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Factors Influencing Online Luxury Fashion Purchase Intention among Generation Z in China

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Abstract

This research explores the factors affecting Chinese Generation Z consumers' online purchase intention in the luxury fashion market. Generation Z (Gen Z) is becoming the backbone of China's online luxury consumer market. It is crucial to learn about their different psychological changes in online consumption. This research is designed to create an integrated framework and comprehend the role of Materialism, Hedonic Value, Utilitarian Value and Perceived Riskby using the Theory of Value Adoption Model (VAM). The conceptual framework proposes an empirical study with a quantitative approach to investigate the online luxury fashion purchase intention among Chinese Gen Z consumers. The findings contribute academically to marketing and online luxury fashion literatures in the Chinese context. With richer insights, online marketers and luxury fashion purchase online.

Keywords: Luxury Fashion, Purchase Intention, Value-based Adoption Model, Gen Z

Introduction

China has gradually risen to the top of the global fashion and luxury market in recent years due to the growth of its economy, integration of global trade, and the development of Internet technology. The sales channel is experiencing new structural changes and the entry of new segments, including Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) and Gen Z (born Gen Z are born in 1997 and onwards, and are aged 23 and below (in the year 2020)(Raslie, 2021). These consumer groups are numerous, more open to new things, and adept at keeping up with the trend of social development than previous generations. The uniqueness and personalized products attract more consumers to engage in online shopping (Zhang, 2017). According to luxury industry analysis conducted by PwC company's report (2023), China's luxury market will overtake the US and Europe by 2025 (Chen et al., 2023). It is estimated that the size of China's luxury market will reach RMB 816 billion (US\$112 billion) in 2025, which will account for about 25 percent of the global luxury market share (Ding, 2023). The Gen Z generation, which accounts for around 15 percent of the overall Chinese population, is poised to become the next engine of domestic consumption. For consumer companies, understanding this generation is paramount if they wish to be part of China's strong economic growth (Sumarliah et al., 2022).

In this context, the luxury fashion business owners needs to understand the needs and consumption behaviour of Gen Z. They need to take this opportunity to continuously enhance their offerings in order to be a leading fashion choice for the next generation (Bain, 2021). The significant online drive for luxury fashion starts with the French fashion house Saint Laurent, which officially launched its presence on Tik Tok (Douyin), has posted several short videos on the platform. Similarly, Balenciaga launched its website on Tmall, a B2B online retail platform connecting businesses to consumers in Greater China, operated by Alibaba Group. The Chinese Gen Z has diversified personalities, global vision, and self-confidence. Therefore, in order to meet the emotional needs of the new generation of consumers, luxury brands must integrate products, experiences and ideas. Despite the rapid pace of innovation, emerging new consumption patterns, evolving channel development, and changing consumer demands have raised the bar for luxury fashion rapid adaptability. "Live in the present, have fun in time" is praised by many younger generations as a life creed and consumption concept. Early studies found that it inadvertently encourages the mindless consumption of luxury fashion to some extent (Li et al., 2012). Under the lifestyle education of new media and social e-commerce, Gen Z has better understanding on luxury fashion and are much more eager to reach and buy luxury fashion for a high-quality lifestyle (Gentina, 2020).

Hence, there is a lack of understanding of factors influencing online shopping intention toward luxury fashion goods among Gen Z (Simmers et al., 2014). In this paper, researcher use Value-based Adoption Model (VAM) as the underpinning theory. The conceptual paper aims to provide an overview of the factors influencing online luxury fashion shopping and its relationship with purchase intention. Materialism, Hedonic, Utilitarian and Perceived Risk will be further analysed to explain the online purchase behaviour of China's Gen Z. In conclusion, this paper highlights the importance of conducting an empirical study to explore the impact of these variables on online luxury fashion purchase intentions.

