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**ẢNH HƯỞNG CỦA MÔI QUAN TÂM CÁ NHÂN VÀ RÀNG BUỘC ĐẠO ĐỨC  
ĐẾN HÀNH VI TIÊU DÙNG CÓ ĐẠO ĐỨC TRONG LĨNH VỰC THỜI TRANG  
CỦA GIỚI TRẺ**

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**Tóm tắt**

Mức tiêu thụ sản phẩm thời trang của người dân đã và đang được điều tra kỹ hơn vì tác động của nó đến với môi trường. Nhiều nghiên cứu đã được thực hiện để xem xét ảnh hưởng của các yếu tố khác nhau liên quan đến ý định tiêu dùng có đạo đức và hành vi tiêu dùng có đạo đức trong ngành hàng thực phẩm và đồ gia dụng ở Việt Nam; tuy nhiên, những tác động này trong ngành thời trang Việt Nam vẫn chưa được thể hiện rõ ràng. Do đó, nghiên cứu này nhằm chứng minh ảnh hưởng của các yếu tố khác nhau (ràng buộc đạo đức và môi quan tâm cá nhân) đến hành vi tiêu dùng có đạo đức đối với các sản phẩm thời trang. Dữ liệu được thu thập theo phương pháp định lượng, sử dụng bảng câu hỏi khảo sát được phân phối thông qua nhiều nền tảng xã hội phổ biến. Nghiên cứu nhằm mục đích góp phần nâng cao nhận thức cộng đồng và thông báo cho cơ quan chức năng về

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mối quan hệ chặt chẽ giữa tiêu dùng của họ và môi trường, từ đó khuyến khích các hành vi đạo đức và bền vững hơn đối với các sản phẩm thời trang.

**Từ khóa:** tiêu dùng có đạo đức, ràng buộc đạo đức, quan tâm của cá nhân, thời trang, Việt Nam

## **HOW INDIVIDUAL CONCERNS AND ETHICAL OBLIGATION AFFECT ETHICAL CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR OF THE YOUTH IN THE VIETNAMESE FASHION INDUSTRY**

### **Abstract**

Further emphasis has been placed on investigating people's consumption of fashion products due to its influence on the environmental factors. Multiple studies have been conducted to examine the influence of various factors associated with ethical consumption intention and ethical consumption behavior in Vietnamese food and household goods industry; nevertheless, it is unclear concerning those impacts in the national fashion industry. Therefore, this study aims to justify the influence of disparate factors (ethical obligation and individual concerns) on ethical consumption behavior towards fashion products. Data was collected in a quantitative method, using a questionnaire survey distributed through numerous popular social platforms. The study aims at contributing to the improvement of public awareness and informing the authority about the close relations between their consumption and the environment, thus stimulating more ethical and sustainable behaviors towards fashion products.

**Keywords:** ethical consumption, ethical obligation, individual concerns, fashion, Vietnam

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### **1. Introduction**

Throughout Vietnamese history, the fashion industry is affected by the long-lasting and unique culture that each period would serve a characteristic pattern in terms of Vietnamese clothes. Moreover, that Vietnam was dominated by France led to the unique combination of Western and Vietnamese patterns creating Vietnamese fashion with a particular trait. Recently, in an article from ELLE Vietnam has said that not only do Vietnamese people have an accelerating demand for fashion but they also update the global fashion trends continuously. According to SGGPnews, 2014 is a remarkable year for Vietnamese fashion. The first launch of Vietnam International Fashion Week put Vietnam fashion on the international map, creating the foundation for the future of Vietnam's textile and garment industry's rapid growth. A report from FASHIONREVOLUTION stated that in 2017, Vietnam's textile industry was the largest exporter with over 2 million employees and more than 6000 garment firms. On the national scale, the Vietnamese fashion industry provides over 4 million jobs for citizens nationwide and contributes enormously to the exported trade with a percentage fluctuating from 13 to 14%.

