

COLLABORATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION IN THE GLOBAL LUXURY RESALE INDUSTRY

AUTHORS

Vick, Jihyun Kim
School of Fashion Design and Merchandising / Kent State University
jkim55@kent.edu

Cho, Eunjoo
School of Human Environmental Sciences / University of Arkansas
ejcho@uark.edu

KEYWORDS

Digital transformation, fashion re-commerce, sustainable future, luxury fashion, Gen Z

ABSTRACT

Using fashion rental services and purchasing second-hand goods are becoming more sustainable consumption options than buying new products because they help reduce waste while providing consumers with trendy products at affordable prices. The luxury fashion resale market has expanded globally, driven by consumer attentiveness toward sustainability. Based on the literature and theoretical foundations (e.g., goal framing theory and self-determination theory), the present study aims to provide empirical evidence to academia and the luxury resale industry regarding young adult consumers' used luxury goods consumption behavior between sustainability motive and materialistic motive on their adoption of subscribing, renting, or purchasing the previously used so-called pre-loved luxury goods. After receiving approval from the IRB, using a self-administered, online survey, we gathered 452 usable responses from Gen Z consumers. Using structural equation model analysis, we found that individuals' beliefs in sustainable consumption and innate tendency toward materialism had a positive impact on their beliefs on signaling status through luxury products, which, in turn, explained their intention to adopt fashion subscription or rental services and their intentions to purchase second-hand luxury goods. By unveiling the multifaceted motivation structure of young adult consumers regarding sustainable luxury fashion consumption, the researchers offer useful insights for the luxury resale industry and other share-based retail industries.

INTRODUCTION

In the luxury resale industry, the sharing economy has manifested itself through two distinct modes of exchange: a) timed access to artifacts, such as short-term access to the goods via subscription or renting services (e.g., Jin and Kim, 2019; Spurgeon and Linda, 2019); and b) transfer of ownership of previously owned artifacts via digital resale platforms such as online consignment retail websites, peer-to-peer resale apps, and online community marketplaces (e.g., Kim-Vick and Yu, 2023). Using fashion rental services and purchasing second-hand goods are becoming more sustainable options than buying new products because they help reduce waste while providing consumers with trendy products at affordable prices (Lai, 2022). The luxury fashion resale market has expanded globally, driven by consumer attentiveness toward sustainability (e.g., Berg et al., 2021; Durif et al., 2017). Online resale markets are an integral part of the expanding "sharing economy" (Hamari et al., 2016), in which consumers have temporary access to resources rather than permanent ownership (Eckhardt et al., 2019).

In the past decade, the sharing economy for cars, clothing, lodging, and other goods has gained significant popularity (e.g., Belk, 2014; Trenz et al., 2018). The online resale market, buying and selling second-hand goods, was valued at US\$56.1 billion in 2020 and is expected to reach US\$195.7 billion in 2030 (Sabanoglu, 2022). The growth of resale platforms is fueled by younger generations like Gen Z consumers, who are more conscious of the environmental impact of their purchases and are value-conscious shoppers (Francis and Hoefel, 2018; Kohan, 2023; Liu et al., 2023). Gen Z consumers and millennials are more willing to purchase second-hand luxury products than older consumers (Berg et al., 2021). The RealReal's (2023) luxury resale report shows that Gen Z consumers are the most circular group who re-consigned 52% more fashion products than older generations in 2022. Industry articles reported that young adult consumers like to buy second-hand luxury goods for affordable price and sustainability efforts (Berg et al., 2021; Kohan, 2023).

The digital resale platforms (hereafter DRPs) serve as intermediaries for redistributing used goods from business to consumers, consumers to consumers, or from consumers to businesses (Cameron and Galloway, 2005). Such DRPs reduce excessive waste (Brosius et al., 2013) by extending the life cycle of the goods through sharing or reselling and reducing the amount of waste sent to the landfill. Consequently, the luxury fashion resale industry is considered to contribute to one's sustainable consumption practices. Even though fashion rentals and second-hand good purchases are found to be new collaborative consumption, scant research examined key motivations for participating in these alternative forms of consumption (Chi et al., 2023; Pantano and Stylos, 2020). Rathi, Kataria, and Chhikara (2022) calls for investigation in this area. Building on goal-framing and self-determination theories, this study investigates the impacts of an individual's beliefs about sustainable consumption and an innate tendency in materialism on mediation and outcome variables.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study draws from goal-framing theory (Lindernberg and Steg, 2013) to examine various motivations influencing intention to use luxury fashion subscription or rental service and purchase second-hand luxury goods via DRPs. The theory postulates that goal frames represent behavioral motives which influence individuals' information and alternative selection processes. The motives may change or strengthen their beliefs about an action. Lindernberg and Steg (2007) divided the goal frames into three dimensions, such as gain, hedonic, and normative goal frames. First, one with a gain goal frame tends to maximize the economic and utilitarian gains from a behavior and improve one's resources with minimal cost. Second, one with hedonic goal frame is to improve how one feels in a given circumstance with the least amount of effort. Individuals in a hedonic goal frame focus on immediate pleasure, positive emotions, and well-being while avoiding negative thoughts and emotions, and uncertainty. Third, one with normative goal frame is driven by conforming to social expectations and moral standards, such as contributing to sustainability.