Research Background

Network consumption is different from traditional consumption; its speed, convenience, and diversification of information make the younger generation keen on online consumption (Zhang, 2017). According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, China's online shopping transactions have shown a positive rising trend since 2015 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). China is becoming a significant contributor to luxury fashion. Chinese personal luxury fashion are expected to account for 46-48 percent of the global luxury market in 2025 (Bain, 2021). Luxury brands have begun to use various Internet and high-tech means to enhance customer experience, but head brands still have a robust digital marketing influence. However, from an intergenerational point of view, Millennials and Gen Z are the two groups with the fastest growth in the number and amount of purchases, and they are also the two groups with the highest proportion of people browsing, collecting and adding shopping carts (Chen et al., 2023).

Gen Z shoppers buy luxury items more frequently to reward themselves. They care about being unique, have a relatively higher interest in trendy seasonal items and niche brands (Wouters & Sham, 2021). Gen Z luxury shoppers prefer niche brands to well-known ones at more than twice the rate of luxury shoppers aged between 26 and 35 years old, and at five times the rate of those aged over 35. They are also more attracted to styles that are trending now than classic styles. Wouter et al (2021) found that younger customers such as Gen Z are more open to buying our seasonal styles and care less about value preservation. These shoppers prioritise sustainability, inclusivity, and authenticity over traditional status

symbols. Gen Z is more likely to achieve "self-satisfaction" and pursue the sense of happiness, satisfaction and ritual brought about by consumption (Dharmesti et al., 2021). Gen Z have a strong sense of place and cultural self-assurance. They advocate liberalism and self-pleasing, are keen to pay for "good-looking" products and have high purchasing power. Brands that align with these values and prioritise transparency in their practises will be more successful in attracting and retaining Gen Z customers. Many works of literature studied the purchase behaviour of Gen Z from the perspective of music product consumption, cosmetics consumption, credit card consumption, car, and tourism. However, studies on the consumption from the perspective of online luxury fashion are scarce and limited. Therefore, this research aims to explore the factors that influence online luxury fashion intention among the Chinese Gen Z market. Based on the preceding discussion, the research will investigate the following specific objectives

Research Objective

To examine the influence of perceived risk, materialism, hedonic and utilitarian factors on the purchase intention of online luxury fashion among Chinese Gen Z consumers.

Literature Review

Chinese Luxury Fashion

Luxury is defined as a concept of "refined enjoyment, of elegance, of things desirable but not essential" (Goody, 2006, p.341). Luxury brands can refer to brands with product attributes such as high quality, high-level aesthetics, and high premiums (Ko et al., 2019). At the same time, it can also be defined as a brand that can bring valued attributes such as uniqueness and social status to consumers (Zhang & Zhao, 2019). Luxury fashion goods are defined as apparel, accessories, handbags, shoes, watches, jewellery, and perfume for which the mere use or display of a particular branded product brings prestige to owners, apart from any functional utility (Gao et al., 2009). Due to the development of high technology, online shopping makes communication convenient and information transparent. Consumers' shopping behaviour also has changed, from craving for products to being picky about products, from chasing quantity to quality, and from chasing price to chasing value((Bucko et al., 2018). Even though many works have focused on Chinese consumers' luxury consumption due to their increasing dominance of the luxury market, most treat them as a homogeneous group without considering demographic differences (Jain, 2019; Li et al, 2017). Considering the enormous potential of this market, the key factors associated with Chinese consumers' purchase intention towards luxury fashion need to be examined in order to expand the general understanding of the emerging market and develop appropriate marketing strategies that would enhance business success (Zhang & Kim, 2013; Lu et al., 2022).

Generation Z

According to Bain &Co's research (2021), Chinese Gen Z and millennial consumers will account for more than 55% of total luxury brand consumption. They will also usher in a new era of consumer culture. As a result, superior luxury brands should integrate and upgrade their brands to maintain their position as a leading cultural brand. With the acceleration of information transmissions such as live broadcasts and microblogs, and the influence of celebrities, purchasing luxury fashion has become part of the consumption model of Gen Z (Wang, 2017). The new generation is not sensitive to saving needs. As Internet natives,

online shopping is more accustomed to them. Compared with traditional marketing methods, consumers of Gen Z prefer innovative ideas and personal experience, paying attention to the connotation and extensibility of brands, environmental protection, and promote low-carbon life while enjoying consumption. Similarly, research suggests that consumers purchase luxury fashion not just to meet basic life needs but for the fact that the symbolic value of luxury brands increases consumers' self-esteem, the extent of recognition by others, and meets the emotional requirements of individuals (Maguire & Hu, 2013; Lu et al., 2022). Therefore, explore and understanding this younger generation's need and online purchase behaviour is crucial for online luxury fashion.

