sustainability

MDPI

Article

Emotion or Information: What Makes Consumers Communicate about Sustainable Apparel Products on Social Media?

Jihyeong Son [1,*], Changhyun Nam [2] and Sonali Diddi [3]

[1] Department of Apparel, Merchandising, Design and Textiles, Washington State University, Pullman, WA 99164, USA
[2] College of Entrepreneurship, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306, USA; cnam@jmc.fsu.edu
[3] Design and Merchandising, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523, USA; sonali.diddi@colostate.edu
* Correspondence: jihyeong.son@wsu.edu; Tel.: +1-509-335-1651

Abstract: This study investigated how sustainability-related messages of cotton textile and apparel products influence consumers' attitudes toward the message and interaction with other consumers in social media. Three hundred and eighty-eight online survey data of US consumers investigated the effects of perceived information and emotion toward sustainability practice messages on attitude toward and social interaction with other consumers and the effects of attitude on social interaction in social media. The results confirm that emotion is an influential variable, and, specific, positive emotion is an influential variable for attitude, and attitude influences social interaction with other consumers of sustainability practice messages. Negative emotions influence both attitude and social interaction. The information does not influence attitude but directly impacts social interaction, which may bring the purchase intention of sustainable fashion products. Thus, apparel marketers should consider emotionally sustainable promotion messages when tailoring their brand communications on social media. This study helps clarify the relationships between emotion and social interaction for sustainable fashion products. It also contributes to the theoretical foundation and has implications for sustainable fashion marketing and management in social media.

Keywords: emotion; information; social media; sustainability practices; cotton apparel; sustainable fashion

Citation: Son, J.; Nam, C.; Diddi, S. Emotion or Information: What Makes Consumers Communicate about Sustainable Apparel Products on Social Media? *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 2849. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14052849

Academic Editor: Azilah Kasim

Received: 30 January 2022
Accepted: 24 February 2022
Published: 1 March 2022

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, social media has played an important role in communicating the sustainability aspects of apparel brand products (e.g., educating, sharing brand stories). Social media provides customers with opportunities to interact with other consumers and share sustainable product consumption practices [1,2]. In turn, customers generate word-of-mouth behaviors that can positively impact apparel product communication and consumption, as most consumers tend to trust other consumer's opinions over business messages they view as advertisements [3]. Indeed, information retrieval through social interaction with trusted individuals on online channels has enabled consumers to clarify their purchasing decisions and mitigate risks associated with online apparel purchases [4]. Increased attention to marketing sustainability practices has stimulated interest in research addressing the relationship between sustainability promotion and consumption in social media. Furthermore, retailers deliver sustainability-related messages to consumers and encourage them to share the information with other consumers. However, the average US consumer receives an estimated 10,000 brand messages a day. Of those recipients, 60% regard the messages as "fake news," and 82% think online ads are destructive [5]. As a result, excessive or unfocused promotional messages in social media can negatively impact consumers' attention, trust, brand loyalty, and can lead to negative viral effects.

Findings from previous research [6] confirm that communicating sustainability with consumers through social media effectively changes consumers' sustainable attitudes and behaviors. Further, to increase the impact of social media marketing, it is critical for consumers to interact (e.g., liking, sharing, commenting, repining) with other members on the social media platform. Such consumer social media interactions have been shown to create numerous viral contents much more influential than direct promotion by retailers [7]. However, little research has been conducted to examine consumers' motivation to communicate about sustainable apparel and textile products with other consumers via social media. While a few apparel retailers and researchers have engaged with consumers to increase interactions on their social media accounts [8], few empirical studies have been conducted to examine the influence of promotional appeal (emotional vs. rational themes) of social media messages on consumer attitudes toward and intention to interact with other consumers on social media regarding sustainable apparel products.

Emotions are natural instinctive mental states; thus, they are in the same class as sensations, beliefs, and desires [9]. Emotions are generally elicited by stimulus events (internal and external) deriving from one's circumstances, moods, and relationships with others or feeling toward objects [10]. Emotions also have a large role in organizing memories and making important decisions [11]. Brosch et al. found that decisions and their consequences are thought to result in emotions, while many of the choices people make are "guided by the experience of these emotions or the anticipation of the emotions that may be elicited" (p. 5). It is difficult to determine the emotions people will feel in the future, but they serve as a rational means to make decisions in the first place [11].

By determining if sustainable promotional messages should focus on reasonable claims or emphasize emotional appeal, marketers can communicate appropriate sustainable messages with consumers, and thus, encourage sustainable apparel consumption in social media. From a scholarly perspective, understanding why people share particular messages on social media can also help predict conative components of virality and find ways to elicit public opinion on social issues such as sustainability [12]. Hence, more empirical research is needed to understand how rational and emotional messages impact attitude and behavior. Thus, this study aims to empirically explore the influence of rational and emotional messages on positive attitudes toward sustainable apparel products, which in turn affect behavioral intentions to interact with other consumers in social media about sustainability-related information.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Feeling as Information