However, this industry also gives out a large amount of waste that pollutes the environment. It is estimated that on average, the textile and garment industry accounts for 20% of the total industrial wastewater as well as dumping 92 million tons of industrial waste. The emission from plants results in 2-10% of the greenhouse effect, which is prone to rise up to 26% by 2050. An

article named Transforming the Textile Industry Towards Green Production declares that this constitutes a tough challenge for the manufacturers to meet the demand of balancing the production and problems related to the environment. Another online post named Vietnamese Consumers Increasingly Embrace Sustainability says that not only producers but the consumers, mainly in HCMC and Hanoi are also aware of sustainable lifestyles and especially ethical consumption behavior in the fashion industry. It has been proved that ethical consumption plays a functional tool in terms of boosting the process of protecting the environment (Daniel and Klaus, 2022). It is also noticeable that the young age group pays more attention to ethical consumption and youngsters are also acting as the key factors in the process of intervening in unethical consumption practices (Reisch and Thøgersen, 2015).

## **2. Overview of ethical consumption and factors affecting ethical consumption intention and behavior**

### ***2.1. The definition of ethical consumption intention and behavior***

To begin with, ethical consumption covers a variety of consumption behavior, which requires consumption ethics in daily life (Yoon, 2020, Chun et al., 2010). Sakib (2022) and Yoon (2020) proclaim that the term “ethical consumption” has risen to be a widespread phenomenon in developed nations.

Some research has postulated that intention is the willingness of the consumer to engage in and conduct the purchasing behavior after taking consideration (d'Andrea, 2019, Paul et al., 2016). About the ethical consumption intention, it has long been attracting such a large number of researchers who take interest in ethical consumption and consumer ethics (William, 2020, Andorfer and Liebe, 2012, Papaoikonomou et al., 2011). It can be concluded from the aforementioned definition of the intention of Yoon (2020) and Chun et al (2010) that ethical consumption intention can be defined as the readiness and willingness of consumers to conduct ethical consumption behavior.

It is worth being taken notice that ethical consumption behavior comprises purchasing products and services in an environment which meet some certain ethical requirements (Cui, 2022). Concluding from this study, ethical consumption behavior appears to drive consumers to be more likely to conduct ethical and environmentally-oriented purchasing actions. Furthermore, it is drawn from Yoon (2020), Hong and Shin (2010), Hong and Song (2008) that ethical consumption behavior can be defined as “attentive consumption which meets the responsibility to be civic consumers by voluntarily engaging and giving help to sociable firms based on moral and personal beliefs.”

### ***2.2. The impact of individual concerns***

Evidently, it is stated from Bansal (2003) that ethical consumption is affected by individual concerns. It is clearly pointed out that individual concerns directly lead to individual green values

(Hameed et al., 2022), which can be seen as ethical consumption intention and behavior in this studied context. Furthermore, Rasool et al (2020), Carrington et al (2010) postulate that the awareness of ethical consumption behavior of customers is significantly boosted by the rise of social and environmental concerns. To be more specific, according to Joshi et al (2015), Bamberg (2003), environmental concern includes a wide range of environmentally related factors namely perceptions, emotions, knowledge, attitude, values and behaviors.

In addition, Ghali (2021) environmental concern is conducted by environmentally concerned customers, who must take the importance and protection of the environment into deep consideration when purchasing products. Environmental concern has long been investigated whether it affects consumer decision-making in a wide range (Stringer et al., 2020). It is reported that intensifying environmental concern will lead to a more likelihood of engagement in pro-environmental behaviors, which involves those in apparel buying behaviors (Ha et al., 2016). Another factor in individual concerns, social concern, also has its power in influencing ethical consumption. Busa and Garder (2015) conclude that along with the effect of environmental factors, social concern is quite a vital element involved in the ethical purchasing actions, which is ethical consumption behavior.