Although an individual is influenced by a dominant goal frame, other goal frames are in the background and adjust the strength of the focal goal. The three goal frames play a key role in pro-environmental behavior (Lindenberg and Steg, 2007). Adopting fashion subscription or rental services and buying second-hand luxury fashion goods are examples of pro-environmental behavior. Shopping through DRPs could give individuals positive feelings as they obtain luxury goods at a discounted price. In addition, the normative goal frame guides individuals to take social responsibilities by shopping through DRPs. A recent study by Jain and Rathi (2023) demonstrated applicability of the theory in the second-hand luxury goods consumption context.

Importance of clothing sustainability as an intrinsic motivation

Consumers who have engaged in collaborative consumption such as sharing, trading, renting, and swapping concern for sustainable consumption (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). Online fashion rental or fashion subscription services, as a form of access-based consumption, may maximize the use of fashion goods and reduce landfill waste (Armstrong et al., 2015). Research showed that consumers' importance of sustainability positively influences their

attitudes towards (Hamari et al., 2016; Lee and Chow, 2020) and willingness to pay more for sustainable products (Laroche et al., 2001). Individuals highly concerned about sustainability are more likely to have a positive attitude and purchase intention towards access-based consumption (Lang and Armstrong, 2018). Moreover, a recent study by Silva, Duarte, Sandes and Almeida (2022) revealed that one's environmental consciousness positively impacted the consumption of pre-loved luxury fashion. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1 a and b: There are positive relationships between consumer's importance of sustainability and (a) their intention to adopt fashion subscription and/or rental services, and (b) their intention to purchase second-hand luxury fashion goods via DRPs.

Materialism as an internalized extrinsic motivation

Materialism represents a belief in material possession in relation to one's identity, goals, and purpose (Durvasula and Lysonski, 2010). Many consumers use material possessions such as fashion and accessories to portray their success and social status (Belk, 1984; O'Cass and Frost, 2002). Materialists tend to give material property/possession a central position because they consider accrued possession a barometer of success (Sun et al., 2017; Richins and Dawson, 1992). Therefore, the more materialistic consumers engage more in luxury consumption compared to less materialistic consumers (Hudders and Pandelaere, 2015), based on the non-verbal communicative function of the social interaction (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998; Douglas and Baron, 1996). Research demonstrated that young adult consumers purchase luxury goods as a symbol of status (Grotts and Widner Johnson, 2013; Han et al., 2010). Moreover, a recent study by Tu et al. (2022) reported that consumers buy second-hand luxury products to signal their social status to others. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2 a and b: There are positive relationships between consumer's materialism and (a) their importance of expressing taste through luxury goods, and (b) their importance of signaling status through luxury goods.

Importance of signaling status through luxury goods

One's ownership and public usage of goods is an example of self-extension (Belk, 1988), which have signaled one's social status (Han et al., 2010). Eastman et al. (1999) defined status consumption as "the practice of using products to signal social status aspirations to other consumers" (p. 42). The consumption of second-hand luxury goods addresses not only one's sense of contribution toward the sustainability (Silva et al., 2022; Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015) but also expressing one's social status through their ownership of the luxury products (Christodoulides et al., 2021; Kessous and Valette-Florence, 2019; Tu et al., 2022). Therefore, consumers who pay great importance in signaling their status through the uses of luxury goods may be more inclined to adopt the alternative luxury consumption – a) fashion subscription/rental services (e.g., Kaiser and Prandelli, 2018) and/or b) purchase second-hand luxury goods from DRPs). Hence, following hypotheses are proposed:

H3 a and b: There are positive effects of importance of signaling one's status through luxury goods on their intention to (a) adopt fashion subscription or rental services, and (b) purchase second-hand luxury goods via DRPs.

METHOD

A self-administered online survey questionnaire was developed, and a purposive sampling technique was utilized to collect data. The population of this study consisted of U.S. Gen Z consumers who attend a midwestern university due to appropriateness of this target market for the personal luxury goods industry (D'aprizo et al., 2019; Deloitte, 2020). Bahri-Anmari et al. (2020) provided support on the collecting data from the actual consumers of the luxury goods from the larger population due to the democratization of the luxury phenomenon such as causal/accessible luxury users. Moreover, research reported that two thirds of their Gen Z college consumers who participated in their studies owned either brand new or second-hand luxury fashion goods in the US (Kim-Vick and Yu, 2023) and second-hand luxury goods in India (Jain and Rathi, 2023).

