecedents and Consequences

Maja Hrlec Gorše
University of Ljubljana, School of Economics and Business, PhD Student, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Mateja Kos Koklič
University of Ljubljana, School of Economics and Business, Ljubljana, Slovenia, mateja.kos@ef.uni-lj.si

Anže Zalokar
Putr d.o.o., Trzin, Slovenia

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Maja Hrlec Gorše [a], Mateja Kos Koklič [b,*], Anže Zalokar [c]

[a] University of Ljubljana, School of Economics and Business, PhD Student, Ljubljana, Slovenia
[b] University of Ljubljana, School of Economics and Business, Ljubljana, Slovenia
[c] Putr d.o.o., Trzin, Slovenia

Abstract

This research examines the ethically minded consumer behavior (EMCB) and its antecedents and consequences in the context of ethical clothes. Its objective is to test the relationships among the reasons for and against buying, subjective knowledge, EMCB and intention to purchase ethical clothes. The authors use survey data from 280 consumers to test the conceptual model. Support is provided for the majority of the hypothesized relationships: reasons for buying and subjective knowledge positively and reasons against buying negatively affect EMCB, and EMCB in turn positively influences the intention to purchase. Additionally, reasons against buying decrease the intention. The study also discusses implications for companies.

Keywords: Ethically minded consumer behavior, Purchase of ethical clothes, Reasons for/against buying, Subjective knowledge

JEL classification: M30, M31

Introduction

Nowadays, numerous companies embrace the need to consider ecological and human welfare when adopting their sustainable development principles (Chow & Chen, 2012). In addition, many different organizations have a mission to educate consumers, organizations and governments on the need to behave ethically and more responsibly towards the environment and consider the welfare of future generations (Kinoti, 2011). Similarly, consumers increasingly consider ecological and human welfare issues in their everyday choices (Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2016). Indeed, ethical consumerism is holding an important position in today's society (Carrington et al., 2014). Consumers have one of the key roles in promoting ethical consumption, cleaner production and proper use of resources, since their choices can influence how each product is produced, which means that consumers can make industries change their way of production (Jaca et al., 2018). Ethically minded consumers are concerned with environmental issues, animal welfare, human rights health related implications (Cooper-Martin & Holbrook, 1993). However, although an upsurge in the consumption of ethical product has been evident, the growth in ethical consumption is still small (Govind et al., 2017).

Textile industry is one of the industries with a strong focus on ethical initiatives (Wang et al., 2017). It induces remarkable impacts on the environment (Laitala, 2014). Although, there are strong initiatives in fashion to follow sustainability and consumers state that they behave ethically, in fashion industry consumers do not act as expected (Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018). In particular, with fast fashion, the concept of clothing has changed dramatically, clothing life cycle has drastically shortened and an environmental perspective on clothing consumption

has gained new dimensions. Therefore, fast fashion industry is known by short-term use, increasing waste, usually low quality, and labor exploit (Gwozdz et al., 2017). However, fashion industry also has an opportunity to change its business concept in such a way to concurrently gain profits and increase environmental and social performance (Pulse of the fashion industry, 2019). However, also consumers create a huge impact with their apparel consumption. More specifically, they make decisions about how frequently, how many and what type of clothes they will purchase. On the other hand, they decide how these clothes are used, maintained and, in the end, how they are disposed when worn out or no longer needed (Gwozdz et al., 2017). An important as well as worrying fact is that only around 20% of clothing is recycled or reused (Global Footprint Network, 2017).

Scholars and practitioners alike devoted a lot of attention to understand the underlying determinants of ethical clothing consumption. The existing research documents different motives and factors of ethical behavior, and understanding these is becoming ever more important (Minton et al., 2015). Authors emphasize the importance of understanding the reasons that impact and justify decisions (Burke et al., 2014; Mercier & Sperber, 2011). Advantages, different alternatives as well as disposal with a wide range of information enable clearer justification for decisions. Despite various attempts to explain ethical behavior, the role of positively and negatively framed reasoning as well as subjective knowledge in shaping ethical clothing consumption remains unclear. This study aims to investigate the antecedents and consequences of ethically minded consumer behavior when purchasing clothes. The proposed model includes reasons for buying, reasons against buying, and the subjective knowledge influencing ethically minded consumer behavior (EMCB) and purchase intention. Hence, the present research aims to add to the existing knowledge base by investigating relevance of selected factors that may facilitate or hinder ethical consumption of clothes.

