



Stressed and Well-Dressed: Relationships Between Climate Worry and Fashion Purchasing Behaviour

Tess DiFrancesco | Supervised by Dr. Devashish Pujari | SSM1100

BACKGROUND

- Climate worry/anxiety refers to psychological stress or worry caused by climate change, biodiversity loss, and resulting consequences. (1)
- The literature has conflicting conclusions on the impact of climate anxiety on consumer behaviour: Can lead to sustainable action or state of eco-paralysis. (2)(3)
- Social constructs of gender impact one's sense of being, little literature on how this relates to climate worry.
- Role of self and emotion in current literature: Consumers can care about sustainability and their own desires vs. two types of consumers, those that buy when they need for sustainability reasons and those that buy based on want. (4)(1)
- Motivating factors in literature: Convenience, brand image, cost, fit/style, sustainability.
- Influencing factors to consumption in literature: Advertisements, social media, influencers, social groups and closeness to peers.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- What relationships exist between those that experience climate anxiety and their motivating/influencing factors to fashion purchasing?

METHODS

- Data collections: 26 items assessed via an online survey. Participants selected if they strongly agree, somewhat agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat disagreed, or strongly disagreed, with statements regarding fashion purchasing and climate worry.
- 539 people ages 18 to 30 living in Canada completed the survey. 439 through an introductory Environmental Science undergraduate class and 100 through social media posts.
- Procedure: Administered through survey platform Qualtrics. Participants were told survey was on the topic of "clothing purchasing habits" with mention of fast-fashion, climate change, sustainability, and climate worry omitted.



REFERENCES

1. Buerke, A., Straatmann, T., Lin-Hi, N., & Müller, K. (2017). Consumer awareness and sustainability-focused value orientation as motivating factors of responsible consumer behavior. *Rev Manag Sci*, 11, 959–991. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-016-0211-2>
2. Budziszewska, M., & Jonsson, S. E. (2021). From Climate Anxiety to Climate Action: An Existential Perspective on Climate Change Concerns Within Psychotherapy: <https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1177/0022167821993243>.
3. Clayton, S. (2020). Climate anxiety: Psychological responses to climate change. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 74, 102263. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2020.102263>
4. Blazquez, M., Henninger, C. E., Alexander, B., Franquesa, C., & Henninger Is Lecturer, C. E. (2020). *Fashion Practice*. 12(1), 34–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17569370.2019.1669326>

RESULTS

- Factor analysis of climate worry showed two factors: factor 1 "general worry" and factor 2 "uncontrollable worry".
- Gender: Women, more so than men, tend to experience uncontrollable climate worry.
- **Role of Self and Emotion:** Those that experience general climate worry tend to buy clothing only when they need it, while those who experience uncontrollable worry tend to purchase clothing as a hobby and based on emotions.
- **Motivating factors:** Most important factor to participants was fit and style of the clothing, followed by cost, convenience, brand image, and lastly sustainability. For those that experience general or uncontrollable climate worry there was a significant relationship with sustainability as a motivating factor.
- **Marketing and Media as Influencers:** Significant relationship between uncontrollable worry and the following of influencers, advertisements, or social media, while there is not for general worry.
- **Social Groups and Closeness to Peers as Influencers:** Uncontrollable worriers claim to feel closer to their peers and are influenced by their social groups to buy clothing, while for general worriers there was no significant relationship with these factors.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- Severity of stress about climate issues does not necessarily lead to better fashion purchasing habits. Further research should explore if there are other ways individuals engage in sustainable habits beyond fashion consumption to support this finding.
- Those that are in control of their climate worry are also able to control their fashion consumption, while those with uncontrollable worry are influenced to consume fashion based on emotion, marketing, and social influence.
- Those who are uncontrollably worried about climate change also express a need for closeness to other groups, perhaps as a coping mechanism, and engage in consumption which has negative impacts on the initial cause of worry.
- Further research should explore the psychological impacts of climate change in connection to consumer behaviour in order to influence individuals to engage in climate activism and sustainable behaviour to both better cope with climate worry and improve their own impact on climate change.