The Value-based Adoption Model Theory (VAM)

This paper used the Theory of the Value-based Adoption Model (VAM) to achieve the research objectives. The VAM focuses on the identification of intention to use and predisposing factors among individuals that willingly consume services, including mobile internet, mobile banking, and games, in addition to traditional information systems for work purposes (Yu et al., 2019). VAM assumes that individual consumers focus on value maximisation. Perceived benefits include usefulness and enjoyment, whereas perceived sacrifice includes technicality and perceived cost (Kim et al., 2007). Perceived usefulness has the characteristics of extrinsic and cognitive benefits, and perceived enjoyment, the characteristics of intrinsic and emotional benefits (Kim et al., 2007). Sacrifices, which include both monetary and non-monetary aspects, are the prices users incur while utilizing new technology (Liao et al., 2022). However, consumers gain benefits that are not just useful but also thrilling and enjoyable. The VAM model has been merged with other models and applied in a range of studies based on consumer value perspectives (Liao et al., 2022). Most studies on online purchase behaviour adopted the VAM model framework, such as in the works of Chu and Lu (2007), Zhang (2017) and Wang et.al (2018). Thus, VAM captures both sacrifice and benefit dimensions, which people usually consider before decision-making (Zheng et al., 2015) and can be used to explain and predict purchase intention of online products (Wang et al., 2013, 2018). Nevertheless, VAM model received little attention as a valuable underpinning basis. Therefore, VAM is employed in the study to investigate different factors of online purchase behaviour (materialism, hedonic, utilitarian and perceived risk) and how these factors influence Gen Z luxury fashion purchase intention.

Materialism

Materialism is the belief that commodities and money are the central routes to happiness and social progress. Numerous empirical studies have shown that luxury consumption's materialistic character strongly influences emerging markets. Consumers have traditionally purchased luxury fashion to demonstrate and enhance their social status. People with a high level of materialism are more concerned about social labels and are more inclined to use high consumption to shape their social image (Niu, 2018). People with higher levels of materialism are more likely to value related things that symbolize wealth, prestige and achievement (Yang & Bruce, 2016; Sun et al., 2017), consume goods openly and increase the visibility of wealth in order to gain the satisfaction of admiration and admiration (Li & Gu, 2016). Materialism can be regarded as a kind of value that consumers focus on material acquisition and possession. As can be seen from the above discussion, materialism emphasizes the value of pursuing happiness and demonstrates the promotion of social status by owning money and possessions. At the same time, high materialists will express

their differences by consumption and shopping in order to win the attention, respect and spiritual satisfaction and happiness of others. The connection between individuals can also demonstrate it, for instance, through competitive or conspicuous consumption, fashion choices, and knowledge acquisition (Zhang & Kim, 2013).