The study offers several contributions to the existing literature on ethical consumption. First, it seeks to quantify the relative importance of two types of reasons: reasons for and reasons against ethical consumption. Additionally, prior research has been advanced by examining the underlying reasons or cognitions shedding light on the complementarity between attitudes for and against a behavior. These reasons are examined simultaneously on a set of respondents, which has rarely been conducted in the consumer ethics literature

(e.g. Burke et al., 2014). Hence, this research informs interventions that seek to promote particular types of behavior also through product differentiation and communication strategies targeted at consumers. Second, our research extends previous work of Sudbury-Riley and Kohlbacher (2016) by employing their novel construct called "ethically minded consumer behavior". This study is one of the first studies utilizing and examining EMCB. To the best of our knowledge, there is only one study examining EMCB (Le & Kieu, 2019). Third, the study provides greater understanding of the impact of selected antecedent and consequent constructs on EMCB and thus extends knowledge base on the nomological network of EMCB. In so doing, we hope to provide useful guidelines for designing policies to affect ethical behavior.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we briefly review the existing literature with respect to ethical consumption and then develop a conceptual framework which serves as the basis for the construction of the hypotheses. We then report on the development of the measures, the data collection methodology and the analytical procedures utilized. Finally, the findings of the study are presented along with a discussion of management implications and future research avenues.

1 Theoretical background and hypotheses development

Issues related to ethical behavior and ethical consumption in the textile industry have been propelled in recent years, as companies have adopted and implemented various global initiatives in the field of ethical behavior (Dickson et al., 2009; Kozar & Hiller Connell, 2013). On the other hand, there are consumers who admit that it is important to behave in a sustainable way, but their actions are not reflected in everyday life. This phenomenon of attitude-behavior gap has been observed in many ethical consumption studies (e.g. Carrington et al., 2016; Papaoikonomou et al., 2011; Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018). Similarly, some researchers point out another gap called the "intention-behavior" gap. Although consumers intend to buy ethical or sustainable products, their intentions are not translated into actual behavior (Carrington et al., 2014; Jung & Jin, 2014). Dickson (1999) found that consumers are unwilling to pay more to acquire ethical apparel, regardless their related knowledge and attitudes. However, Carrington et al. (2016) concluded that around a half of the consumers are willing to pay more for the product with ethical attributes. Carrigan and Attalla (2001) noted that consumers

perceived price, quality, and value as more important attributes in making ethical purchasing decisions.

Attempting to explain human behavior is a very demanding task, resulting in numerous theoretical models. Numerous authors studying sustainable and ethical consumer behavior draw on the attitude-behavior models. Some of the most influential theoretical frameworks in social psychology are Ajzen's behavioral models. These models suggest that a single act (behavior) is predictable from an attitude towards the act (Ajzen, 1991, 2011). Researchers attempting to understand the purchase behavior of ethically minded consumers tend to apply cognitive models (Fukukawa, 2003). Two of the most widely applied attitude-behavior models are the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and its revision called the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991, 2011). An overview of the existing literature indicates that TRA is the most popular model in attitude research on recycling behavior. In line with this theory, the immediate antecedent of any behavior is the intention to perform the behavior in question. There are two conceptually independent determinants of an individual's intention. One is personal factor called attitude towards the behavior and the second predictor is a social factor, social norm. On the other hand, the theory also deals with the antecedents of attitudes and subjective norms. TPB is similar to TRA, the only difference being the addition of a new antecedent to intentions and behavior, the so called perceived behavioral control (Davies et al., 2014). Although identified as one of the most commonly used frameworks to tap into sustainable and ethical behavior, these models have been criticized for attitudes alone usually being poor predictors of behaviors (e.g. De Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007). Furthermore, Shaw et al. (2005) conclude that a substantial amount of variance in buying behavior remains unexplained by models based on attitude-behavior relations, and that other theoretically relevant variables should be included.

Another relevant theory was proposed by Bandura (1986), who argued that human actions can be explained by three interactive variables: personal factors, environment, and behavior. Interactions of the personal factor, environmental factors and consumer behavior constitute the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). Based on the literature review, it becomes evident that internal and external factors influence ethical consumer behavior. SCT includes inner and external factors that drive humans. The theory can be easily implemented when exploring ethical behavior, because it is believed that environmental topics could best be explained by personal factors, such as age, gender, and education (Sanz de Acedo Lizárraga et al., 2007).