According to cognitive reasoning-based models, findings from previous studies reveal that product quality information, such as performance, durability, and convenience, dominates rational decision-making processes, although those making the decisions already have a positive attitude toward sustainable products [13–15]. However, psychologists also argue that many decisions are made by automatic, unconscious processes based on conscious and rational thinking information [16]. In addition, emotions can affect attitudes and judgment differently, leading to behavioral consequences that depend on whether they are positively or negatively perceived [17]. For example, positive emotions can lead to a more optimistic evaluation of sustainable behaviors than negative emotions [18]. Schwarz's Feeling-As-Information Theory can explain this argument: that emotion, as a source of information and subjective experience, follows the same principles as when other information is used [19]. Other studies show negative emotions such as fear and guilt toward sustainable issues (e.g., climate change), impact positive environmentally sustainable behaviors (e.g., traveler's perceptions and intentions toward sustainable accommodation, restaurant, and eco-friendly apparel) [20–24]. Therefore, types of messages (positive or negative) influence communication effectiveness related to both emotional and rational appeal [25]. Thus, it is meaningful to test the impact of positive and negative emotions as they relate to sustainable information related to apparel products on consumers' attitudes

and engagement in group behaviors such as sharing information. By sharing information when information about an event is shared on social media, individuals consider their options and form attitudes and beliefs that determine how they will respond and participate in collective behaviors [12]. Informative or creative firm advertising are more likely to generate empathy measured by "likes" on Facebook, while posted ads using emotional appeal do not. Brands' marketing messages posted on social media are more likely to be shared among peers when using an informative cognitive approach or an emotional approach [26].

2.2. Perceived Information

There is an exponential growth in the use of social media and user-generated content to search for product information [2,27], enabling consumers to interact more easily with brands and other consumers. Interactions can be defined as two-way communications between brands and consumers using social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest). In addition, user-generated content through social interactions form the basis for consumers to connect with brands, seek information about products, and influence purchase behaviors through electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) that other consumers use [28,29]. The trends in social media indicate that specialized social media platforms (i.e., Instagram and Pinterest) successfully integrate consumer's purchase journey, especially "the research stage" in which consumers seek more information related to brands, products, and events, and then satisfy through merchandising [30–32].

Seeking information related to functional aspects of products along with entertainment (e.g., hedonism, enjoyment, fun, feeling cool) and social status have been found to be some of the most important motivations for consumers to interact with brands on social media [31,33]. Findings from Kanter and Fine's study show that interactions on social media play an important role in promoting environmental awareness and encouraging sustainable lifestyles [34]. Ballews et al. [35] proposed a conceptual framework: Technologies for Pro-environmental Action Model (TPAM). The model explains how social media's various functions (i.e., informational, relational, and experiential) and newer digital platforms encourage individuals to engage in environmentally responsible behaviors (ERBs) when matched with individuals' personal, social and contextual pathways.

Social media has also enabled consumer advocacy efforts and forced brands to take actions by disseminating information about various petitions and social causes [35,36]. Some examples specific to the fashion industry include social media campaigns by Fashion Revolution (an NGO focused on social and environmental issues in the fashion industry) like #whomademyclothes which began in response to the Bangladesh clothing factory collapse that killed 1138 workers. The campaign has garnered over 3.8 million posts on Instagram, spreading information about the fashion industry and demanding that brands share their business practices. This was followed by a second viral social media campaign, #Imadeyourclothes, that introduces workers to fashion consumers across the globe. Workers share information related to their work and workplace conditions (Fashion Revolution, 2020) [37]. Such campaign support is possible only when consumers find information personally relevant and they choose to interact (sharing, liking, and repining) with other like-minded individuals through social media. This example shows the pivotal role of social media and its influence in promoting sustainable clothing consumption. Social media functions help consumers find basic product information and empower them to be responsible advocates that hold brands accountable for their business practices. Informational messages support functional needs and help consumers build a positive attitude and share information with others. Based on the literature cited, this study hypothesizes the following relationship:

Hypothesis 1 (H1) . *Perceived information significantly influences (a) attitude and (b) social interaction.*

2.3. Perceived Emotion

Emotions can be categorized as positive (e.g., pleasing or arousing) or negative (anger or fear). From a business perspective, emotions play a strategic role in relationship building with customers and driving business decisions [38]. Consumers share their opinions and ideas publicly through social media, and businesses have the opportunity to understand consumer emotions about various topics, issues, and concerns [39]. Emotions expressed on social media are increasingly vital in developing sales agendas. With this information, businesses devise well-targeted marketing strategies to promote products and services to like-minded consumers as well as analyze user-generated data to gain market intelligence for future business directions [40]. Previous research has shown that sustainability practice messages/posts effectively activate descriptive and injunctive norms [41].

Research indicating the influential role of emotions in consumers' purchase and patronage behaviors is well documented. Studies with luxury brand consumers have found that consumer involvement and associated feelings positively correlate with consumer-brand interaction and purchase intention [42]. Brand social media messages should also emphasize emotional aspects; emotion motivates consumers to interact with the brand community on social media. In the same vein, Chan et al. found that luxury consumers' positive emotional responses elicited during product usage positively influence repurchase intentions [43]. They also found that hedonic consumers who experience positive emotions are more likely to interact on social media. Fashion brands have used social media to entice consumers with limited editions or created demand. For example, Everlane, a fashion brand, created a viral social media frenzy by inviting consumers to try out their first pair of pants. Consumer social interactions went viral with over 12,000 consumers on the waitlist to provide feedback, generating consumer interest and garnering new Everlane followers.

