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Fast Fashion Consumption:

The Relation between Moral Conviction, Purchase Behavior and Intention

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Abstract

The fast fashion sector relies on unethical production procedures including the exploitation of workers within developing countries. It is therefore important to examine factors that predict individuals' fast fashion consumption. The current study, using an online survey ($N = 250$), investigates whether moral conviction towards the fast fashion industry is negatively associated with fast fashion purchase behavior and intention, and whether that link is partially mediated by compassion towards the workers in the fast fashion sector. If the association between moral conviction and purchase behavior or intention depends on individuals' general attitude regarding the fast fashion industry is also explored. Results showed that independent of individuals' general attitude towards the fast fashion industry, a stronger moral conviction is associated with reduced fast fashion purchase behavior and intention. Compassion did not mediate these relationships. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: moral conviction, purchase behavior, purchase intention, compassion, attitude strength, fast fashion

In the past years, consumers have purchased an increasing number of clothing items from the fast fashion sector, which is one of the most polluting industries (*The price of fast fashion*, 2018; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). Fast fashion refers to a business approach that is built on offering trendy and cheap clothes in a quick manner (Cachon & Swinney, 2011). With the acceleration of fashion consumption cycles, the fast fashion sector relies on unethical production procedures including the exploitation of workers within developing countries, child labor, greenhouse gas emissions, and the pollution of ecosystems (Jones et al., 2005; McNeill & Moore, 2015; Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015; Wood et al., 2018).

Consumer research has shown that individuals increasingly consider the social and environmental consequences of their fashion purchasing decisions, such as the human rights violations in textile factories (Dickson, 2001; Tomolillo & Shaw, 2004; Niinimäki, 2010; Freestone & McGoldrick, 2008). Especially in Western countries consumption contributes to climate change and harm in countries distant from the places in which most of the consumption takes place. Therefore, current consumption patterns seem to be a moral issue relating to harm and fairness (Graham et al., 2011; Gray et al., 2012; Nielsen & Hofmann, 2021). Whether individuals hold a moral conviction, meaning a strong belief about the rightness or wrongness of a given issue, affects individual and collective behavior, including consumption (Skitka et al., 2005; Skitka & Bauman, 2008; Komarova Loureiro et al., 2016; Feinberg et al., 2019; Nielsen & Hofmann, 2021).

The current study's objective is to identify whether individuals' moral conviction about the fast fashion industry predicts purchase behavior and the intention to purchase fast fashion clothing. Furthermore, the present study aims to investigate whether compassion towards the fast fashion industry workers underlies the relation of moral conviction about the fast fashion sector with fast fashion purchase behavior and intention. Additionally, the current

study controls for strong, but non-moral attitudes, to test whether moral conviction uniquely predicts fast fashion purchase behavior and intention (Skitka et al., 2005).

The role of moral conviction has been studied in different contexts, such as the political domain (Skitka & Bauman, 2008; Zaal et al., 2011; Mazzoni et al., 2015). Research on the relation of moral conviction with purchase behavior and intention has been limited with a focus on food consumption (De Backer & Hudders, 2015; Komarova Loureiro et al., 2016; Feinberg et al., 2019; Nielsen & Hofmann, 2021). Even more limited research on moral conviction has been carried out within the clothing consumption context (Niinimäki, 2010; Gwozdz et al., 2017; Joanes, 2019; Nielsen & Hofmann, 2021). In terms of theoretical contributions, the present study may fill a gap on the role of moral conviction for consumers' purchase decisions in the fast fashion domain, which has not been investigated yet to the author's knowledge. Therefore, enhanced theoretical knowledge of moral conviction in the fashion consumption context may generalize the predictive value of moral conviction. Thereby, this study may show that moral conviction plays an important role in fashion consumers' decisions, beyond political contexts.

The fast fashion industry may be a relevant avenue for moral conviction research as it provides moral issues concerning both environmental and social welfare. Studying moral emotions in a consumption context may enhance the understanding of processes underlying consumption trends. Furthermore, it is methodologically meaningful to control for strong, but nonmoral attitudes to assess the extent of moral conviction's influence on purchase behavior. It is important to further establish that moral conviction is a distinct construct from nonmoral, strong attitudes, which may be strengthened by providing evidence in a different context than previously studied, such as within interpersonal conflict (Skitka et al., 2005).

Moreover, understanding the mechanisms underlying fast fashion consumption may support efforts of reducing it and its detrimental social and environmental effects (Hernandez et al., 2020). From a governmental perspective, it may be possible to influence social and

environmental welfare positively through sensibilization, awareness, and education of the broader mass to affect their consumption behavior. Humanitarian organizations' campaigns may benefit from insights into the emotional process underlying the relationship between moral conviction and consumption. Appealing to consumers' compassion may be a powerful avenue for targeted communication. By raising awareness, consumers may stop purchasing fast fashion items and these chains may be held accountable and potentially improve their employees' working conditions. To continue being competitive and profitable, it may be highly relevant for fast fashion companies to consider that their image may depend on consumers' moral conviction towards this sector.

Moral Conviction versus Attitude Strength

The domain theory of attitudes postulates that individuals experience moral attitudes as subjectively different from non-moral attitudes (Nucci & Turiel 1978; Skitka et al. 2005). Moral conviction refers to a strong belief that an attitude is based on one's core beliefs or feelings of rightness or wrongness about an issue (Skitka et al., 2021). Individuals may hold moral convictions towards the fast fashion industry with varying strength that might fluctuate over individuals, cultures, and time (Rozin & Singh, 1999; Skitka et al., 2005; Ryan, 2014). People can access and disclose their moral convictions as well as differentiate them from non-moral attitudes, such as attitudes rooted in personal preference or normative convention (Skitka et al., 2021).