One of the frameworks in explaining ethical purchase decisions is the reasons theory (Westaby, 2002, 2005; Westaby & Fishbein, 1996) which formally conditions the reason type (reason for and reason against) on behavioral intention or frequency. More specifically, reasons for performing a behavior and reasons against performing a behavior represent an individual's specific motives, depending on the behavioral intention or frequency of the consumer's behavior. Along these lines, the concept of a reason-based choice deserves special attention (Shafir, 1993). Its key premise is that consumers seek reasons to resolve conflict. They tend to give greater weight to positive features in a choice task and greater weight to negative features in a rejection task. Consumers find it more comfortable to utilize negative reasoning against ethical consumption and reject ethical options. In doing so, they simplify their decision and maintain status quo (Burke et al., 2014). It is important to understand various reasons, due to their impact on devising and evaluating arguments that help justify decisions (Mercier & Sperber, 2011).

The literature outlined different reasons used by consumers to decide whether (or not) to behave ethically. Every individual has its own presentation of what is ethical and ethical consumers have their own motives for choosing one product over another and whether to buy an ethical product or not. Among the often mentioned reasons for not buying ethical products are low availability of green products, personal beliefs and values and also higher costs that are involved (Davari & Strutton, 2014; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). In the context of purchasing ethical clothing, concern about environmental impacts (also through perceived consumer effectiveness), values, norms and social identity, different consumption patterns, and positive impacts on one's life have been highlighted (Burke et al., 2014; Gwozdz et al., 2017). On the other hand, consumers do not engage in ethical clothing consumption because of the many barriers or constraints, such as price-quality concerns, lack of information about ethical clothing, availability of such products, cynicism and skepticism, economic resources, and retail environments (Burke et al., 2014; Connell Hiller, 2010). In addition to these reasons for and against ethical behavior, subjective knowledge has been underlined as an important determinant of sustainable behavior (Redman & Redman, 2016; Joshi & Rahman, 2017). Interestingly, the study by Vicente-Molina et al. (2013) pointed out that subjective knowledge is the most relevant of all

the knowledge-related factors in determining the pro-environmental behavior.

Based on these foundations, we propose a conceptual model depicted in Fig. 1. The underlying premise in our model is that three factors − reasons for buying, reasons against buying and subjective knowledge regarding ethical clothing − determine the EMCB and in turn, the intention to purchase ethical clothes. In this model, the ethically minded consumer behavior refers to past and current clothing consumption choices pertaining to environmental issues and corporate social responsibility (Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2016). EMCB could also be considered a proxy for current behavior. Reasons for buying encompass various factors motivating the consumer to purchase ethical clothes, such as saving money, improving (or sustaining) health, and aiding in identity creation. Conversely, reasons against buying ethical clothes include an individual's motives not to purchase ethical clothes, for example, perceiving no other benefit other than being ethical or perceiving no added value (Burke et al., 2014). Subjective knowledge reflects an individual's perception of how much he/she knows about ethical clothes (Park et al., 1994). Purchase intention describes the likelihood that an individual will purchase ethical clothes in the future (Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008).

In the first set of hypotheses, we propose three antecedents of ethically minded consumer behavior: reasons for buying, reasons against buying, and subjective knowledge. In doing so, we rely on the reasons theory (Westaby & Fishbein, 1996): reasons for performing a behavior and reasons against performing a behavior represent two sets of motives for their behavior (behavioral frequency). For example, Brenton (2013) empirically demonstrated that various reasons for buying ethical products were significantly related to frequency of purchasing ethical products.

Similarly, Ebreo and Vining (2001) found that altruistic reasons enhance one's recycling behavior, while other reasons, i.e. social and economic, do not play a significant role. They also came to a conclusion that none of the reasons, i.e. those for (altruistic and economic) and those against (social), significantly shape waste-reduction behavior. Along these lines, Chatzidakis and Lee (2013) explored the reasons against consumption, which lead to anti-consumption. The authors drew a clear distinction between reasons for and reasons against consumption. Reasons function as antecedents of choices and thus guide individual's decisions (Kivetz, 1999). Based on this grounding, we hypothesize the following:

H1. Reasons for buying ethical clothes positively influence EMCB.

H2. Reasons against buying ethical clothes negatively influence EMCB.