Previous research has found that negative emotions have varying results on individuals' decisions. In their experimental study, Harth, Leach, and Kessler found that individuals who experience guilt are more likely to repair environmental damage [21]. Individuals who feel angry are more likely to punish wrongdoers, and finally, individuals who feel proud have a positive relationship with environmental protection. Consumer perceptions and attitudes toward social interactions are influenced by their emotional disposition to a topic or post. Social media messages focused on sustainable consumption encourage consumers to interact with brands and their communities in an effort to promote sustainable lifestyles. For example, REI promoted #OptOutside, which became viral, and the hashtag discouraged consumers from mindlessly shopping during Black Friday to instead spend time with their family and outdoors in the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 [44,45]. Patagonia has also promoted sustainable clothing consumption through social media, encouraging consumers to buy only when they have need it. Patagonia's social media has also served as an important tool to inform its consumers of the company's sustainable and socially responsible business practices [46]. While some research has been done in other domains related to the influence of consumer emotions on purchase intention, there is a lack of understanding of how consumer emotions toward sustainability practice messages influence attitudes and social interactions. Based on the literature cited, the following relationships are hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2 (H2) . *Perceived positive emotion significantly influences (a) attitude and (b) social interaction.*

Hypothesis 3 (H3) . *Perceived negative emotion significantly influences (a) attitude and (b) social interaction.*

Hypothesis 4 (H4) . *Attitude has a significant influence on social interaction.*

3. Method

3.1. Sample and Data Collection

The research population of this study includes consumers who have the experience of sharing sustainability practice messages of cotton apparel and textile products on social media. However, it was difficult to invite all of them into our study design except for case studies. It was highly impractical and unnecessary to reach everyone who fit our study design. Therefore, a convenience sampling method was a practical solution to estimate the population parameters from sample statistics [47]. Amazon Mechanical Turk (Mturk), a crowdsourcing marketplace where researchers and research participants can find each other and provide a secure means of payment for participants [48], was used for convenience sampling. Additionally, according to statistical power criteria (80% power with d = 0.3, $\alpha < 0.05$) [49], over 350 were collected for sample size.

Of the 405 participants recruited by (MTurk) in January 2019, this study collectively obtained 388 usable responses comprised of US consumers screened to experience sharing sustainability practice messages for cotton apparel and textile product in social media. Since cotton is the most commonly used natural material in the apparel industry and discussed its sustainability in production, cotton apparel and textile were used as examples of sustainable apparel and textile products in the survey scenario [50]. It took approximately 10 min for a participant to complete the online survey built by Qualtrics.

3.2. Survey Instruments

A scenario-based survey is used in this study because it can be advantageous to implement a scenario that creates the "same" frame of reference for all participants [51]. In order to get participants to answer the survey questions by considering social media messages related to sustainability and sustainable textile and apparel products, the following statements were provided at the beginning of the survey. Social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, etc., is now considered an essential marketing tool, (1) helping apparel brands and retailers communicate their environmental, social, and economic sustainability practices with consumers and (2) providing opportunities for consumers to share their sustainable apparel product consumption (e.g., sharing reviews about brands and products, and social issues related to corporate social responsibility). For example, "cotton" textiles and apparel products are most often communicated about their environmentally friendly manner, labor issues, and economic value in this culture; it is also considered as "organic" or "natural". Therefore, in this study, we would like to know your social media usage behavior, such as the "liking", "commenting", and "repining" behavior related to these cotton apparel sustainability practice messages."

The reflective constructs of the questionnaire were adapted from existing literature: (a) perceived information (b) perceived positive and negative emotions [52], (c) attitude toward sustainability practice messages regarding cotton textiles and apparel [53], and (d) interactions (liking, commenting, and repining) in social media [54]. They were employed using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = very strongly disagree, 7 = very strongly agree) [52–54].

3.3. Data Analysis Procedures

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted to test proposal hypotheses using Mplus 7.0 software. This analysis required a two-step approach testing of a theoretical conceptual model's measurement and structural components. In a first step, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with maximum likelihood estimation was utilized in evaluating the reliability of the measurement components for the model. In the next step, an estimation of the structural model and an investigation of the hypothesized interrelationships among latent constructs were performed. The model fit was assessed using four goodness-of-fit statistics such as the chi-squared value (χ^2), comparative fit index (CFI > 0.9), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI > 0.9), the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA < 0.08),

and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR < 0.08) based on rule-of-thumb criteria for goodness-of-fit indices [55].

4. Results

The following theoretical framework was proposed according to a literature review related to cognitive reasoning-based models. We tested hypotheses regarding perceived information, perceived positive and negative emotions, (c) attitude toward positive toward sustainability practice messages regarding cotton textiles and apparel, and (d) interactions.

4.1. Demographic Information

As shown in Table 1, a total of 388 usable responses were recruited from the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). One hundred ninety-three participants were female (49.7%) and 195 participants were male (50.3%), with ages ranging from 18 to 76 years with a mean age of 34. The majority was Caucasian/European American (73%), followed by Hispanic/Latino (10%), African American (7%), Asian (7%), and others (3%). Fifty-nine percent of the participants had incomes between $25,000 and $75,000. Twenty-six percent had incomes of $75,000 or more, while 14% had incomes of less than $25,000. Regarding their average daily use of social media, approximately 43 and 32% of the participants spent 1–2 and 3–4 h per day on social media. Forty-nine percent of the participants frequently used Facebook, followed by Instagram (35%), Twitter (6%), YouTube (4%), Pinterest (3%), and others (2%). Most participants had either a high level or advanced level of Internet experience (42 or 39%, respectively). The majority of the participants (77%) followed sustainability-related messages of apparel on social media, and 43% of participants preferred "liking", "commenting", and "repining" on posts more often in general.

