

Can Promoting Fashion Innovativeness Move Traditional Luxury Consumers Toward More Sustainable Fashion Behaviours?

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Introduction

This study examines the individual uniqueness motivations among some fashion consumers in Asian markets, promoting fashion innovativeness as a desirable behaviour, linked to more mindful, circular and sustainable fashion consumption. Additionally, we examine customers desire for uniqueness, versus conformity motivations, are driven by a consumer's sense of self-fulfilment via fashion, rather than social fulfilment (via susceptibility to influence of others and desire for social respect).

Luxury Fashion & Sustainability

From a sustainability perspective, luxury and prestige fashion systems are notable for their insufficient commitment to sustainability aims and support for sustainable initiatives, relative to their market dominance. Further, luxury customers are said to lack awareness of green practice, often via a willful ignorance of the issue (Bhandari et al., 2022). Hence, it is useful to better understand the drivers of continued and increasing demand for these products in their key markets, to examine how consumer perceptions might be shifted toward more sustainable behaviours.

Luxury consumption in Asian markets is often characterized by face-saving and group orientation motivations (Le Monkhouse, Barnes & Stephan, 2012). There is extant evidence that sustainability motivations differ markedly across cultural contexts, and that some cultures may weight other consumption drivers (such as social norms) above sustainability (Amatulli et al., 2021).

Traditionally, Asian cultures were said to focus on luxury as it was a publicly visible means to show conformity with social norms of status and quality. Western consumers, on the other

hand, were said to be more concerned with expressions of individual taste and style (Oh & Kim, 2011). However, there is evidence that a steady acculturation toward Western culture is occurring in Asia (Das & Jebarajakirthy, 2019). Some studies note a clear shift in Asian markets from collectivist values to individualist amongst some consumers regarding their shopping behaviour (Wu et al., 2015).

This study posits that, alongside this shift in shopping values, there is potential to capitalize on individual uniqueness motivations among some fashion consumers in Asian markets, promoting fashion innovativeness as a desirable behaviour, linked to more mindful, circular and sustainable fashion consumption. It is our proposition that a desire for uniqueness, versus conformity motivations, are driven by a consumer's sense of self-fulfilment via fashion, rather than social fulfilment (via susceptibility to influence of others and desire for social respect). Hence, we hypothesise that:

H1: Self fulfilment positively affects desire for uniqueness

H2: Self fulfilment positively affects fashion innovativeness

H3: Conformity motivations negatively impact fashion innovativeness

Methods

An online survey was distributed for data collection. The survey development followed a tailored design method (TDM) (Dillman et al., 2014). This study focused on a convenience sample of consumer in Asian markets particularly Singapore and Malaysia. The

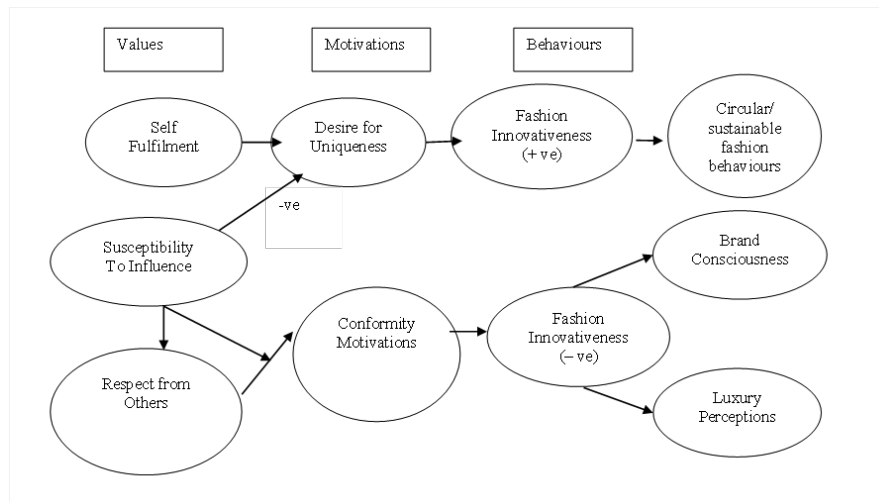


Figure 1. Research Model

sampling frame was individuals over the age of 18 years, present in the central city shopping district of Kuala Lumpur (n=250) and Singapore (n=250).

The original sample 500 respondents, applying the inclusion criteria (Bernerth et al., 2021), we excluded 5 respondents for rapid completion, 7 for incomplete responses, and 3 for failing an attention check (Please choose the strongly disagree from the options below), we obtained a usable sample of 485 respondents.

Of the final sample, 485 respondents were age between 18-25 (56.7%). A t-test revealed no statistically significant differences between these early and late respondents groups in all the constructs or between Singapore and Malaysia samples. Thus, our analysis found no evidence of response bias.

Findings

This study utilised partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to evaluate the measurement model and test the proposed hypotheses. PLS-SEM was selected due to its capacity to handle complex relationships and mitigate factor ambiguity in moderation-mediation models (Liang et al., 2007). This variance-based technique enhances the prediction of endogenous constructs while providing superior statistical power, making it well-suited for our analysis (Hair Jr. et al., 2014). It is particularly valuable for investigating the intricate effects of self fulfilment, desire for uniqueness, fashion innovativeness (+ve), and susceptibility to

influence on Circular/ sustainable fashion behaviours.

Moreover, fashion Innovativeness (FI -ve), respect from others, conformity motivation, susceptibility to influence on brand consciousness or luxury perceptions.. The method's flexibility accommodates diverse measurement models and yields precise insights into variable interactions. By employing PLS-SEM, we rigorously examine the interrelationships among variables and robustly test our hypotheses within a moderated-mediation framework.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that self fulfilment positively affects desire for uniqueness. The results confirm a significant positive relationship between self fulfilment and desire for uniqueness ($\beta = 0.338$, $p < 0.000$, $f^2 = 0.125$).

In addition, self fulfilment showed a positive and significant effect on Fashion Innovativeness (FI +ve) ($\beta = 0.080$, $p < 0.000$, $f^2 = 0.047$), which supports hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 posited that conformity motivations leads to low fashion innovativeness (FI -ve). This hypothesis was also supported, with the results indicating a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.361$, $p < 0.000$, $f^2 = 0.150$).

Conclusions

This study provides evidence that there are opportunities in the markets studied to operationalize values-based motivations for consumption to encourage consumers away from traditional conformity patterns of fashion

product preference, towards more sustainable behaviours.

While much sustainability focused public messaging seeks to educate consumers regarding detrimental impacts on the planet of consumption choices, in the context of fashion, this has been largely ineffectual in some markets (despite high uptake of other, non-fashion related sustainable behaviour).

This study offers insight into the importance of values-based messaging, which promotes sustainable methods of fashion consumption as a means to achieve and maintain uniqueness and fashion innovativeness, in changing traditional patterns of value-based fashion consumption behaviours.

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