Attitudes concern positive or negative evaluations of any entity, such as a person, idea, or event (Skitka et al., 2005; Skitka et al., 2015). Attitude strength towards the fast fashion industry is defined by the extent of the attitude's extremity, subjective importance, and centrality to an individual's identity (Skitka et al., 2005). Individuals may have a strong attitude towards the fast fashion industry, which may be reflected in attitude extremity. Extremity refers to the degree that an attitude differs from a neutral midpoint on a negative to positive continuum, for instance feeling strongly against the fast fashion industry. Attitude

importance concerns the personal relevance people assign to an attitude, for example assigning personal importance to the topic of fast fashion. Attitude centrality refers to the degree that an attitude is rooted in an individual's sense of self, such as strongly relating one's beliefs about the fast fashion industry to one's sense of self. A strong, non-moral attitude towards the fast fashion industry differs from a moral conviction towards the fast fashion industry (Skitka et al., 2005). A moral conviction towards the fast fashion industry reflects one's feelings about the fast fashion industry being closely connected to one's fundamental beliefs about right and wrong.

Moral Convictions as Universally and Objectively True Experiences

Compared to attitudes experienced as personal preferences or normative conventions, individuals perceive moral convictions as universally true beliefs that apply across individuals, cultures, and time (Haidt et al., 2003; Skitka et al., 2005). Different to strong but non-moral attitudes, attitudes high in moral conviction are experienced as objective facts similar to scientific facts. As individuals perceive their moral convictions as universally applicable and objectively true, they may be more likely to consider people who do not share their moral convictions as fundamentally wrong.

People are more intolerant toward others who oppose their strong moral convictions (Skitka et al., 2021). For example, a study found that when controlling for attitude strength, stronger moral conviction was related to greater social and physical distancing from attitudinally dissimilar others, with lower cooperativeness, and a diminished ability to create procedural solutions for conflict resolution in attitudinally heterogeneous groups (Skitka et al., 2005). In contrast, individuals show high tolerance towards others with an attitude that is different in personal preference (Skitka et al., 2021). This suggests that individuals view their moral convictions, unlike strong, but non-moral attitudes, as universally and objectively true, and thus, may be more intolerant towards people with dissimilar moral convictions to their own.

Moral Convictions as Action Motives and Obligations

An additional way that moral convictions differ from strong, but non-moral attitudes is that moral convictions carry an inherent motivational nature that guides subsequent behavior (Skitka et al., 2005). The motivational component of moral conviction seems to be explained by a sense of obligation to act on one's moral convictions (Skitka et al., 2021). The stronger morally convicted individuals felt about a certain issue, the more they felt obligated to behave in line with their moral convictions (Sabucedo et al., 2018). People with a stronger moral conviction about a certain issue experienced a lower sense of choice when making a decision that was relevant to the given issue.

When deciding how to act, people may experience their moral convictions as obligations directing behavior and potentially limiting free choice (Kouchaki et al., 2018). In line with experiencing moral conviction as an obligation, stronger moral convictions predicted increased political engagement after controlling for attitude strength (Skitka & Bauman, 2008; Skitka et al., 2021). For example, stronger moral convictions about a given issue were associated with greater activism intentions and behavior related to the given issue (Zaal et al., 2011; Van Zomeren et al., 2012; Milesi & Alberici 2018; Sabucedo et al., 2018). To summarize, the domain theory of attitudes and empirical research suggests that compared to strong, but non-moral attitudes, moral convictions are experienced as objectively and universally true, carry a motivational quality and sense of obligation that may uniquely guide behavior in accordance with one's moral convictions (Skitka et al., 2005; Skitka et al., 2021). Given these effects of moral convictions on individuals' experiences and behavior, they can be expected to guide consumer decisions.

The Role of Moral Convictions in Consumer Decisions

Previous research has shown that moral conviction is related to purchase behavior and intention (Guido et al., 2009; De Backer & Hudders, 2015; Hong & Kang, 2019; Nielsen & Hofmann, 2021). In the present study, fast fashion purchase behavior is defined as the

proportion of fast fashion clothing items within consumers' wardrobes. Purchase behavior is strongly associated with purchase intention (Lerner et al., 2007). Hence, fast fashion purchase intention is also measured and defined as consumers' willingness to buy fast fashion clothing frequently or likely in the future (Lerner et al., 2007). The role of moral conviction on purchase intention and behavior has been mainly investigated within the food consumption context (Honkanen et al., 2006; Guido et al., 2009; De Backer & Hudders, 2015). For example, moral convictions about human welfare were associated with actual diet choices, such as whether individuals consumed meat regularly, occasionally, or not at all. The more individuals are morally convicted that human suffering must be avoided, the more likely they were to eat no meat rather than occasionally eat meat. Additionally, the more individuals were morally convicted about the importance of respect for status, the more likely they were to eat meat compared to consume meat occasionally. This study suggests that individuals differ in their food consumption choices in relation to their moral convictions about human welfare (De Backer & Hudders, 2015).

Next to purchase behavior, consumers' moral convictions also play a role in guiding their purchase intentions (Honkanen et al., 2006; Arvola et al., 2008; Guido et al., 2009; Olsen et al., 2010). For instance, consumers' intention to buy organic food was mainly motivated by their moral conviction about the food industry (Guido et al., 2009). In this study, moral convictions about the food industry had the greatest predictive power of purchase intentions for organic food within consumers' decision-making process. Therefore, this study suggests that individuals consider their moral conviction in their purchase decisions and that individuals with stronger moral convictions have higher purchase intentions for organic than conventional food.