Table 1. Results of Demographic Information.

	Category	***N* (%)**
Gender	Female	193 (49.7)
	Male	195 (50.3)
Ethnicity	Caucasian	283 (72.9)
	Hispanic or Latino	37 (9.5)
	African American	29 (7.5)
	Asian	26 (6.7)
	American Indian/native	6 (1.5)
	Others	7 (1.8)
Household income	$25,000 below	56 (14.4)
	$25,000–$50,000	110 (28.4)
	$50,000–$75,000	118 (30.4)
	$75,000–$100,000	62 (16.0)
	$100,000–$150,000	24 (6.2)
	$150,000 over	18 (4.7)
Spending on social media a day?	less than 1 h	38 (9.8)
	1–2 h	166 (42.8)
	3–4 h	124 (32)
	5–6 h	43 (11.1)
	6 h over	14 (3.7)
	no everyday	3 (0.8)
Level of Internet experience?	low level	2 (0.5)
	Basic level	12 (3.1)
	Intermediate level	57 (14.7)
	High level	163 (42)
	Advanced level	154 (39)

Table 1. *Cont.*

	Category	*N* (%)
Social media platform	Facebook	191 (49.2)
	Instagram	136 (35.1)
	Twitter	24 (6.2)
	YouTube	17 (4.4)
	Pinterest	11 (2.8)
	Other	9 (2.4)
Follow sustainability practice messages of apparel on SNS?	Yes	297 (76.5)
	No	91 (23.5)
In general, like, comment, and repining on posts more often?	Yes	168 (43.3)
	No	220 (56.7)

4.2. Measurement Model Testing Results

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine the measurement model's factor structure and scale validity. Table 2 presents the results of the CFA. The results indicated that the measurement model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 373.4$, $df = 142$, $p < 0.001$, TLI = 0.94, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.065, SRMR = 0.060). With regard to constructing validities, all factor loadings were significant and greater than 0.65 ($p < 0.001$; loadings ranging from 0.65 to 0.95). The estimates of average variance extracted (AVE) for this study constructs ranged from 0.50 to 0.96 were the suggested guideline of 0.50 [56,57]. Furthermore, the construct reliability (C.R.) coefficients, ranging from 0.79 to 0.88, were greater than the suggested criterion value of 0.60 [58]. The measurement model was conducted to analyze the scales' overall factor structure and construct validity with all Cronhach's alphas above 0.70 [57]. These results indicated commonly acceptable evidence of the construct validity in the measurement model.

Table 2. Results of the Measurement Model.

	Factors & Items	λ	C.R.	Cronbach's α	AVE
	Perceived information		0.83	0.83	0.50
P.I. 1	Availability	0.65			
PI 2	Special offers	0.71			
PI 3	Packing or shape	0.73			
PI 4	Guarantees or warranties	0.74			
PI 5	New ideas	0.66			
	Perceived positive emotion		0.79	0.79	0.56
PPE 1	Happy	0.76			
PPE 2	Acceptance	0.72			
PPE 3	Interest	0.76			
	Perceived negative emotion		0.85	0.96	0.96
PNE 1	Fear	0.88			
PNE 2	Anger	0.94			
PNE 3	Disgust	0.95			
PNE 4	Sadness	0.92			
	Attitudes toward sustainability practice messages regarding cotton textiles and apparel		0.88	0.88	0.66
ATT 1	I like sustainability practice messages in social media.	0.82			
ATT 2	I feel positive toward sustainability practice messages	0.85			
ATT 3	Sustainability practice messages are good for the environment.	0.79			
ATT 4	I feel proud when buying sustainable cotton textiles and apparel.	0.78			
	Social Interactions		0.87	0.93	0.68
P.I. 1	Liking	0.79			
PI 2	Commenting	0.83			
PI 3	Repining	0.86			

Table 2. *Cont.*

Factors & Items			λ	C.R.	Cronbach's α	AVE
Model fit index	χ^2 (*df*)	*p*-value	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
	373.4 (142)	0.000	0.94	0.95	0.065	0.060

Notes. χ^2 = chi-suqare; *df* = degree of freedom; λ = standard regression weights; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual.

4.3. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing Results

As shown in Figure 1 and Table 3, structural equation modeling (SEM) indicated good model fit (χ^2= 357.86, *df* = 141, $p < 0.001$, TLI = 0.95, CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.06). Testing the hypotheses in a theoretical conceptual model revealed perceived information did not influence attitude toward sustainability practice messages regarding cotton textiles and apparel but positively influenced social interaction ($\gamma = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1(a) is not supported, but Hypothesis 1(b) is supported. Perceived positive emotion positively influenced attitude toward sustainability practice messages regarding cotton textiles and apparel ($\gamma = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$), but not social interaction. Therefore, Hypothesis 2(a) is supported, and Hypothesis 2(b) is not supported. Perceived negative emotion negatively influenced attitude toward sustainability practice messages regarding cotton textiles and apparel ($\gamma = -0.13$, $p < 0.01$).) and positively influenced social interaction ($\gamma = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, both Hypotheses 3(a) and 3(b) are supported. In addition, the attitude toward sustainability practice messages regarding cotton textiles and apparel influenced social interaction ($\gamma = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$).