Perceived or subjective knowledge has been posited as an antecedent of (sustainable) consumer behavior in several studies. For example, Ellen (1994) found that subjective knowledge positively influences the purchase of organic food. Similarly, Pieniak et al. (2010) concluded that subjective knowledge was positively and relatively strongly associated with organic vegetables consumption. Somewhat different finding has been provided by Joshi and Rahman (2017), showing a significant but weaker effect of subjective knowledge on sustainable purchase behavior. Although most studies suggest that knowledge might positively affect sustainable behavior, too much information might also complicate processes and negatively affect behavior (Chen & Chang, 2013; Press & Arnould, 2009). To address these somewhat contrasting findings regarding the impact of subjective knowledge on sustainable behavior, we posit:
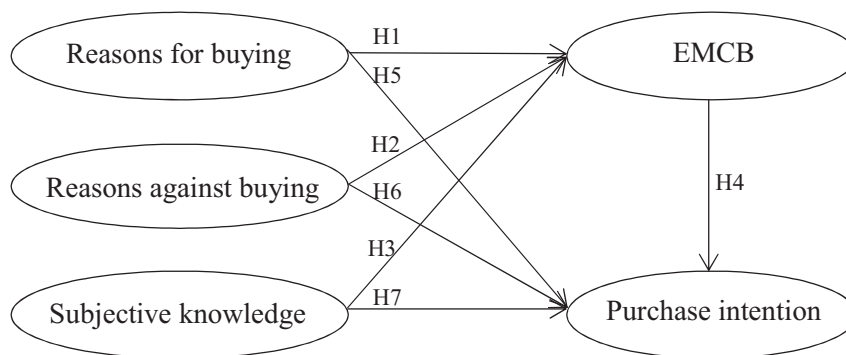

Fig. 1. Conceptual model development.

H3. Subjective knowledge positively influences EMCB.

The next three hypotheses focus on antecedents of purchase intention. The existing research shows that past or current behavior can be used to provide an explanation of future behavioral intentions (Bagozzi et al., 2000; Bamberg et al., 2003). This has been demonstrated by Han and Kim (2010) who found that the frequency of past behavior increases the intention to revisit a green hotel. Furthermore, Bagozzi and Dabholkar (1994) found that prior recycling behavior was a better predictor of intention to recycle than recycling attitudes. The study by Davies et al. (2002) also lends support to the role of past behavior in impacting intention to recycle. Hence, we posit that an individual with past and current ethically minded behavior with regard to clothes will more likely form intention to engage in purchasing ethical clothes in the future:

H4. EMCB positively influences purchase intention.

The next two hypotheses are, similar to H1 and H2, formulated on the grounds of the reasons theory (Westaby & Fishbein, 1996), suggesting that reasons for buying encourage the purchase intention and reasons against buying inhibit the intention. Positively framed reasons trigger consumers to choose/buy a product, while negatively framed reasons lead consumers to express doubt and concerns and reject ethical alternatives (Burke et al., 2014; Winchester et al., 2008). Empirical evidence has been provided by Claudy et al. (2013) who showed that reasons against significantly influence an individual's intention to adopt a renewable energy system (solar panels), while reasons for adoption did not play a significant role. A somewhat different context has been explored by Westaby (2005) who found that employees shape their intention to stay in the company based on both reasons for and reasons against staying. Based on this argumentation, the following two hypotheses are suggested:

H5. Reasons for buying ethical clothes positively influence purchase intention.

H6. Reasons against buying ethical clothes negatively influence purchase intention.

Finally, the last hypothesis taps into the role of subjective knowledge in shaping purchase intention. Previous studies not only demonstrated a significant effect of subjective knowledge on behavior, but also presented evidence of impacting an individual's behavioral intention. This has been supported by Barnes et al. (2009) who revealed that better knowledge also increases the willingness to pay a price premium. Furthermore, Lee (2017) also demonstrated that subjective environmental knowledge increases green purchase intention. Similarly, Goh and Balaji (2016) also attested to the positive impact of environmental knowledge on green purchase intention. To test the connection between subjective knowledge and purchase intention, we formed the following hypothesis:

H7. Subjective knowledge positively influences purchase intention.