Research on moral conviction has established its role in food consumption (Honkanen et al., 2006; Guido et al., 2009; De Backer & Hudders, 2015). Supporting this view, studies on fashion consumption have found that moral factors play a role in consumers' clothing

purchases (Hong & Kang, 2019; Nielsen & Hofmann, 2021). For instance, when individuals attached moral significance to their fashion purchases, they were less likely to purchase clothing items. Within this study, moral considerations were defined as contemplating clothing purchases as morally right or wrong. Moral considerations about clothing consumption motivated efforts to resist the craving for new clothing items. The motivational force of moral considerations was partially explained by the activation of self-control. When individuals showed stronger moral considerations about their fashion consumption, they experienced greater internal conflict about their purchasing decisions and exerted more self-control in withholding consumption (Nielsen & Hofmann, 2021). Moreover, another study examined the role of moral intensity on environmentally sustainable clothing purchases (Hong & Kang, 2019). Within this study, moral intensity toward sustainable textile products was defined as individuals attaching importance to and being aware of the consequences of their purchasing of environmentally sustainable clothes. Individuals with a higher moral intensity regarding sustainable textile products were more likely to purchase these products.

Although moral consideration and moral intensity seem to be conceptually related to moral conviction, their definition within the cited studies are different to the definition of moral conviction within the present study. To the author's knowledge, moral conviction's role in fast fashion consumption has not yet been studied which is an additional reason to investigate the effect of moral conviction on fast fashion purchases. Additionally, the current study controls for strong, but non-moral attitudes, to test whether moral conviction uniquely predicts fast fashion purchase behavior and intention (Skitka et al., 2005).

In sum, if individuals perceive their moral convictions as objectively true and universally applicable, have a sense of obligation to act on them, and experience them as strong motivations for action, then moral convictions can be expected to affect consumers' decisions. Research has shown that moral conviction and related moral constructs are associated with purchase behavior and intention in the context of food and fashion

consumption (Guido et al., 2009; De Backer & Hudders, 2015; Hong & Kang, 2019; Nielsen & Hofmann, 2021). Similar effects may be thus expected for fast fashion consumption.

Therefore, it is hypothesized that there is a negative association between moral conviction about the fast fashion industry and fast fashion purchase behavior, when controlling for attitude strength (H1). Moreover, it is hypothesized that there is a negative relationship between moral conviction about the fast fashion industry and fast fashion purchase intention, when controlling for attitude strength (H2).

The Moral Emotion Compassion

The motivational force of moral conviction does not only drive individuals' behavior, but also their emotions (Skitka et al., 2005). In comparison to strong, but non-moral attitudes, individuals experience their moral convictions as charged with more intense affect (Kroll & Egan, 2004; Skitka et al., 2005; Skitka & Wisneski, 2011; Garrett, 2019; Skitka et al., 2021). Moral convictions are associated with strong emotions, such as anger, disgust, guilt, gratitude, and compassion (Rozin et al., 1999; McCullough et al., 2001; Mullen & Skitka, 2006; Tangney et al., 2007; Goetz et al., 2010). These so-called moral emotions may be essential in explaining when individuals do or do not act in accordance with their moral conviction, which so far has been studied to a limited extend (Tangney et al., 2007). Moral emotions may be defined as emotions related to the well-being or interests of another than the self or society at large (Haidt, 2003, as cited in Tangney et al., 2007). Changes in moral conviction predicted changes in moral emotions (Brandt et al., 2015; Skitka et al., 2021). For instance, a longitudinal study revealed that individuals' moral convictions about candidate preference at the beginning of the election period predicted their hostility and enthusiasm towards the candidates subsequently in the election period (Brandt et al., 2015). At the same time, alterations in moral emotions predicted changes in moral conviction, even more reliably than changes in cognitions related to moral convictions (e.g., Brandt et al. 2015, Clifford 2019,

Feinberg et al. 2019, Wisneski & Skitka 2017). Thus, moral emotions are both antecedents and consequences of moral conviction (Skitka et al., 2021).

Moral emotions may partially explain moral convictions' predictive power of actual behavior and behavioral intentions (Skitka et al., 2005; Tangney et al., 2007; Cole Wright et al., 2008; Skitka & Wisneski, 2011; Skitka et al., 2017; Geiger & Keller, 2018; Skitka et al., 2021). For instance, individuals' anticipated pride of political engagement and regret of a lack thereof mediated the association between moral conviction and activism intentions (Skitka et al., 2017). Another study found that emotions partially explained the association between moral conviction about policy preferences and the behavioral intention to participate in activism (Skitka & Wisneski, 2011). More specifically, individuals with a stronger moral conviction about physician-assisted suicide (PAS) experienced stronger positively or negatively valenced emotions than individuals with weaker moral convictions about PAS, when controlling for attitude strength. The valence of emotions depended on whether individuals supported or opposed PAS. Within this study, positively valenced emotions included relief and gratitude, while negatively valenced emotions included worry, fear, disgust, and sadness. These emotions partially mediated the relationship between moral convictions about PAS and individuals' intention to engage in activism for their position on PAS (Skitka & Wisneski, 2011).