Further, the indirect effect of perceived positive emotion on social interaction was positive and significant ($\gamma = 0.13$, $p < 0.05$). This result indicated that attitude toward sustainability practice messages regarding cotton textiles and apparel partially influences the relationship between perceived negative emotion and social interaction.

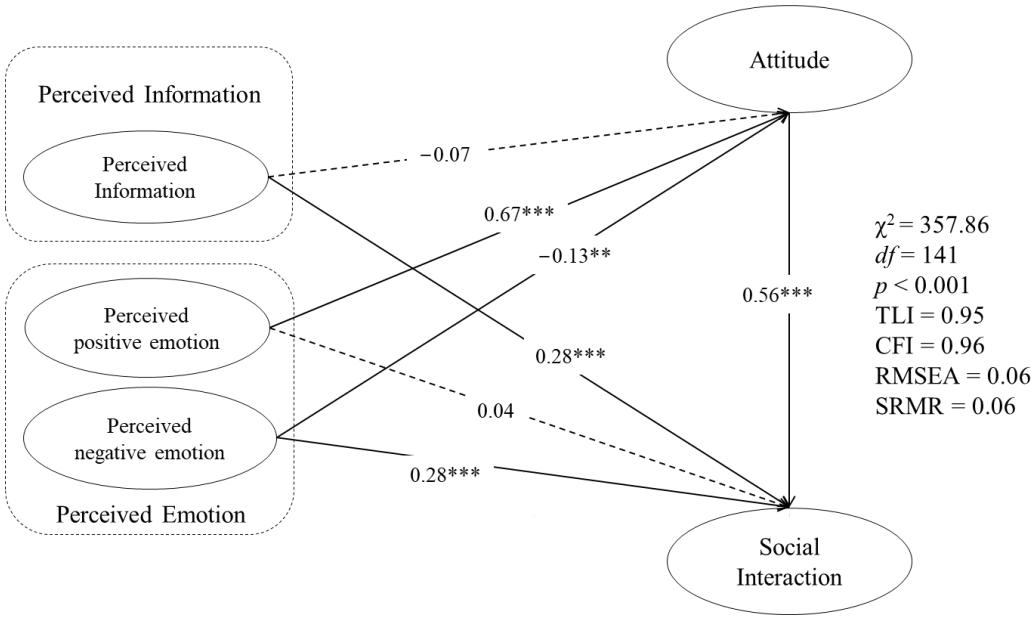

Figure 1. Theoretical conceptual model. (** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$).

Table 3. Results of the structural model.

Hypothesized Path	Standardized Coefficient	Hypothesis Testing
Direct effects		
H1a Perceived information → Attitudes	−0.07	Not supported
H1b Perceived information → Social interaction	0.28 ***	Supported
H2a Perceived positive emotion → Attitudes	0.67 ***	Supported
H2b Perceived positive emotion → Social interaction	0.04	Not supported
H3a Perceived negative emotion → Attitudes	−0.13 **	Supported
H3b Perceived negative emotion → Social interaction	0.28 **	Supported
Indirect effect		
Perceived information → Attitudes → Social interaction	0.04 *	Not supported
Perceived positive emotion → Attitudes → Social interaction	0.56 *	Fully supported
Perceived negative emotion → Attidues → Social interaction	0.56 *	Partially supported

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$,** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$.

5. Discussion

This study emphasizes the influence of perceived information and emotions related to sustainable concerns and benefits on attitudes to sustainable products and social interaction on social media. The results show that positive emotions toward sustainable messages have no direct effect but have a considerably high indirect effect on social interactions. It generates a positive attitude toward the message, and leads consumers to express their liking or repine of the message through social interaction. On the other hand, negative emotions toward sustainable concerns, directly and indirectly, affect social interactions. As consumers perceive negative emotions, they negatively affect the social media message. Intriguingly, however, negative emotions and attitudes positively influence social interaction. Furthermore, the model provides a higher level of explanatory power.

Interestingly, the cognitive benefits of sustainable apparel products do not form positive attitudes, but consumers still share this information with others. Therefore, the cognitive processing of information and feeling as information of sustainable messages can be claimed as determinants of emotional contagion and collective behaviors that can affect viral behaviors in social media. An implication is that apparel retailers should emphasize positive and negative emotions caused by sustainable promotional messages.l They should not only rely on cognitive responses to the advertising of sustainable apparel products.

The results of this study help clarify why consumers share and interact with businesses and other consumers regarding sustainable messages on social media. Prior research has suggested that the increasing impact of social media marketing depends on how consumers get involved with behavioral engagement in social media promotional messages [59], but the messages have no detailed mechanisms through which this interaction occurs. Our findings suggest that one such mechanism is that arousing emotions may trigger sharing sustainable related messages and getting involved with the message and businesses.The unconscious and instant responses such as emotions, happiness, acceptance, interest, fear, anger influence decisions and rational thinking emotions [16]. Accordingly, this result confirms feeling-as information theory that emotions follow the same principle as using emotion as a source of information [19].