Hedonic

The development of the Web environment, together with the continued use by users, has led to pleasurable experiences during online browsing and even enjoyment during the shopping process (Barta et al., 2021). Hedonism is a philosophy that prioritizes pleasure and happiness as the ultimate goals of life, with pleasure is the valuable aspect only if they increase pleasure or reduce pain. Consumers may also be willing to buy online for hedonic reasons. Previous studies regarding e-commerce have found hedonic motive as a positive determinant of online shopping intent. Tsai (2005) pointed out that the value of hedonism lies in the personal enjoyment and experience of the product. The hedonism of luxury consumption is mixed, including the dual experience of functional and social value (Cai & Liu et al., 2011). Consumer affect also significantly influence conspicuous consumption of luxury or high end brands in which hedonic experience is vital to decision-making (Huang & Wang, 2018). Hedonistic pay more attention to the pleasant experience brought by online shopping. (Tynan et al., 2010; Voss et al., 2003). Koch et al (2020) have shown that emotions tend to have a greater influence than rational thinking on the buying decisions related to fashion products. Luxury fashion are usually goods of excellent quality and exquisite craftsmanship, which not only have the functional attributes of general goods but also strive for excellence in design and service and pay great attention to the emotional feelings of consumers. While luxury fashion has good quality, it must also convey emotions to customers; that is to say, it must be able to arouse emotional public resonance between customers and the brand (Rajan, 2020; Koch et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2020). Given the valuable role of hedonic on consumer behaviour, it is imperative to evaluate the role of hedonic on consumers' online luxury fashion purchase intention, necessitating the conduct of this study.

Utilitarian

Opposing the hedonism, Voss et al (2003) argue that utilitarian appeals differ from hedonistic appeals by emphasizing the functional advantages of owning a product, rather than its potential for pleasure. Utilitarian shopping orientation refers to evaluating the benefits and sacrifices needed to acquire a product (Overby & Lee, 2006). Moreover, utilitarian value is the most salient factor influencing purchase intention. Utilitarianism has a significant impact on luxury fashion behavior in western societies, where luxury consumption is often associated with higher quality and performance, according to scholars in the field (Shukla & Purani, 2012; Wiedmann, 2009). The dimension of utilitarianism is derived from functions, meaning utilitarian customers value the product's functionality when consuming. The prevailing proportion of these customers exhibit rational behavior and, in contrast to hedonist, consumers with utilitarian tendencies rely on the internet to acquire valuable information that facilitates their decision-making process.

Amatulli et.al (2019) found that utilitarian shopping value positively impact physical channel search behaviour, and utilitarianism can better explain consumers' online channel search and shopping behaviour. By studying Chinese consumers' online and offline purchase intentions, Li and Gu (2016) found that utilitarian shopping-oriented consumers prefer the

usefulness of shopping, so they choose to buy online. In contrast to traditional Chinese consumers, Gen Z consumers are exhibiting more discerning and pragmatic attitudes, and are expanding their horizons beyond merely functional considerations of products. As a result, they are more and more willing to spend money on higher product value and quality and spend more time studying products and their nuances. Moreover, it can be stated that when using online platforms, consumers tend to buy a particular chosen commodity on time and with ease to avoid feelings of frustration and discomfort (Indrawati et al., 2020; Fernandes et al., 2020). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the extent utilitarianism impacts the online luxury fashion purchase intention of China's Gen Z.

Perceived Risk

The perceived risk of online luxury shopping is mainly composed of personal information security, commercial reputation and online shopping experience. Some scholars also believe that the existence of consumer risk will have a negative impact on consumers' online shopping attitudes and behaviours (Vijayan & Oo, 2022). Perceived risk has been regarded as the most prominent negative factor in early research and is generally divided into five dimensions: economic, social risk, risk of function, time, and privacy (Liu, 2012). In recent years, the impact of online shopping on risk perception has gradually diminished. Not only because of the improvement of online shopping laws and regulations, the management of quality control by merchants, and consumers' belief that risks are controllable (Yang et al., 2015). In addition to the product information merchants provide, people also refer to online reviews of products. Similarly, Vijayan and Oo (2022) concluded that low perceived risk increases the purchase intention towards online apparel shopping. Through empirical research, scholars have found that security and privacy concerns are irrelevant to online purchasing intention (Dong & Yang, 2008; Sweeney & Geoffrey, 2001).