The present study focusses specifically on the moral emotion compassion towards other individuals because considerations about human welfare seem to be salient in the fast fashion industry. More specifically, the working conditions in the fashion industry are morally questionable and the suffering of the fast fashion workers appears to be a central part of this sector. Within this study, the moral emotion compassion is defined as an affective state of being moved by the fast fashion workers' distress followed by a motivation to help them (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005; Goetz et al., 2010). Compassion is conceptually similar to and has been used synonymously with empathic concern, which constitutes one dimension of the

broader concept of empathy that additionally involves the cognitive ability for perspective-taking (Goetz et al., 2010; Singer & Klimecki, 2014; Pfattheicher et al., 2016). Compassion is related to caring for others and prosocial behavior in general (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005; Goetz et al., 2010). Individuals experiencing compassion hold the moral aspiration of alleviating others' distress and promoting another's well-being (Goetz et al., 2010; Pfattheicher et al., 2016). Previous research has shown that compassion towards the environment is positively associated with pro-environmental behavior and that compassion towards other individuals promotes pro-environmental intentions (Berenguer, 2007; Tam, 2013; Pfattheicher et al., 2015). A recent study investigated compassion's role within ethical fashion consumption. The more compassion individuals experienced for others, the more willing they were to pay a higher price for ethically manufactured clothes (Geiger & Keller, 2018). While issues concerning the social welfare of fast fashion workers are public, it is still unknown whether compassion towards fast fashion workers plays a role in consumers' decisions concerning clothing purchases. The lack of social welfare, including the inhumane working conditions of fast fashion factory employees, make this sector morally relevant. However, the relation of moral convictions about the fast fashion industry with fast fashion purchase behavior has not been investigated to date and whether compassion towards fast fashion workers may explain this relation is yet to be tested.

To address this gap, the present study examines the potential relation of consumers' compassion towards fast fashion workers with their fast fashion purchase behavior and intention. If compassion for other individuals positively relates to the willingness to pay more for ethically manufactured clothes (Geiger & Keller, 2018), then it can be expected that compassion towards the fast fashion workers negatively relates to fast fashion purchases. Moreover, if moral emotions partially mediate the association between moral conviction about policies and activism intentions, then it can be expected that compassion for fast fashion workers may partially mediate the relation of moral conviction towards the fast fashion

industry with fast fashion purchase behavior and intention (Skitka & Wisneski, 2011). Therefore, it is hypothesized that compassion towards the fast fashion workers partially mediates the relation of moral conviction about the fast fashion industry with fast fashion purchase behavior (H3) and intention (H4), when controlling for attitude strength.

Method

Participants

The online survey was administered to general consumers residing in Germany and The Netherlands, who were recruited using the platform Prolific Qualtrics and responded to the questionnaire in English. A total of 250 individuals participated after excluding three participants. When inspecting the control variable gender, there were too few respondents within this group that selected the category “other” ($n = 3$). Since gender was included as a control variable in all analyses, these participants had to be excluded from all analyses and thus were excluded from the sample. Out of the total number of participants 132 were females and 118 were males. They ranged in age from 18 to 72 ($M = 30.32$, $SD = 9.42$). As an indication of participants’ income, on average, participants spend 20 – 50 Euros on clothing in one month and 40.6% more income was needed before considering fashion items with sustainability features. The present study was approved by the Psychology Ethics Committee of Leiden University. Participants received a monetary compensation of 1.00 GBP for this study.

Measures

Moral Conviction

Individuals’ strength of moral conviction about fast fashion was assessed with a self-report 3-item scale (Ryan, 2014; Skitka et al., 2017; Skitka et al., 2021). The adapted version of this scale measured the strength of individuals’ moral conviction about the fast fashion industry: “How much are your feelings about fast fashion connected to your fundamental beliefs about right and wrong?”, “How much are your feelings about fast

fashion connected to your core moral beliefs or convictions?”, and “How much are your feelings about fast fashion based on your moral values?”. Individuals were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *very much*). The three items were averaged to compute the scale of moral conviction ($\alpha = .92$).

Fast Fashion Purchase Behavior

Fast fashion purchase behavior was measured with two single-item scales. One item assessed the proportion of fast fashion clothing that participants own: “From all your clothing, what percentage is fast fashion?”. Individuals responded by adjusting a slider, ranging from 0% to 100%. Another item assessed the estimated frequency of fast fashion clothing purchases (adapted from Millan & Reynolds, 2014): “How often do you purchase fast fashion clothing *per month*?”. Moreover, a third item assessed fast fashion purchase behavior “On average, how much money do you spend on clothing in a month?”. However, this item had been removed prior to statistical analyses as it did not have sufficient variability. The respondents were asked to indicate their frequency of clothing purchases on a 5-point scale (1 = *zero times* to 5 = *7 times or more*).

Fast Fashion Purchase Intention

Fast fashion purchase intention for fast fashion clothing items was measured with a two-item scale adapted from Kumar and colleagues (2009). The items were adjusted to fast fashion purchasing intentions: “I intend to buy fast fashion items frequently.” and “Imagine that you want to buy a t-shirt, how likely would you purchase it from a fast fashion retailer?”. Intention to purchase fast fashion items frequently was recorded on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The likelihood of buying clothing items from a fast fashion retailer was assessed with a 5-point scale (1 = *not likely at all* to 5 = *very likely*).

State Compassion

State compassion was assessed with the Santa Clara brief compassion scale (SCBCS; Hwang et al., 2008), which is an abbreviated version of the Compassion Love Scale by Sprecher and Fehr (2005). The SCBCS was adapted to specifically measure state compassion for workers in the fast fashion industry by adjusting two items by inserting “fast fashion workers” instead of “others” (“I feel a great deal of compassion towards workers in the fast fashion industry.”; “I often have tender feelings toward workers in the fast fashion industry when they seem to be in need.”). Additionally, participants were instructed to think about workers in the fast fashion industry when responding to the items. The extent to which the statements were true of the participants was measured with a 5-point scale. (1 = *not at all true of me* to 5 = *very true of me*). The five items were averaged to compute the scale state compassion ($\alpha = .918$). The five items were averaged to compute the scale state compassion ($\alpha = .85$). The complete adapted 5-item scale is listed in Appendix 1.