Consistent with other research [41,42], emotions influence consumers' attitudes and social interaction behavior. However, in this study, negative emotions toward sustainable social media issues have a more direct and indirect effect on social interaction than positive emotions have an indirect effect through positive attitude building. It contradicts previous research [42,43] that positive emotion can lead to a more optimistic lead consequence behavior than negative emotion toward sustainable issues. When consumers feel fear, anger, disgust, sadness toward sustainable issues, it generates more power for them to instantly react to the feelings by expressing liking and their opinions and sharing them with others. This is due to the context of this study, sustainable messages on social media. Consumers who feel negative emotions such as anger or guilt were more likely to condemn those

involved in environmental damages and participate in activities to recover them [20,21]. However, both positive and negative emotions have value in social media marketing in that they shape attitudes and eventually influence interactions.

Previous research argued that product quality information influences a positive attitude toward a sustainable product. Therefore, it dominates the decision-making processes [13–15]. However, in this study, perceived information about sustainable textile and apparel products does not lead to positive attitudes toward the message, although it leads to sharing the message. This result could be understood as that consumers use social media to seek information about their purchases and use it for entertainment or socializing to share and react to these informative messages [60].

6. Conclusions

6.1. Theoretical Contribution

This study contributes to understanding how consumers motivate to get involved with sustainability-related messages in order to have a viral effect of promotional messages on social media. As confirming Schwarz's Feeling-As-Information Theory [17], perceived information and emotions and a positive attitude toward the messages bring social interactions. Further, negative emotions toward sustainability-related messages, directly and indirectly, affect consumers' behaviors on social media. However, to confirm whether these interactions finally occur in sustainable product consumption, future research needs to investigate how these emotionally formed social interactions affect consumption.

6.2. Managerial Contribution

With new digital technologies and the availability of information via different sources, marketers must establish two-way communication with their consumers and understand underlying reasons why consumers intend to interact with businesses and other consumers socially. According to this study, delivering information and evoking emotions of sustainability practice messages are essential to initiate consumer interaction on social media.