2 Methodology

An online survey of adult residents of a European Union country was conducted to test the proposed conceptual model. For the purpose of the study, non-probability sampling was employed. The researchers initially identified a limited number of adult respondents. These respondents were then asked to share the survey with their acquaintances who also met the acquired age criterion, resulting in a snowball sample. In total, the data analysis included 280 useable responses collected via online questionnaires among general population representatives. The average age of the respondents was 35.3 years (std. deviation was 13.5), with 60.4% of respondents up to 34 years old, 27.1% between 35 and 54 years old, and 12.5% above 55. The percentage of females was 64.6% and of males 35.4%. Well above half of the respondents (75.7%) reported having completed (upper) secondary education, while 20% completed tertiary and 4.3% completed primary level. In terms of income, the largest share (36.8%) of the respondents stated that their personal monthly income is higher than the average personal income in Slovenia (1087 EUR), 28.9% of the respondents reported they have average income and 34.3% of the sample reported that they receive less than 1087 EUR per month. The socio−demographic profile of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The socio-demographic profile of respondents.

Variable	%/M (SD)	Variable	%
Gender		*Education*	
Women	64.6	Primary level	4.3
Men	35.4	Upper secondary level	75.7
		Tertiary level	20.0
Age (in years)	35.3 (13.5)	*Income*	
Up to 34	60.4	Below average	36.8
35 to 54	27.1	Average	28.9
55+	12.5	Above average	34.3

The questionnaire consisted of several multi-item construct measurements based on the existing literature, and, unless noted otherwise, employed the five-point Likert-type scales. The reasons for and against buying ethical clothes were defined as the specific subjective factors that people use to explain their anticipated behavior in terms of buying ethical clothes. Reasons for buying ethical clothes encompassed three distinct dimensions, namely, better health, saving money and self-esteem. Ethical apparel is usually thought of as an expensive product, but on the other hand, consumers might save the money, if they buy in second hand shop or wear apparel till it is worn out. Reasons for buying were measured with 3 items, such as "Ethical clothes are better for my health and well-being". The reasons against buying were captured with 4 items (lack of interest, carelessness about the problems, no added value, no personal benefit), for example "Except for ethicality, ethical clothes bring no added value". Both scales were drawn from the measurement instrument previously used by Burke et al. (2014). The intention to purchase ethical clothes was operationalized as the likelihood that an individual will purchase ethical clothes in the near future. This construct was measured with 3 items and was adapted from Michaelidou and Hassan (2008). One of the intention items was "In the next 6 months, I intend to buy an ethical clothing". EMCB reflects ethically minded consumer behavior with respect to purchasing ethical clothes as a variety of consumption choices. A seven−item scale was adapted from Sudbury-Riley and Kohlbacher (2016) to measure EMCB regarding clothes, for example: "When there is a choice, I always choose the apparel brand that contributes to the least amount of environmental damage". The scale uses a scoring method comprising 1 = never true, 2 = rarely true, 3 = sometimes true, 4 = mostly true, and 5 = always true. In this way, a higher score is indicative of a greater level of reported ethically minded consumer behavior (Appendix, Table A1). Subjective knowledge refers to a consumer's perception of the amount of information about the textile industry problems that they have stored in their memory. It was measured with a single item adapted from Flynn and Goldsmith (1999), namely "I believe I am sufficiently informed about the problems of the textile industry (fair trade, environmental pollution, …)". All the measurement items are presented in the Appendix, Table A1. The construct reliabilities exceeded the suggested cut-off value 0.6 (Churchill, 1979), with reasons for buying reliability 0.74, reasons against buying reliability 0.81, intention reliability 0.87, and EMCB reliability 0.88.

3 Results

Before testing the hypotheses, we first provide insight into the descriptive statistics of the data gathered. For this purpose, we looked at the average values of the participants' levels of agreement with each construct in the questionnaire (see Table 2). In the total sample, the respondents agreed above average with two constructs: reasons for buying and purchase intention. Their levels of agreement ranged on average from 3.10 to 3.21. On the other hand, their levels of agreement were below average for reasons against buying, subjective knowledge and EMCB. In addition, to better elucidate the relationships among them, we examined correlations among them. The correlations range from −0.11 to 0.47, the lowest being the correlation between the reasons against buying and subjective knowledge, and the highest being the correlation between the reasons for buying and EMCB.