Control Variables

Control variables included the general attitude and attitude strength towards the fast fashion industry. General attitude towards the fast fashion industry was assessed with two items: “My general feeling about the fast fashion industry is” and “Purchasing fast fashion clothing would be”. Participants responded on a 11-point semantic differential scale (1 = *negative* to 11 = *positive*; 1 = *bad* to 11 = *good*). The two items were averaged to compute the scale of general attitude ($\alpha = .88$). Attitude strength towards the fast fashion industry was assessed with a 3-item scale (adapted from Skitka et al., 2005). This scale was modified to measure attitude strength towards the fast fashion industry by inserting “fast fashion” into each question. One item assessed attitude extremity: “In general, how strongly do you feel about the fast fashion industry?”. Another item measured attitude importance: “How important is the topic of fast fashion to you personally?”. Finally, one item assessed attitude

centrality: “How much are your beliefs about the fast fashion industry related to how you see yourself as a person?”. Individuals responded on a 5-point scale to the item measuring attitude extremity (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *very strongly*), attitude importance and centrality (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *very much*). The three items were averaged to compute the scale of attitude strength ($\alpha = .76$).

Furthermore, the present study controlled for social desirability. Social desirability was measured with the 13-item Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale – Short Form (Reynolds, 1982). This scale contains 13 items (i.e., “It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.”; “I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my own way.”; “On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.”). Responses are measured with a true or false format (1 = *true*; 2 = *false*). After recoding the responses by reverse scoring five of the items, the items were summed to form the social desirability scale ($\alpha = .63$). A high score represented a tendency to respond socially desirable.

Finally, income, gender, and age were included as control variables. Income was indirectly assessed with two-single item scales (*Income 1*: “On average, how much money do you spend on clothing in a month?”; *Income 2*: “How much **percent** more income is needed before you can consider fashion products with sustainability features?”). To indicate the additional proportion of income needed for consideration of products with sustainability features, individuals adjusted a slider ranging from 0% to 100%. Money spent on clothing purchases per month was recorded on a 5-point scale (1 = *0 – 20 Euros* to 5 = *200 Euros or more*). The items used to record gender and age are listed in Appendix 1.

Procedure

All participants completed the questionnaire online administered via Qualtrics. Before the participants filled in the questionnaire, they were informed about the goal of investigation, compensation, confidentiality of data, and voluntary participation. Individuals completed an

informed consent form. Thereafter, participants responded to the questionnaire included items specific to the present study and items of the larger research project. First, attitude valence and attitude strength were measured, then moral conviction, fast fashion purchase behavior, fast fashion purchase intention, compassion, social desirability, income, age, and gender. Participants took approximately twelve minutes to complete the questionnaire ($M_{duration} = 11.46$). At the end of the study, they were fully debriefed. The debriefing included an explanation of the purpose and goals of the research project as well as contact details of the principal investigator that they could contact for questions or comments. The participants' data was treated with complete confidentiality, analyzed anonymously, disconnected from identifiers, and collected and stored in a coded manner. Participants could withdraw participation at any point while responding and up to twenty-four hours after finishing the questionnaire.

Statistical Analyses

The first hypothesis stated that there is a negative relationship between the moral conviction about fast fashion and fast fashion purchase behavior. The second hypothesis examined whether there is a negative association between moral conviction about fast fashion and fast fashion purchase intention. To test these hypotheses, two separate hierarchical regression analyses were carried out with fast fashion purchase behavior or fast fashion purchase intention as the dependent variable, respectively. To test the mediating role of compassion (H3 and H4), bias corrected bootstrap analyses was performed using PROCESS (5000 iterations; Hayes, 2018). Finally, exploratory analyses were performed, using bias corrected bootstrap analyses with PROCESS (5000 iterations; Hayes, 2018) to explore potential moderation by general attitude towards fast fashion of the relation between the predictor variable moral conviction about fast fashion and the dependent variable fast fashion purchase behavior or fast fashion purchase intention, respectively.

3. Purchase Behavior	46.36	29.33	-.22**	.74**								
4. Compassion	3.34	.74	.32**	-.16*	-.08							
5. Attitude Valence	4.31	2.14	-.45**	.57**	.38**	-.12						
6. Attitude Strength	2.61	.79	.56**	-.22**	-.12	.44**	-.19**					
7. Age	30.32	9.42	-.06	-.18**	-.29**	-.00	.07	-.01				
8. Income 1	2.02	1.05	.03	.02	-.03	.02	.15*	.12	.02			
9. Income 2	40.65	29.28	-.10	.31**	.32**	.02	.13*	-.01	-.20**	-.16*		
10. Gender	—	—	.04	-.23**	-.35**	-.19**	.02	-.10	.12	.10	-.20	
11. Social Desirability	—	—	-.04	.00	-.03	.12	.14*	.05	.17**	.04	-.05	.04

*Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$*

Hypotheses

The first hypothesis stated that there is a negative association between moral conviction about the fast fashion industry and fast fashion purchase behavior. To test this hypothesis, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed with fast fashion purchase behavior as the dependent variable. The control variables age, gender, income 2, and attitude strength were entered in the first block, and moral conviction as the independent variable in the second block. The first regression model with purchase behavior as the dependent variable was significant, $R^2 = .27$; $F(5, 244) = 18.33$, $p < .001$. When moral conviction was entered in the second step, it uniquely explained 1.6% of variance of fast fashion purchase behavior ($R^2_{change} = .021$) and moral conviction was a significant predictor, $\beta = -.18$, $t(249) = -2.66$, $p = .008$. The first hypothesis was therefore supported.