6.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has a few limitations that suggest a direction for future study. First, since this study used MTurk to collect consumer samples, a web-based survey using MTurk offered the samples from consumers. It limited the sampling pool to only those individuals who had access to MTurk in the United States. Future studies should consider recruiting participants from different cultures to generalize the findings internationally. Second, the results of the cognitive reasoning-based models are quite straightforward and robust–that emotions influence attitude and social interaction toward sustainable messages. However, these social interactions could not fully explain the underlying reason for purchasing sustainable apparel products. Further studies could include additional variables (e.g., purchase intention, behavior, etc.) to confirm whether these interactions finally occur in sustainable product consumption. In addition, future research needs to investigate how these emotionally-formed social interactions affect consumption.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, J.S. and C.N.; methodology J.S. and C.N.; software, J.S.; validation, J.S. and C.N.; formal analysis, J.S.; investigation, J.S. and C.N.; resources, J.S.; data curation, J.S.; writing—original draft preparation, J.S., C.N. and S.D.; writing—review and editing, J.S. and C.N.; visualization, C.N.; project administration, J.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was funded by Cotton Incorporated.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Washington State University (IRB #17424).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Zhang, J.; En, M. From online motivations to ad clicks and to behavioral intentions: An empirical study of consumer response to social media advertising. *Psychol. Marg.* **2016**, *33*, 155–164. [CrossRef]
2. Sogari, G.; Tommaso Pucci, B.A.; Zanni, L. Millennial generation and environmental sustainability: The role of social media in the consumer purchasing behavior for wine. *Sustainability* **2017**, *9*, 1911. [CrossRef]
3. How Consumers View Advertising: 2017 Survey. Available online: https://clutch.co/agencies/resources/how-consumers-view-advertising-survey-2017 (accessed on 11 January 2022).
4. Son, J.; Sun, J.; Hughes, A. Millennials' online apparel purchase decisions through social Interactions. *Fash. Ind. Educ.* **2017**, *15*, 44–58. [CrossRef]
5. Many Americans Believe Fake News Is Sowing Confusion. Available online: https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2016/12/15/many-americans-believe-fake-news-is-sowing-confusion/ (accessed on 19 June 2021).
6. Turunen, L.L.M.; Minna, H. Communicating actionable sustainability information to consumers: The Shades of green instrument for fashion. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2021**, *15*, 126605. [CrossRef]
7. 8 Ways Customers Interact and Engage with Your Brand on Social. Available online: https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-interaction/ (accessed on 29 May 2020).
8. Rapp, A.; Beitelspacher, L.S.; Grewal, D.; Douglas, E. Hughes. Understanding social media effects across seller, retailer, and consumer interactions. *J. Acad. Mar. Sci.* **2013**, *5*, 547–566. [CrossRef]
9. Reisenzein, R. What is a definition of emotion? And are emotions mental-behavioral processes? *Soc. Sci. Inf.* **2007**, *46*, 424–428. [CrossRef]
10. Scherer, K.R. What are emotions? And how can they be measured? *Soc. Sci. Inf.* **2005**, *44*, 695–729. [CrossRef]
11. Brosch, T.; Scherer, K.R.; Grandjean, D.M.; Sander, D. The impact of emotion on perception, attention, memory, and decision-making. *Swiss Med. Wkly.* **2013**, *143*, w13786. [CrossRef]
12. Chen, R.; Sakamoto, Y. Feelings and perspective matter: Sharing of crisis information in social media. In Proceedings of the 47th International Conference on System Sciences, Hawaii, HI, USA, 6–9 January 2014; pp. 1958–1967.
13. Ottman, J.A. *Green Marketing: Challenges and Opportunities for the New Marketing Age*; NTC Business Books: Lincolnwood, IL, USA, 1993.
14. Peattie, K.; Ratnayaka, M. Responding to the green movement. *Ind. Mark. Manag.* **1992**, *21*, 103–110. [CrossRef]
15. Kim, Y.D.; Nam, C.; LaPlaca, A.M. Marketing and communicating sustainability through college athletics: The effects of pro-environmental initiatives on the belief-attitude-intention hierarchy. *J. Mark. Hig. Educ.* **2021**, 1–21. [CrossRef]
16. Manning, E. *Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy*; MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 2009.
17. Lee, J.; Hong, I.B. Predicting positive user responses to social media advertising: The roles of emotional appeal, informativeness, and creativity. *Int. J. Inf. Manag.* **2016**, *36*, 360–373. [CrossRef]
18. Carrus, G.; Passafaro, P.; Bonnes, M. Emotions, habits and rational choices in ecological behaviours: The case of recycling and use of public transportation. *J. Environ. Psychol.* **2008**, *28*, 51–62. [CrossRef]
19. Schwarz, N. *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*; Feelings-As-Information Theory; Sage Publications Ltd.: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2012; pp. 289–308.
20. Ferguson, M.A.; Branscombe, N.R. Collective guilt mediates the effect of beliefs about climate change on willingness to engage in mitigation behavior. *J. Environ. Psychol.* **2010**, *30*, 135–142. [CrossRef]
21. Harth, N.S.; Leach, C.W.; Kessler, T. Guilt, anger, and pride about in-group environmental behaviour: Different emotions predict distinct intentions. *J. Environ. Psychol.* **2013**, *34*, 18–26. [CrossRef]
22. Kapoor, P.S.; Balaji, M.S.; Jiang, Y. Effectiveness of sustainability communication on social media: Role of message appeal and message source. *Int. J. Con. Hosp. Manag.* **2021**, *3*, 949–972. [CrossRef]
23. Meek, S.; Wilk, V.; Lambert, C. A big data exploration of the informational and normative influences on the helpfulness of online restaurant reviews. *J. Bus. Res.* **2021**, *125*, 354–367. [CrossRef]
24. Kumar, N.; Garg, P.; Singh, S. Pro-environmental purchase intention towards eco-friendly apparel: Augmenting the theory of planned behavior with perceived consumer effectiveness and environmental concern. *J. Glob. Fash. Mark.* **2022**, 1–17. [CrossRef]
25. Cozzio, C.; Volgger, M.; Taplin, R.; Woodside, A.G. Nurturing tourists' ethical food consumption: Testing the persuasive strengths of alternative messages in a natural hotel setting. *J. Bus. Res.* **2020**, *117*, 268–279. [CrossRef]
26. Villarroel Ordenes, F.; Grewal, D.; Ludwig, S.; Ruyter, K.D.; Mahr, D.; Wetzels, M. Cutting through content clutter: How speech and image acts drive consumer sharing of social media brand messages. *J. Consum. Res.* **2019**, *45*, 988–1012. [CrossRef]
27. Bronner, F.; De Hoog, R. Vacationers and eWOM: Who posts, and why, where, and what? *J. Travel Res.* **2011**, *50*, 15–26. [CrossRef]
28. Filieri, R.; McLeay, F. E-WOM and accommodation: An analysis of the factors that influence travelers' adoption of information from online reviews. *J. Travel Res.* **2014**, *53*, 44–57. [CrossRef]