### ***2.3. The impact of ethical obligation***

It is worth noting that ethical obligation is thought to be a critical factor in enhancing knowledge in the decision-making process of customers (Owusu et al., 2020, Shaw et al., 2000). In the realm of fair trade, ethical obligation is defined as taking into consideration a broadly held shared concern in society (Hassan et al., 2016, Shaw and Shiu, 2002). Furthermore, Sabucedo et al (2019) argue that ethical duty serves as a motivator for ethical behavior. It is assumed that ethical obligations have a beneficial impact on customer attitudes and intentions (Ho, 2021). Thus, it can be concluded that ethical obligations also have a positive impact on ethical consumption behavior as well.

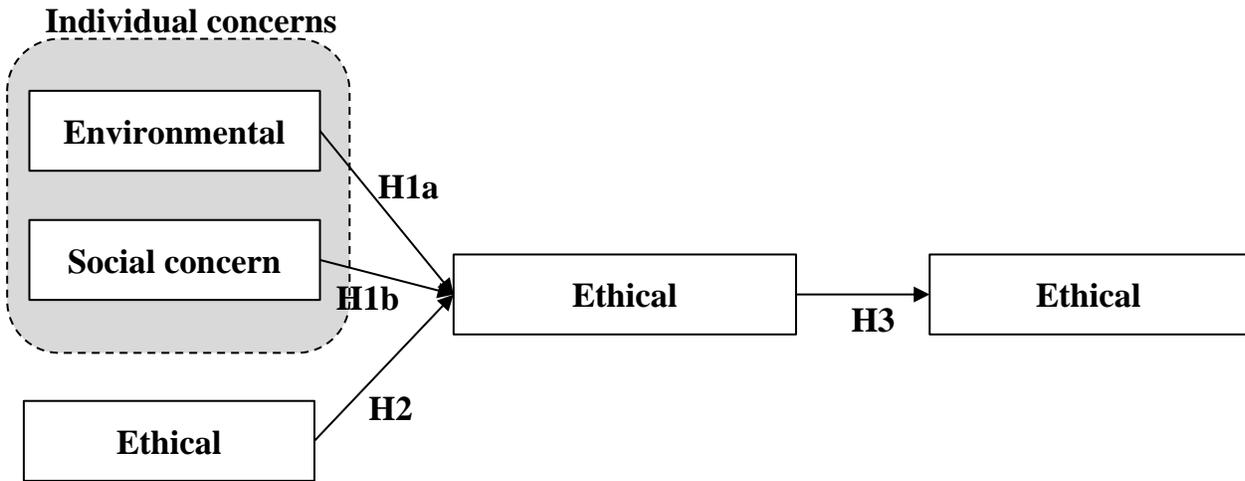
## **3. Research model and data**

### ***3.1. Research model***

Based on the proposed VBN theory by Stern (2000), the research team decided to suggest a research model involving individual concerns (environmental concern and social concern), proving that these 2 factors have an impact on ethical consumption behavior. The proposed research model also suggests the role of social networks, whose function is to moderate the relationship between the determinants and ethical consumption intention as well as ethical consumption behavior.

Along with the VBN theory, the extended TPB theory is also applicable to investigate ethical consumption behavior. Ethical obligation appears to be one of the key factors affecting the ethical consumption intention and ethical consumption behavior. Ethical issues have a tendency to alter

the behavioral consumption. It is pointed out by Arli et al (2018) and Shaw and Clarke (1999) that ethical consumerism people tend to have an intense ethical obligation, which has an impact on the procurement options. Those with ethical obligation support an environmentally friendly lifestyle. Therefore, it is hypothesized that ethical obligation does have an effect on ethical consumption behavior.