The second hypothesis stated that there is a negative association between moral conviction about the fast fashion industry and fast fashion purchase intention. To test this hypothesis, a hierarchical regression analysis was carried out with fast fashion purchase intention as the dependent variable. The control variables age, gender, income 2, and attitude strength were entered in the first block, and moral conviction as the independent variable in

the second block. The second regression model with purchase intention as the dependent variable was significant, $R^2 = .26$; $F(5, 244) = 17.46$, $p < .001$. When moral conviction was entered in the second step, it uniquely explained 6.1% of variance of fast fashion purchase intention ($R^2_{change} = .069$) and moral conviction was a significant predictor, $\beta = -.32$, $t(249) = -4.77$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the second hypothesis was supported.

Mediation Analyses

The third hypothesis stated that compassion partially mediates the effect of moral conviction about the fast fashion industry on fast fashion purchase behavior. To test this hypothesis, a bootstrapping procedure using PROCESS (5000 iterations, bias-corrected; Hayes, 2018) was carried out. The control variables age, gender, income 2, and attitude strength were included as covariates. The findings showed no relation between moral conviction and compassion, $b = .09$, $p = .06$, and no relation between compassion and fast fashion purchase behavior, $b = -3.24$, $p = .19$. The results further revealed a significant direct relation between moral conviction and fast fashion purchase behavior in the presence of the mediator compassion, $b = -4.77$, $p = .01$, 95%CI [-8.55; -.98]. These findings therefore showed that the relation between moral conviction strength and fast fashion purchase behavior is not mediated through compassion, $b = -.30$, 95%CI [-.99; .24]. Thus, the third hypothesis cannot be supported.

The fourth hypothesis stated that compassion partially mediates the effect of moral conviction about the fast fashion industry on fast fashion purchase intention. The findings showed no mediation effect of compassion on the association between moral conviction and fast fashion purchase intention, $b = -.01$, 95%CI [-.04; .01]. Thus, the fourth hypothesis cannot be supported.

Moderation Analyses

Finally, statistical tests were carried out to further establish empirically that moral conviction is a distinct construct to attitudes as the domain theory of attitudes predicts, (Skitka

et al., 2005; Skitka et al., 2021). To explore if the relation of moral conviction about the fast fashion industry with fast fashion purchase behavior and intention depends on participants' general attitude towards the fast fashion industry, moderation analyses with bootstrapping procedure using PROCESS were conducted (5000 iterations, bias-corrected; Hayes, 2018). The results showed that attitude did not moderate the relation between moral conviction and fast fashion purchase behavior, $b = .40$, $p = .56$, 95%CI [-.93; 1.73]. Moreover, the findings revealed that attitude did not moderate the relation between moral conviction and fast fashion purchase intention, $b = .01$, $p = .68$, 95%CI [-.04; .06]. These results show that moral conviction about the fast fashion industry predicts fast fashion purchase behavior and intention independently of general attitude towards fast fashion.

Discussion

The current study examined the relation of moral conviction about the fast fashion industry with fast fashion purchase behavior and intention, and whether this association is mediated by compassion. Findings revealed that individuals with a strong moral conviction purchased less fast fashion and had a lower intention to purchase fast fashion clothing in the future, supporting the hypotheses. These relations existed, even when controlled for attitude strength, general attitude, and several background variables. The findings suggest that when consumers hold a strong moral conviction toward the fast fashion industry, they are less likely to own or intend to purchase fast fashion products.

The perceived universalism of moral convictions makes them applicable across contexts (Skitka et al., 2005). To the author's knowledge, previous research has examined the role of moral conviction in different contexts, such as for food consumption or the political domain, but not yet in the context of fast fashion. The present study shows that moral conviction affects consumers' decisions and thereby extends previous research on the range of behavior that moral conviction impacts. Moreover, the current study reveals that moral

conviction plays an important role in the context of fast fashion consumption as fast fashion consumption was investigated with two indicators: individuals' current clothing possessions and intentions to purchase fast fashion in the future. By measuring fast fashion consumption with two indicators including the result of a behavior (i.e., the proportion of clothing items in individuals' wardrobes), these findings may indicate a robust relation between moral conviction towards the fast fashion sector and fast fashion consumption. Therefore, the current study contributes to generalizing the predictive value of moral conviction to the fast fashion consumption context, further demonstrating that moral conviction affects consumer decisions.

Moral conviction towards the fast fashion industry appears to possibly represent a motivational force that shapes both actual purchase behavior and the intention (Kroll & Egan, 2004; Skitka et al., 2005; Skitka et al., 2021). Possibly, moral conviction as a motivational component may lay the foundation for the intention to buy less fast fashion clothing, and consequently guiding actual purchase behavior. Motivated by moral conviction, purchase intention may be deliberately guiding purchase behavior instead of acting out of a more impulsive nature (Peña-García et al., 2020). The similar pattern in results for purchase behavior and intention may point towards the relative universality of moral conviction, which individuals perceive as absolutes instead of mere personal preferences (Skitka et al., 2005). For instance, possessing a small amount of fast fashion clothing may be a representation of a stronger moral conviction towards the fast fashion industry, which in turn may be reflected in an individual's intention to purchase no fast fashion in the future. Thus, a strong moral conviction towards the fast fashion industry may be a relatively stable factor, guiding actual purchase behavior and purchase intention.