29. Sriwardiningsih, E.; Saputra, P.C.; Wibowo, S.H.; Febriani, D.; Riyanto, S. The Effectiveness of Electronic WOM in Electronic Commerce and Social Media. In Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Cybernetics and Intelligent System, Kota Makassar, Indonesia, 25–26 October 2021; pp. 1–6.
30. Purba, F.R.; Paramita, E.L. The Influence of e-WOM and customer satisfaction on purchasing decisions. *Int. J. Soc. Sci. Bus.* **2021**, *5*, 575–585. [CrossRef]
31. Mander, J.; Kavanagh, D.; Chase, B. *Social: GlobalWebIndex's Flagship Report on the Latest Trends in Social Media*; GlobalWebIndex: London, UK, 2019.
32. Ruiz-Alba, J.L.; Morales Mediano, J.; Ayestarán, R.; López-Tenorio, P.J. Fashion Events and e-WOM. *Evevt Manag.* **2021**, 1–36. [CrossRef]
33. Jahn, B.; Kunz, W. How to transform consumers into fans of your brand. *J. Ser. Manag.* **2012**, *23*, 344–361. [CrossRef]
34. Kanter, B.; Fine, A. *The Networked Nonprofit: Connecting with Social Media to Drive Change*; John Wiley & Sons: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2010.
35. Ballew, M.T.; Omoto, A.M.; Winter, P.L. Using Web 2.0 and social media technologies to foster proenvironmental action. *Sustainability* **2015**, *7*, 10620–10648. [CrossRef]
36. Gil de Zúñiga, H.; Jung, N.; Valenzuela, S. Social media use for news and individuals' social capital, civic engagement and political participation. *J. Comput.-Mediat. Comm.* **2012**, *17*, 319–336. [CrossRef]
37. Get Involved Gulide: In the Workplace. Available online: https://issuu.com/fashionrevolution/docs/fr_2020_getinvolved_workplace-comingsoon (accessed on 1 January 2022).
38. Yu, L.; Cao, X.; Liu, Z.; Wang, J. Excessive social media use at work: Exploring the effects of social media overload on job performance. *Inf. Technol. People* **2018**, *31*, 1092–1112. [CrossRef]
39. McClure, C.; Seock, Y.K. The role of involvement: Investigating the effect of brand's social media pages on consumer purchase intention. *J. Retail. Consum. Serv.* **2020**, *53*, 101975. [CrossRef]
40. Chung, W.; Zeng, D. Dissecting emotion and user influence in social media communities: An interaction modeling approach. *Inf. Manag.* **2020**, *57*, 103108. [CrossRef]
41. Brossard, D. New media landscapes and the science information consumer. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* **2013**, *110*, 14096–14101. [CrossRef]
42. Martín-Consuegra, D.; Díaz, E.; Gómez, M.; Molina, A. Examining consumer luxury brand-related behavior intentions in a social media context: The moderating role of hedonic and utilitarian motivations. *Phys. Behav.* **2019**, *200*, 104–110. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
43. Chan, W.Y.; To, C.K.; Chu, W.C. Materialistic consumers who seek unique products: How does their need for status and their affective response facilitate the repurchase intention of luxury goods? *J. Retail. Consum. Serv.* **2015**, *27*, 1–10. [CrossRef]
44. How to Optout of Black Friday Spending. Available online: https://blog.lendingclub.com/opt-out-of-black-friday (accessed on 10 February 2022).
45. REI Declares War on Black Friday with #Optoutside Push. Available online: https://digiday.com/marketing/rei-declares-war-black-friday-optoutside-push/ (accessed on 14 February 2022).
46. How Patagonia Is Doing Social Meida Right. Available online: https://medium.com/@vmcgowan/how-patagonia-is-doing-social-media-right-b3bc6e1b06d7 (accessed on 14 February 2022).
47. Mangal, S.K. *Statistics in Psychology and Education*; PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.: New Delhi, India, 2002.
48. Chandler, J.; Rosenzweig, C.; Moss, A.J.; Robinson, J.; Litman, L. Online panels in social science research: Expanding sampling methods beyond Mechanical Turk. *Behav. Res. Methods* **2019**, *51*, 2022–2038. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
49. Cohen, J. *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 1988.
50. Biodiversity: The Next Frontier in Sustainable Fashion. Available online: https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/biodiversity-the-next-frontier-in-sustainable-fashion (accessed on 13 February 2022).
51. Jaeger, S.R.; Porcherot, C. Consumption context in consumer research: Methodological perspectives. *Cur. Opin. Food Sci.* **2017**, *15*, 30–37. [CrossRef]
52. Hong, J.W.; Muderrisoglu, A.; Zinkhan, G.M. Cultural differences and advertising expression: A comparative content analysis of Japanese and U.S. magazine advertising. *J. Adv.* **1986**, *16*, 55–68. [CrossRef]
53. Matthes, J.; Wonneberger, A.; Schmuck, D. Consumers' green involvement and the persuasive effects of emotional versus functional ads. *J. Busi. Mar.* **2014**, *67*, 1885–1893. [CrossRef]
54. Gan, C. Understanding WeChat users' liking behavior: An empirical study in China. *Comput. Hum. Behav.* **2017**, *68*, 30–39. [CrossRef]
55. Schermelleh-Engel, K.; Moosbrugger, H.; Müller, H. Evaluating the fit of structural equation models: Tests of significance and descriptive goodness-of-fit measures. *Methods Psychol. Res. Online* **2003**, *8*, 23–74.
56. Fornell, C.; Larcker, D.F. Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *J. Mark. Res.* **1981**, *18*, 39–50. [CrossRef]
57. Hair, H.J. Outcomes for children and adolescents after residential treatment: A review of research from 1993 to 2003. *J. Child Fam. Stud.* **2005**, *14*, 551–575. [CrossRef]
58. Bagozzi, R.P.; Yi, Y. On the evaluation of structure equation models. *J. Acad. Mark. Sci.* **1998**, *16*, 76–94.

59. Liu, X.; Shin, H.; Burns, A.C. Examining the impact of luxury brand's social media marketing on customer engagement: Using big data analytics and natural language processing. *J. Bus. Res.* **2021**, *125*, 815–826. [CrossRef]
60. Hartmann, P.; Apaolaza, V.; He, J.; Barrutia, J.M.; Echebarria, C. The Relationship between gratifications from social networking site use and adolescents' brand interactions. In *Advances in Advertising Research*; Springer Gabler: Wiesbaden, Germany, 2017; pp. 29–41.