**Figure 1.** Proposed research model

### 3.2. Research hypothesis

Individual concerns, including environmental and social issues, have a substantial effect on ethical consumption intention and behavior, as previously stated. According to Ghali (2021) and Kinnear et al (1974), environmental concern refers to the way customers should carefully evaluate the value of the environment and how to protect it while making purchases. According to Nguyen (2022) and Starr (2009), environmental concern impacts ethical consumption intention by functioning as a motivator in consumers' decision-making processes. It is clear that the relationship between environmental concern and ethical consumption intention remains speculative (Saari, 2021, Vainio and Paloniemi, 2014). When it comes to the fashion sector, it may be argued that consumers who care about the environment are more inclined to make ethical purchasing decisions. Furthermore, Hoffman (2018) asserts that social concern is closely tied to the general goal of societal well-being rather than the satisfaction of specific desires. According to the same study, social concern is likely to lead to ethical consumer behavior. Nonetheless, social concern research appears to be unproductive in terms of elucidating its impact on ethical consumer behavior, and there are few studies on the issue. As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study:

*H1a:* Environmental concerns of consumers will positively influence their ethical consumption intention.

*H1b:* Social concerns of consumers will positively influence their ethical consumption intention.

According to Hassan et al (2016) and Shaw and Shiu (2002), the fair trade community defines ethical duty as taking into consideration a broadly held societal concern. Furthermore, ethical duty may be defined as following the law and upholding values and norms (Bozoklu, 2018). According to Wuest (2014)'s research, ethical duty functions as a predictor of ethical consumption intention. According to these applications, ethical duty has a beneficial influence on ethical consumption intention.

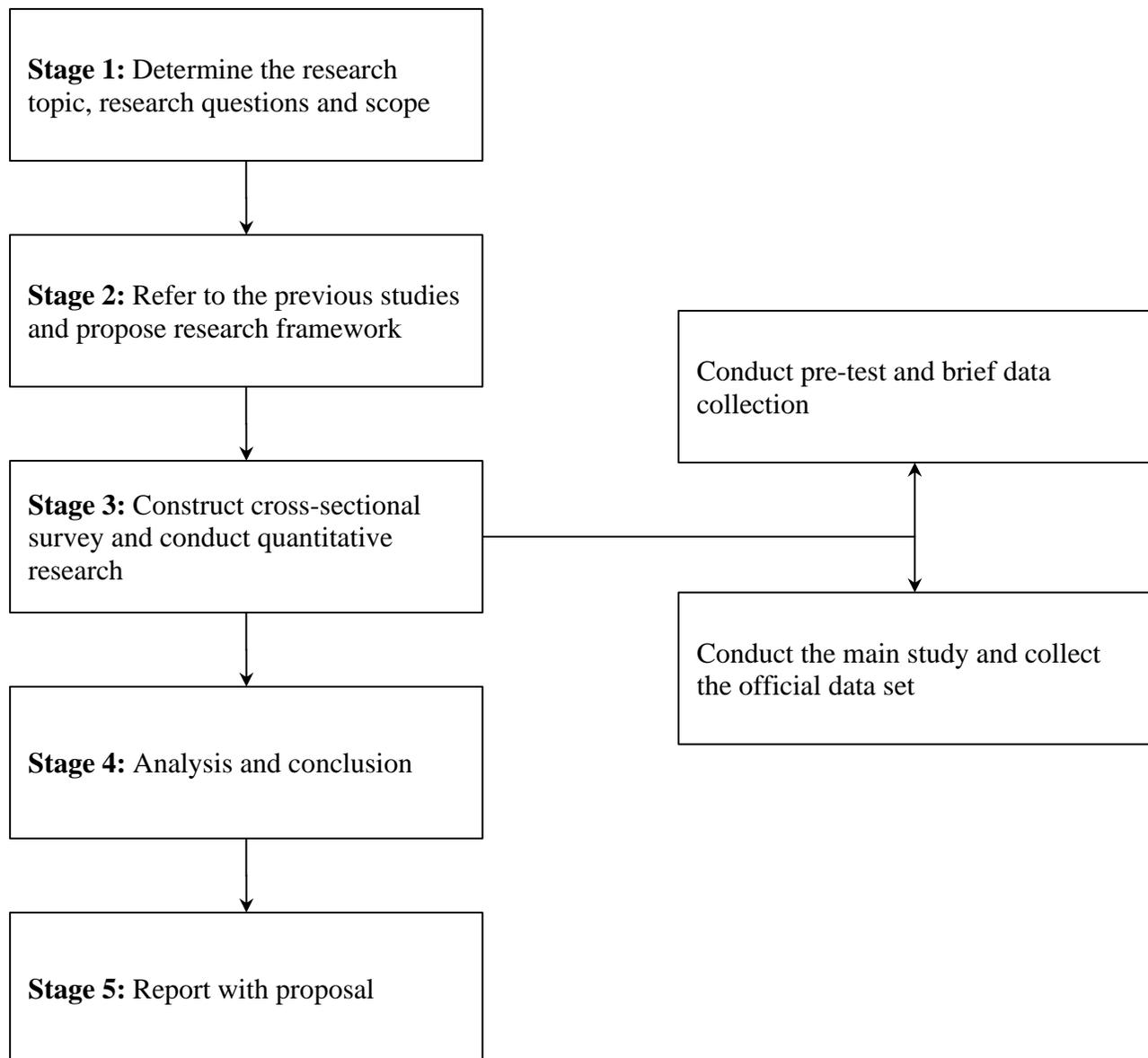
*H2:* Ethical obligation of consumers will positively influence their ethical consumption intention.