The third and fourth hypothesis stated that compassion would mediate the relation of moral conviction about the fast fashion industry with fast fashion purchase behavior and

intention. Contrary to these expectations, compassion did not mediate either of these associations. Individuals may weigh the costs and rewards of compassion when choosing to engage in compassionate responses (Zaki, 2014). Compassion may promote prosocial behavior if the cost is low (Neuberg et al., 1997). Possibly, individuals weighed the costs of experiencing compassion towards the fast fashion workers more strongly than the rewards of it. Thus, when choosing not to experience compassion towards the fast fashion workers, individuals may not need to change their fast fashion purchasing behavior or intentions. Possibly, the lower costs of fast fashion items and the preference for the aesthetics of such fashion items outweighed the rewards of engaging in compassion towards the fast fashion workers. Additionally, this cost-reward balancing may be influenced by perceived dissimilarity of fast fashion consumers towards the fast fashion workers. Individuals feel more compassion towards similar others compared to dissimilar others (Xu et al., 2009; Gutsell & Inzlicht, 2010). Individuals showed a bias in moral judgement of compassion towards favoring socially close as compared to socially distant others, even though they considered equal empathy as morally right (Fowler et al., 2021). When balancing competing rewards and costs of purchasing fast fashion items, individuals may mitigate their compassion towards socially distant fast fashion workers.

Alternatively, a strong moral conviction may hinder compassionate responses in a rigid pursuit of what is considered morally right or wrong. For instance, individuals may hold the conviction that exploitation of fast fashion workers is morally reprehensible and not purchase fast fashion items. However, these individuals do not necessarily feel compassion towards the fast fashion workers as this would require taking on their reference frame, such as a lack of work alternatives. Another possible explanation for the present finding is that individuals may have morally disengaged from the issue of dubious social welfare of the fast fashion workers, potentially even involving processes of dehumanization (Bandura, 1999; Haque & Waytz, 2012). By denying their moral responsibilities, individuals might have made

the cause less relevant for themselves. While individuals' moral conviction might have been strong, by distancing themselves from the fast fashion workers, they may have downgraded their compassion to not have to act on their moral conviction (Detert et al., 2008).

Additionally, individuals may downregulate their compassion when faced with a larger number of recipients (Cameron & Payne, 2011). Individuals engaged in proactive emotion regulation to avoid feeling as much compassion toward a group as compared to individuals. Potentially, the "identified victim effect" may play a role as individuals were more willing to help an identified single victim than a group of individuals (Kogut & Ritov, 2005). While individuals may have downregulated their compassion when confronted with a large group, they may be more likely to feel compassionate towards a single person. Possibly, presenting individual information on the fast fashion workers may yield differential findings concerning the role of compassion within the relation of moral conviction with fast fashion consumption.

Finally, exploratory analyses were carried out to test a potential moderation of general attitude towards fast fashion on the relation of moral conviction about the fast fashion industry on fast fashion purchase behavior and intention. Profound analyses revealed that general attitude towards fast fashion does not moderate either association. Findings revealed a strong relation of moral conviction about the fast fashion industry with fast fashion purchase behavior and intention, irrespective of individuals' general attitude towards fast fashion. The present study extends previous evidence that moral convictions are distinct from strong, but non-moral attitudes (Skitka et al., 2005), showing that moral conviction towards the fast fashion industry is different from a general attitude towards fast fashion. Previous research has started to establish that moral convictions differ from strong, but non-moral attitudes. Non-moral attitudes may be based on preferences or norms (Skitka et al., 2005; Skitka et al., 2015). Consumers' attitude towards fast fashion may be rooted in their personal taste in fast fashion aesthetics or discretion for cost-value balance. Similarly, consumers may hold a positive attitude towards fast fashion since these clothes allow them to belong to a certain

group and fulfill its dress conventions. Next to these attitudes rooted in personal taste and normative convention, consumers may hold a moral conviction towards the fast fashion industry and be morally committed to not purchase fast fashion items. The present study shows that moral conviction about the fast fashion industry show a strong relation with clothing purchase behavior irrespective of general attitude towards fast fashion, supporting the differential predictive power of moral conviction on behavior.

Practical Implications

The present study indicates that the more strongly consumers are convicted about the fast fashion industry, the less likely they are to purchase fast fashion clothing. Additionally, this relation exists irrespective of individuals' general attitude towards fast fashion, such as a personal preference towards the aesthetics of fast fashion. To reduce fast fashion consumption, governments and humanitarian organizations may benefit from including moral appeals in their campaigns and showcasing the detrimental social and environmental consequences of fast fashion consumption. Thereby, consumers may become increasingly aware of the moral relevance of the fast fashion industry. With increased sensibilization, consumers' moral convictions about fast fashion may become stronger, which in turn make them less likely purchase fast fashion. If individuals limit or potentially stop their fast fashion consumption, the fast fashion industry may be obliged to improve their production procedures in terms of environmental and social impact.

The present findings provide implications for fashion businesses by suggesting that consumers take their moral convictions into account when making clothing purchases. Consumers with a strong moral conviction may be more likely to decrease or stop their fast fashion consumption and instead potentially consider ethical fashion products. Campaigns promoting ethical fashion consumption may benefit from highlighting moral appeals concerning the fast fashion industry to possibly engage and retain consumers. For fast fashion

companies, these findings are relevant since they show that consumers may consider their moral convictions when purchasing clothes. Fast fashion companies may need to consider how to remain competitive and profitable by either targeting individuals with low moral conviction or by introducing campaigns that highlight how they start acting more morally. To continue being competitive and profitable, it may be highly relevant for fast fashion companies to consider that their image may depend on consumers' moral conviction towards this sector.