In testing the conceptual model, we followed a two step-procedure as suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). First, we evaluated the measurement model. A confirmatory factor analysis was used to check the unidimensionality, validity and reliability of the chosen constructs. The convergent validity of the model was supported, as all t-test values of the indicator loadings in the measurement model were statistically significant (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). All multiple-item constructs displayed adequate composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). The CR values ranged from 0.82 to 0.88 and AVE values varied between 0.50 and 0.70, with cut-off values of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was examined by constraining the covariance in any set of two constructs (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) and then performing a chi-square difference test on the values obtained for the constrained and unconstrained models. Since the unconstrained models had significantly lower chi-square values, it can be concluded that the measures exhibit acceptable discriminant validity.

Table 2. Average values of participants' levels of agreement with the constructs.

| | Avg. value | Correlations | | | | |
		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Reasons for buying	3.10	1	−0.45	0.26	0.47	0.26
2. Reasons against buying	2.27		1	−0.11	−0.47	−0.47
3. Subjective knowledge	2.29			1	0.37	0.18
4. EMCB	2.67				1	0.44
5. Purchase intention	3.21					1

Next, we proceeded with evaluating the full structural model to assess the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. The model fit indicators showed the data conform well to the model ($\chi2$ = 214.42, df = 130, p = 0.00, GFI = 0.924, CFI = 0.965, RMSEA = 0.051, sRMR = 0.047). Antecedents in the model explain the 47.4% variance in EMCB, while EMCB together with other antecedents explains the 37.3% variance in the purchase intention. To test the proposed hypotheses, we checked the t-values of the relevant paths.

As expected, the data confirm that the reasons for buying positively influence EMCB, which supports H1 (γ = 0.30; t = 3.26). Similarly, we found a significant negative impact of the reasons against buying on EMCB, yielding support to H2 (γ = −0.42; t = −4.17). In H3, we predicted a positive influence of subjective knowledge on EMCB and found support (γ = 0.21; t = 4.72). As predicted in H4, EMCB significantly determines an individual's purchase intention (γ = 0.36; t = 3.68). Based on our analysis, we could not find a significant effect of the reasons for buying on the intention as predicted in H5 (γ = −0.16; t = −1.56). However, there seems to be a prominent effect of the reasons against buying on the purchase intention (H6; γ = −0.53; t = −4.60). H7 predicted a negative effect of subjective knowledge on the intention, but the path coefficient was insignificant (γ = 0.05; t = 1.05). The results are summarized in Table 3 which also provides the standardized path coefficients.

Further, given that the reasons for buying, reasons against buying and subjective knowledge potentially have an indirect effect on purchase intention through EMCB, the indirect effects of the three exogenous variables were also examined. Analysis revealed that the indirect effect of the reasons against buying on the intention (unstandardized path coefficient (UPC) = −0.15) is stronger and of opposite sign, when compared to the indirect effect of the reasons for buying (UPC = 0.11). Somewhat smaller and also significant is the indirect effect of subjective knowledge on the intention (UPC = 0.07). When evaluating the total effects of three exogenous variables on the purchase intention, it can be concluded that subjective knowledge bears the strongest effect (UPC = 0.12), followed by reasons against (UPC = −0.68) and reasons for buying (UPC = −0.05; insignificant effect).

4 Discussion and implications

In the present study, we investigate how reasons for and against ethical clothes as well as subjective knowledge influence consumers' ethically minded consumer behavior and subsequently their purchase intentions. By gathering and analyzing data from 280 Slovene consumers, we test the proposed research hypotheses and find support for five out of seven hypotheses. We could not prove H5, which stated that the reasons for buying influence purchase intention, nor could we provide support for H7 about a positive influence of subjective knowledge on purchase intention.

Our findings suggest that both reasons for and reasons against buying significantly impact EMCB, but the two factors work in the opposite direction. Specifically, reasons for buying enhance frequency of ethical purchase of clothes (H1), while reasons against buying inhibit this type of behavior (H2). Based on our study, it seems that better health, saving money and higher self-esteem work as significant encouragements of ethically minded behavior. On the other hand, reasons such as lack of interest, perceiving no added value and no personal benefits hinder an individual's ethically minded behavior. Hence, this lends support to the reasons theory (Westaby & Fishbein, 1996), as well as substantiates the notion proposed by Kivetz (1999) about reasons as drivers of consumer's decisions. However, although conducted in another context, the findings by Ebreo and Vining (2001) are not completely aligned with the current study, since the authors could not provide support for all the reasons in case of recycling or waste-reduction.