Ethical consumption intention may be described as the desire of ethical consumers to engage in socially responsible purchasing behavior (Chen, 2022). It may also be defined as the inclination to buy ethical items rather than conventional ones (Nguyen, 2022, Rashid, 2009). According to the TPB, it has long been maintained that there is a positive association between ethical consumption intention and conduct (Ajzen, 1991). According to Maichum (2016), ethical consumption intention serves as a motivator for ethical consumption behavior. Thus, ethical consumption intention is said to have a favorable influence on ethical consumption behavior in this study.

*H3:* Ethical consumption intention of consumers will positively influence their ethical consumption behavior.

### ***3.3. Research data***

Our research team performed a cross-sectional survey using cyber platforms to collect data from target populations during the project. A pre-test was conducted before the final data collection to check the clarity of the questionnaire measures and to test their viability to the Vietnamese participants. The study procedure is divided into five key stages, which will run from September 2022 to March 2023, as follows:



**Figure 2.** Research process

The target respondents of the study were young individuals belonging to generation Z, aged from 11 to 26 across Vietnam. Among the valid respondents, females accounted for 52.4% while the figure of male counterparts was 46.7%; another 1% of respondents considered themselves as belonging to another sexuality group. The insignificant margin between the male and female respondents could imply the non-bias surveying method and guaranteed the distribution of surveys that helped approach male and female equally. 75.2% of the sample were from different universities in Vietnam while the remaining 24.8% were highschool students or already graduated from high school or universities with and without employment. It was also recorded that 9.5% of the respondents were financially independent.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of respondents

<b>Demographics</b>		<b>N = 210</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	110	52.4%
	Female	98	46.7%
	Others	2	1%
<b>Age group</b>	Gen Z (11-26)	206	98.1%
	Others	4	1.9%
<b>Education</b>	High school	45	21.5%
	University	158	75.2%
	University graduates with and without employment	7	3.3%
<b>Income status</b>	Financially independent	20	9.5%
	Financially dependent	190	90.5%
<b>Monthly personal income</b>	No personal income	139	66.2%
	Below 1.000.000 VND	19	9%
	1.000.000 VND - 5.000.000 VND	33	15.7%
	6.000.000 VND - 10.000.000 VND	13	6.2%
	11.000.000 VND - 15.000.000 VND	3	1.4%
	16.000.000 VND - 20.000.000 VND	3	1.4%
	21.000.000 VND and above	0	0%

### 3.4. Questionnaire and measurement scale

A 5-point Likert scale was applied to measure the constructs in the conceptual model, where the opinions of participants towards the proposed statements were presented. According to this type of Likert scale, 5 means total agreement (Strongly agree); 4 means agreement (Agree); 3 means Neutral; 2 means Disagreement (Disagree) and 1 means Total disagreement (Strongly disagree).