Purchase Intention

Ajzen (1991) defined that the intention of purchasing goods or services consists of consumers' purchasing intention and attitude. Early research used purchase intention to mediate behaviours and attitudes (Fishbein, 1975). This intention could bridge consumers' responses towards goods and their acquisition of the goods. Dodds et al (1991) hold a comparable perspective, in which purchase intention refers to the likelihood that consumers will purchase a specific product. In online luxury fashion shopping, consumers' motive helps to determine the internal purpose. Morwitz et al (2007) suggest that purchase intentions can serve as a useful tool to evaluate the efficacy of a novel distribution channel, enabling managers to determine whether it warrants further investment and aiding in the identification of geographic markets and consumer segments that would be most receptive to the channel. Their importance lies in the fact that intentions are considered the key predictor of actual behavior (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2015). Sumarliah et al (2022) states that it remains unclear whether antecedent states (i.e. a person's mood and mental condition) affect consumers' intent for online fashion shopping. Hence, this study seeks to examine the purchase intention within the context of online luxury fashion among Gen Z in China.

Proposed Framework

Literature shows that the perceived benefice and perceived sacrifices have influenced the consumer online luxury fashion purchase intention with the VAM grounding the research. The author of the thesis proposed that the determinant of the purchase intention is closely

linked with perceived benefit (Materialism, Hedonic and Utilitarian) and perceived sacrifice (risk). Based on the discussion above, the paper proposes a theoretical framework to study the determinant of online luxury purchase intention. The proposed framework is presented in Figure 1.

Conclusion and Future Research Direction

This study provides a conceptual analysis of the factors that influence online luxury fashion purchase intention of Gen Z consumers in China. Firstly, a conceptual framework based on the VAM model was developed. Secondly, the study emphasizes the significance of future empirical research to investigate the determinants of purchase intention for online luxury fashion in China. To this end, a quantitative approach is proposed for primary data collection using a questionnaire. Based on the literature review conducted, the following propositions are proposed to explore the purchase intention of Gen Z consumers in luxury fashion in China, through the lens of the VAM. These propositions will be tested as illustrated in Table 1. The conceptual analysis of the determinants of online purchase intention among Chinese Gen Z consumers in luxury fashion are expected to yield some valuable outcomes. From a theoretical perspective, the findings are expected to fulfill the gap between perceived sacrifices and perceived benefits towards luxury fashion online purchase intention. The investigation aimed to examine the relationship between perceived sacrifice (perceived risk) and perceived benefit (materialism, hedonic value, utilitarian value) on online luxury fashion purchase intention. This empirical study helps to better identify and unearth factors in the Chinese market, and ultimately understand the changing dynamics of this significant contributor to luxury fashion market.

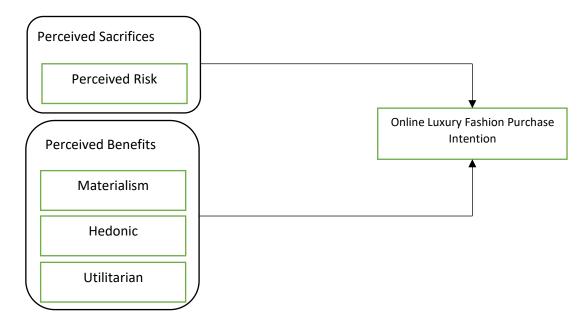


Figure 1 Proposed Framework

From the practical perspective, this study also highlights remarkable implications in terms of managerial perspective for online retailers and marketers to improved and further enhance their online business. As for the consumers' perspective, the study illustrate the advantages of online luxury fashion shopping to China's Gen Z through the benefits such as enjoyment through online shopping, the materialism value of luxury fashion products, the task-related

shopping and the risk during purchase decision-making. The empirical evidence will contribute to the body of knowledge by employing the VAM Theory to examine the factors of online luxury fashion purchase intention such as Materialism, Hedonic, Utilitarian and Perceived Risk. Besides that, this paper emphasised the importance of conducting a future empirical study to investigate the factors that influence Chinese consumers' Gen Z online luxury fashion purchase intention. As a result, it is suggested that a further empirical study using a quantitative approach be conducted to investigate luxury fashion purchases intention.

Table 1

Proposition to be tested

P1	There is positive relationship between Materialism and Purchase Intention
P2	There is positive relationship between Hedonic and Purchase Intention
Р3	There is positive relationship between Utilitarian and Purchase Intention
P4	There is negative relationship between Perceived Risk and Purchase Intention

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