We also show that subjective knowledge about the textile industry significantly drives EMCB, thus providing support for H3. Our finding of a positive

Table 3. Testing the conceptual model.

Hypothesis	SPC (t-value)	Result
H1+: Reasons for buying → EMCB	0.30 (3.26*)	Supported
H2-: Reasons against buying → EMCB	−0.42 (−4.17*)	Supported
H3+: Subjective knowledge → EMCB	0.21 (4.72*)	Supported
H4+: EMCB → Purchase intention	0.36 (3.68*)	Supported
H5+: Reasons for buying → Purchase intention	−0.16 (−1.56)	Not supported
H6-: Reasons against buying → Purchase intention	−0.53 (−4.60*)	Supported
H7+: Subjective knowledge → Purchase intention	0.05 (1.05)	Not supported

Note: * one sided p-value < 0.05; SPC = Standardized Path Coefficient.

significant effect corroborates studies of previous authors, such as Joshi and Rahman (2017), Ellen (1994) and Pieniak et al. (2010) who demonstrated the effect of subjective knowledge on an individual's behavior.

Although not the primary goal of our study, we also compared the strength of the three antecedents of EMCB. Interestingly, the direct effect of negatively framed reasons in shaping EMCB is stronger compared to positively framed reasons, followed by subjective knowledge. The rationale for such outcome might lie in the framing effect literature which denotes that there are substantial differences in how we process negatively and positively framed information. More specifically, the loss is more substantial than the gain (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981); hence, the effect of negatively framed reasons (against) is the strongest.

Ethically minded consumer behavior has also been confirmed as a significant predictor of the intention to purchase ethical clothes, thus supporting H4. In our study, EMCB closely corresponds to the concept of past behavior which has been previously demonstrated as an independent predictor of later actions. In particular, several studies related to green behavior provide evidence of such relationship (e.g. Bagozzi & Dabholkar, 1994; Han & Kim, 2010).

Surprisingly, the reasons for buying ethical clothes were not supported as an antecedent of one's purchase intention (H5). It is suggested that the positively framed reasons are negligible in directly shaping the intention, but they affect the intention indirectly through EMCB. In fact, based on the direct and indirect effects, it may be concluded that EMCB is a full mediator in the relationship between the reasons for buying and the purchase intention. One of the potential reasons for this outcome is the so called negativity bias, implying that consumers tend to overvalue negative information relative to positive information when combining both into one evaluation (Baumeister et al., 2001; Skowronski & Carlston, 1987). Namely, negative dimensions loom larger than positive dimensions (Shafir, 1993). This bias has also been confirmed in the ethics literature showing that consumers have a negativity bias in their response to ethical information in that they overestimate negative response to bad behavior (Moosmayer, 2012). Consumers who continually reject ethical options of buying ethical apparel might over utilize negative reasoning to decrease ethical alternatives and devaluate reasons for buying ethical clothes and simplify their decision process (Burke et al., 2014).

In contrast, the impact of reasons against buying on the intention is substantial (H6 supported) and even stronger than the impact of EMCB. Overall, our findings regarding H5 and H6 only partly corroborate the reasons theory (Westaby & Fishbein, 1996) which states that reasons for buying encourage and reasons against buying reduce the purchase intention. Partial support to the study is also provided by Winchester et al. (2008) who found that positive and negative beliefs contribute to purchase propensity. In the context of buying ethical apparel, intentions seem to be primarily influenced by particular reasons against buying, which present negatively framed reasons and thus influence an individual even more (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). A similar conclusion has been reached by Claudy et al. (2013) who found that only reasons against adoption influence the intention to adopt solar energy panels, but not reasons for.

Finally, the hypothesized relationship between subjective knowledge and purchase intention (H7) has not been supported in our study. Although consumers are interested in obtaining information about different products, some authors (Cervellon & Carey, 2011; Mancini et al., 2017) argue that consumers' understanding of sustainable apparel is often vague. Based on the descriptive statistics, it seems that the level of subjective knowledge among participants in our study is below average. Along these lines, Zhang et al. (2018) found an insignificant effect of subjective knowledge on purchasing intention of green housing and assumed it comes from possessing inadequate knowledge or information of green housing. The low level of knowledge might be a trigger for consumers to believe that ethical apparel is just one made of expensive, organic, natural fibers. This misunderstanding may cause low involvement and nullify the intention to purchase ethical apparel. Also, consumers may not even know that they are making ethical apparel purchases, due to their ignorance of the ethical concept itself (Chang & Watchravesringkan, 2018). Given the significant effect of subjective knowledge on EMCB and significant effect of EMCB on intention, EMCB fully mediates the relationship between knowledge and intention.