The study used five questions taken from Hultman et al (2015) and Pham and Nguyen (2020) to measure the participants' levels of environmental concern while the levels of ethical obligation was measured by a three-item scale taken from Hultman et al (2015) and Pham and Nguyen (2020). The impact of social network was measured by a three-item scale taken from Wasserman and Faust (1994) and Contractor et al (2006).

A five-item scale was taken to measure the ethical consumption intention, according to Kushwah et al (2019) and Zhang et al (2018). Another five-item scale was employed to measure the ethical consumption behavior, according to Kushwah et al (2009) and ElHaffar et al (2020).

## 4. Research results

### 4.1. Internal consistency reliability

**Table 2.** Construct reliability and validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
<b>EC</b>	0.728	0.846	0.830	0.545
<b>ECB</b>	0.914	0.915	0.935	0.743
<b>ECI</b>	0.866	0.870	0.903	0.651
<b>EO</b>	0.826	0.826	0.896	0.742
<b>SC</b>	0.897	0.902	0.928	0.763

*EC = Environmental Concern; ECB = Ethical Consumption Behavior; ECI = Ethical Consumption Intention; EO = Ethical Obligation; SC = Social Concern; SN = Social Network*

The internal consistency reliability is assessed on the basis of composite reliability (Joreskog, 1971) and Cronbach's alpha, though being a less clarified measure than composite reliability (Hair et al., 2019). Table 4.4 shows that the composite reliability values (rho\_a and rho\_c) of all items

range from 0.826 to 0.935, exceeding 0.7; the Crobach’s alpha for every observed variable is larger than 0.7, hence guaranteeing the internal consistency of the measurement model. The following stage would be evaluating the convergent validity of each construct, which demonstrates the variance of its items. The average variance extracted (AVE) for every item was calculated by squaring the loading of each indicator on a construct and computing the mean value (Hair et al., 2019). Therefore, the results of AVE shown in Table 2 has indicated that the convergent validity is entirely accomplished as all of them range from 0.545 to 0.763, exceeding 0.5.

**4.2. Discriminant validity**

**Table 3.** Discriminant validity - HTMT

	<b>EC</b>	<b>ECB</b>	<b>ECI</b>	<b>EO</b>	<b>SC</b>
<b>EC</b>					
<b>ECB</b>	0.495				
<b>ECI</b>	0.600	0.832			
<b>EO</b>	0.440	0.856	0.694		
<b>SC</b>	0.566	0.643	0.554	0.697	

*EC = Environmental Concern; ECB = Ethical Consumption Behavior; ECI = Ethical Consumption Intention; EO = Ethical Obligation; SC = Social Concern; SN = Social Network*

Discriminant validity is assessed with heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) of the correlations proposed by Henseler et al (2015) that indicate the mean value of the item correlations across constructs (i.e. the heterotrait correlations) relative to the geometric mean of the average correlations for the items measuring each construct (i.e. the two sets of monotrait correlations) (Franke and Sarstedt, 2019). According to Hanseler et al (2015), using PLS bootstrapping to test whether HTMT is significantly lower than 1 would indicate the discriminant validity of each variable. The heterotrait correlations between the constructs range from 0.440 to 0.856, which satisfy the need for discriminant validity. However, in case of the correlation between ethical consumption behavior and ethical obligation, HTMT should be lower than 0.85 since these two constructs are more conceptually distinct (Hair et al., 2019); hence, discriminant validity might not be satisfied for this correlation (Table 3).

#### 4.4. Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis H1 states that individual concerns have a positive impact on ECI and for this hypothesis, two sub-hypotheses H1a and H1b would be tested separately. Hypothesis H1a states that EC has a positive influence on ECI and the results show that this relationship has a significant path coefficient  $\beta = 0.287$  ( $t = 9.351$ ,  $p = 0.000$  at the significance level  $\alpha = 2.5\%$ ). Thus, hypothesis H1a is strongly supported. Hypothesis H1b posits that SC positively impacts ECI. In this case, the null hypothesis is more likely to be supported as the path coefficient is marginally significant at 0.002 ( $t = 0.033$ ,  $p = 0.974 > \alpha = 2.5\%$ ). Therefore, SC can be concluded not to have a positive influence on ECI.