Limitations

The current study has three main limitations. The first limitation concerns the relatively low reliability of the social desirability scale. The present study's constructs were assessed with a self-report survey and may thus be affected by a social desirability bias (Fisher, 1993). This bias concerns the inclination of respondents to present themselves in the best possible light and respond in a way that seems socially approved. Possibly, social desirability was measured imprecisely and was therefore not fully controlled for, which might have influenced the present results to some extent. Specifically, the social desirability bias may have distorted individuals' report on their moral conviction about the fast fashion industry, which may represent a topic sensitive to social approval. Similarly, individuals may adjust their responses on their fast fashion consumption to avoid responses that may conflict with their reported moral conviction (Guido et al., 2009).

The second limitation is the assessment of fast fashion purchase behavior. This construct was assessed with only one item. A second item that was intended to measure purchase behavior had to be dropped prior to statistical analysis since it did not have sufficient variability. Therefore, purchase behavior was assessed with a one-item scale that depended on individuals' recall of the proportion of fast fashion clothing in their wardrobes. Potentially, inaccurate recall might have led to a recall bias which in turn may have affected the results.

The third limitation concerns the present study's cross-sectional design. Since the distinct constructs were measured at the same time, no causality can be established for the relation of moral conviction about the fast fashion industry with fast fashion purchase behavior and intention. Therefore, it remains unclear which of the constructs may be the cause and which the effect (Wang & Cheng, 2020; Solem, 2015). For example, the present study cannot establish whether a stronger moral conviction about the fast fashion industry is an antecedent of less fast fashion purchases or the consequence of a decreased fast fashion consumption.

Directions for Further Research

The present study lends preliminary evidence for the role of moral conviction in the context of fast fashion consumption. Future research may investigate whether moral conviction towards the fast fashion industry is stable over time, whether it is an antecedent of fashion consumption, and whether its link to fast fashion purchase intention is an indication of actual future consumption behavior. By using longitudinal designs, future studies may find evidence for a temporal relation between moral conviction about fast fashion and consumption behavior (Solem, 2015). Thereby, cause-and-effect relationships may be established that can deepen the theoretical understanding of moral conviction's predictive power of behavior, and more specifically on consumption behavior. Additionally, future research may control for general attitude to continue establishing moral conviction's unique predictive power of behavior in a consumption context, further supporting the domain theory of attitudes and previous empirical research (Skitka et al., 2005; Skitka et al., 2021).

Moreover, while the present study solely assessed the strength of moral conviction towards the fast fashion sector, future research may explore which moral foundations may be involved (Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Haidt & Graham, 2007). Building on the universalism aspect of moral conviction, moral foundations may transcend across contexts and be applicable to

the textile industry (Skitka et al., 2005). It may be interesting to specifically test whether individuals engage in moral piggybacking. Moral piggybacking may occur if consumers connect the issues of the fast fashion industry (e.g., exploitation of workers and environmental damage) to their already adapted moral foundations (Feinberg et al., 2019). Potentially, future research may explore whether the moral foundations of harm and fairness play a role in the moral convictions towards the fast fashion industry, for instance concerning humane working conditions and fair wages (Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Haidt & Graham, 2007). Investigating the underlying moral foundation concerning the relation of moral conviction about fast fashion and fast fashion consumption may specify the understanding of what motivates individuals to behave in line with their moral convictions.

Conclusion

Moral convictions towards the fast fashion industry play an important role in shaping consumers' fast fashion purchase behavior and intention. While a larger body of research has examined the consequences of moral convictions in a political context, the role of moral conviction in the context of fast fashion consumption has not been examined previously to the author's knowledge. The present study helped to fill this gap in the research literature and potentially motivate further research on this topic. The more knowledge on the role of moral conviction in fast fashion consumption becomes available, the more directed professionals in the field may utilize this motivational force for regulating fashion over-consumption.

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Appendix 1. Scales used in the present study

Construct	Items
Attitude valence	My general feeling about the fast fashion industry is Purchasing fast fashion clothing would be
Attitude strength	In general, how strongly do you feel about the fast fashion industry? How important is the topic of fast fashion to you personally? How much are your beliefs about the fast fashion industry related to how you see yourself as a person?
Moral conviction	How much are your feelings about fast fashion connected to your fundamental beliefs about right and wrong? How much are your feelings about fast fashion connected to your core moral beliefs or convictions? How much are your feelings about fast fashion based on your moral values?
Purchase Behavior	How often do you purchase fast fashion clothing <i>per month</i> ?* From all your clothing, what percentage is fast fashion?
Purchase Intention	Imagine that you want to buy a t-shirt, how likely would you purchase it from a fast fashion retailer? (Examples of fast fashion retailers include, but are not limited to, H&M, Zara, Urban Outfitters, Topshop, Bershka) In the future, I intend to buy fast fashion clothes frequently.
Compassion	I feel a great deal of compassion towards workers in the fast fashion industry. I tend to feel compassion towards them, even though I do not know them. One of the activities that provide me with the most meaning to my life is helping others in the world when they need help. I would rather engage in actions that help others, even though they are strangers, than engage in actions that would help me. I often have tender feelings toward workers in the fast fashion industry when they seem to be in need.
Social Desirability	It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my own way.

Construct	Items
	On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.
	There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.
	No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.
	There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.
	I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.
	I sometimes try to get even, rather than forgive and forget.
	I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.
	I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.
	There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.
	I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favours of me.
	I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.
Income	How much percent more income is needed before you can consider fashion products with sustainability features? Please adjust the slider.
	On average, how much money do you spend on clothing in a month?
Age	How old are you?
Gender	What is your gender?

*Item was dropped