The findings of this study offer useful implications for various industries by highlighting three areas: positively framed reasoning, negatively framed reasoning and perception of knowledge about ethical clothes. These factors directly and/or indirectly shape an individual's ethical behavior and intentions to purchase ethical clothes. Based on path coefficients, the negatively framed reasons are the strongest determinants of ethical behavior as well as the intention. Hence, marketing practitioners should pay close attention to these reasons and address them in their messages targeted at relevant

target groups. Specifically, tapping into reasons such as not being interested, perceiving no personal benefits or perceiving no added value, brings the most potential to minimize this type of reasoning in order to strengthen EMCB and in turn purchase intention. On the other hand, the key reasons for buying ethical clothes were saving money, providing a healthier alternative and helping an individual with creating a positive identity. Communicating these reasons to potential consumers might strengthen their ethically minded behavior and purchase intention. Furthermore, utilizing content marketing strategies might prove useful to strengthen reasons for buying and subjective knowledge as well as diminish reasons against buying ethical clothes.

Additionally, we are highlighting the opportunities for implications in practice. H&M Group is one of only two companies within the apparel industry named as one of the 2019 world's most ethical companies (Ethisphere Report, 2019). Their values and ambition to lead the change towards a sustainable fashion industry, as well as their Code of Ethics (one and the same for all markets), guides them in everyday mission to conduct business in a fair and ethical way (H&M, 2019). Accordingly, there are still vast opportunities to increase ethical way of thinking, behavior and promoting ethical products. Our findings can be sound support for the companies within the textile industry and help them to better understand the reasons for and against purchase of ethical clothes and how to influence consumers' ethical behavior and their purchase intentions.

Several limitations apply to this study and pave the way for future research. First, one of the key limitations of the research was the sampling method, since the technique used was informal sampling on the basis of self-selection units. Second, online survey was used as a method of collecting data, which automatically excludes respondents who do not have access to a computer. Third, given that the determinants of EMCB as well as determinants of purchase intention explained less than 50% of variance (47.4% and 37.3% respectively), other potential antecedents of EMCB and intention could be considered for future research. For example, Joshi and Rahman (2017) contend that subjective norm is a strong antecedent of sustainable purchase behavior. Hence, testing subjective norms as determinants of EMCB could potentially increase the amount of the explained variance. Fourth, the reasons theory poses certain limits on understanding consumer behavior, as it looks at humans as rationally guided individuals (Postow, 2013). Also Ajzen (2011) stated that TPB and other

reasoned action models are too "rational" and do not take into account cognitive and affective processes that are known to bias human judgements and behavior. To better capture the human nature, insights into these processes (for example, through emotionally charged reasons) would also be required (Westaby & Fishbein, 1996). Finally, our study employs a cross-sectional design, while a longitudinal approach would provide a more stringent insight into causal relationships.

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Appendix

Table A1. Measurement items.

Construct	Item
Reasons for buying	Ethical clothes are better for my health and well-being.
	By buying ethical clothing, I save money in the long run.
	I am a better person for buying ethical clothes.
Reasons against buying	I am not interested in ethical clothing.
	I do not care about problems in the textile industry.
	Except for ethicality, ethical clothes bring no added value.
	I do not see the personal benefit of buying ethical clothing.
Subjective knowledge	I believe I am sufficiently informed about the problems of the textile industry (fair trade, environmental pollution, …).
EMCB	When there is a choice, I always choose the apparel brand that contributes to the least amount of environmental damage.
	If I consider that clothing poses a potential threat to the environment, then I do not buy it.
	I do not buy brands of clothes that harm the environment.
	Whenever possible, I buy a brand of clothing with the option of recycling.
	Where possible, I buy clothes from recycled fibers.
	I pay more money for eco-friendly clothing brands, even when I have a cheaper alternative.
	I pay more money for socially responsible clothing brands, even when I have a cheaper alternative.
Purchase intention	In the next 6 months, I intend to buy ethical clothing.
	I want to buy ethical clothing in the next 6 months.
	I will very likely buy ethical clothing in the next 6 months.