Hypothesis H2 assumes that there is a positive correlation between EO and ECI. According to the table of results, this hypothesis could be strongly supported with the path coefficient  $\beta = 0.363$  ( $t = 6.972$ ,  $p = 0.000$  at the significance level  $\alpha = 2.5\%$ ).

Hypothesis H3 predicts that ECI positively correlates with ECB. The reported results demonstrate that H3 is strongly supported with  $\beta = 0.676$ ,  $t = 17.417$ ,  $p = 0.000$ .

**Table 4.** Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Path	Coeff	STDV	t-value	p-value	f <sup>2</sup>	Decision
H1a	EC → ECI	0.287	0.031	9.351	0.000	0.124	Supported
H1b	SC → ECI	0.002	0.047	0.033	0.973	0.000	Not supported
H2	EO → ECI	0.363	0.052	6.972	0.000	0.166	Supported
H3	ECI → ECB	0.676	0.039	17.417	0.000	0.752	Supported

## 5. Research conclusion and implications

### 5.1. Conclusion

In general, ethical consumption has currently been considered an appealing range in the context of fashion. In this advanced era with ethicalism and sustainability, an increasing number of customers, especially the young, choose to conduct ethical consumption behavior in the process of purchasing products from firms.

Our research team has investigated thoroughly into some factors bearing influence on ethical consumption intention and behavior in the Vietnamese fashion industry. To be specific, this study has postulated that ethical obligations and individual concerns (environmental and social concern)

have an impact on the implication of ethical consumption of customers in Vietnam in the context of fashion.

After having collected data from the proposed research model and analyzed thoroughly, the research results point out that environmental concern and ethical obligation bear the positive influence on ethical consumption intention, in which ethical consumption intention significantly affects ethical consumption behavior. Meanwhile, social concern does not show its effect in the process of conducting ethical consumption intention. In this research model, ethical consumption intention shows its significance as a mediator.

## **5.2. Implications**

*Implications of the government that help citizens understand what affects the ethical consumption behavior in order to boost its development.*

As mentioned above, in the Vietnamese context, there seems to be a considerable lack of specific and specialized regulations and laws about the implementation of ethical consumption intention and ethical consumption behavior. While the Vietnamese government passed the first Law on Environmental Protection in 1993, the majority of residents have failed to follow it. Law on Environment Protection's infractions continue to occur when firms and people do business, resulting in an increase in pollution (Diez, 2016). In this study, the research team has recognized this gap of ethical consumption's implementations. Thus, our research team has some recommendations for the government that they should investigate thoroughly about the impact of political concern on ethical consumption intention and behavior with a view to bring out some related and effective regulations and laws, especially in the Vietnamese fashion context. This, evidently, will enhance the rate of conducting ethical consumption behavior in the range of fashion in Vietnam.

*Implications of firms that help to meet with the plausible modification and transformation of the market in the upcoming future.*

As can be seen evidently, digitalization has been a megatrend in this advanced era. There are now some creative methods to be applied for virtual shopping, which give customers the chance to put on items and goods at their own homes. This, significantly, enhances the sales of these products, which seems to be less paid attention in the range of ethical consumption in Vietnam fashion industry. Hence, this gap can be filled by applying high technologies in the way customers can conduct ethical consumption behavior at home in this mentioned-above fashion industry. It is quite challenging to complete this high-tech approach, however, whenever this is accomplished, this will considerably boost ethical consumption. Furthermore, in order to increase the rate of ethical consumption behavior in the fashion industry in Vietnam, the method of engaging customers and boosting customers loyalty and relationships with the ethical consumption fashion firms should be enhanced in a more effective way. To be specific, marketing campaigns should be combined with public relations and other engaging activities, aiming at raising the customer loyalty.

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