Upon approval of the Internal Review Board (IRB) on the research process and online survey instrument, e-mail invitations for the online survey were sent out to the population. To measure the importance of clothing sustainability, three items were developed by the researchers. To measure materialism – success dimension, five items were adopted from Sirgy et al. (2021). To measure the importance of signaling status through luxury goods, two items were adopted from Eastman et al. (1999). To measure intention to adopt fashion subscription or rental services and intention to purchase second-hand luxury goods through DRPs, six items were adopted from Kim-Vick and Yu (2023). All adopted measures' wordings were modified to suit the personal luxury goods consumption as well as sharing economy context. All scale items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly agree" to 5 = "strongly disagree") except demographic information. The survey questionnaire was pilot tested on its readability before the data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of a total of 476 responses, 24 of them were incomplete responses. Thus, a final sample of 452 responses from Gen Z, comprising of 279 who reported owning luxury goods and 173 responses who do not own personal luxury goods. Over 85% of the participants were female, and were between 18 and 20 years old, with average age of 19.3 years old. Nearly three-quarters identified themselves as white/Caucasian American, followed by African American (9.1%), Asian American or Pacific Islander (7.5%), multi-racial (5.5%), and Hispanic or Latino (3.1%). Most were single, never married (96.5%). To detect the non-response bias in the data, the researcher compared the responses on research constructs and demographic variables between two groups: Early (first 10%) and late (last 10%) respondents, using t-tests and Chi-square tests. No significant differences were found between these two groups on their responses to the variables. Thus, the researcher proceeded with further data analysis.

Measurement model analysis

Following Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to ensure factor structure of each construct using AMOS 29.0. The measurement model included 14 indicators. To assess model fit, a Chi-square statistic, normative fit index (NFI), relative fit index (RFI), comparative fit index (CFI), incremental fit index (IFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were used following criteria suggested by Schumacker and Lomax (2004). The measurement model yielded a good fit, $\chi^2(df = 192) = 326.14$, $\chi^2/df = 1.70$, $p < .01$; NFI = .92, RFI = .90, IFI = .96, TLI = .96, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .04). All fit indices, except for NFI, indicated an adequate model fit to data (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2006). According to Kenny (2020), the χ^2 test is generally a reasonable measure of fit only for models with about 75 to 200 cases. He stressed that for models with 400 or more cases, interpretation of the χ^2 statistics is not a good indicator of the model fit.

As shown in Table 1, CFA of the measurement model for multi-item scales indicated that factor loadings of indicators for each construct were statistically significant and adequate for structural model testing, which establish convergent and discriminant validity. Cronbach's alpha values for all five constructs ranged from .77 to .84, indicating a high level of reliability for the scale items (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The average variance extracted values for the five constructs ranged from .50 to .74, which were acceptable; factor loadings indicated that the data fit the measurement model adequately. Therefore, the researcher conducted a subsequent structural equation modeling (SEM) using these measurement models to test the proposed hypotheses. Table 2 demonstrates correlation coefficients and descriptive statistics of model constructs

Constructs/Scale items	Standardized factor loadings	t-values	R ²	AVEs	α
Importance of clothing sustainability - Organic fiber and fabric - Transparency of supply chain - Sustainability goals of the company	.61 .76 .88	12.12 11.73	.37 .58 .78	.57	.79
Materialism – success* - I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes. - I believe that the things I own say a lot about how well I am doing in life. - I like own things that impress people. - I believe that some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.	.64 .74 .79 .69	12.73 12.22 11.38	.41 .55 .62 .47	.51	.81
Importance of signaling status through luxury goods - It is very important how well I present myself to others using luxury brand goods. - It is important for me to buy luxury brand goods that are easily recognized by others.	.90 .81	17.07	.81 .66	.74	.84
Intention to adopt alternative luxury fashion consumption - Subscription services - Rental services	.70 .89	9.65	.49 .79	.69	.77
Intention to purchase second-hand luxury goods through DRPs - Facebook Marketplace - C2C or P2P selling apps (e.g., Poshmark) - Consignment online retailer (e.g., TRR) - Online second-hand luxury retailers (e.g., Fashionphile)	.68 .67 .70 .79	11.87 12.26 13.49	.46 .44 .49 .62	.50	.80

Note:5-point semantic differential scale was used to measure research constructs: extremely likely (1) to extremely unlikely (5).

* An item, “I do not place much emphasis on the amount of material objects people own as a sign of success (Reverse coding),” was dropped due to a low factor loading score.

Table 1. Measurement model analysis. (n = 452)

Model constructs	Correlations					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Importance of clothing sustainability	1					
2. Materialism – success	-.07	1				
3. Importance of expressing one’s taste through luxury goods	.06	.29**	1			
4. Importance of signaling status through luxury goods	-.001	.59**	.39**	1		
5. Intention to adopt fashion subscription or rental services	.23**	.17**	.15**	.19**	1	
6. Intention to purchase second-hand luxury goods via DRPs	.10*	.15**	.13**	.13**	.37**	1
Mean	2.58	3.04	2.24	3.45	3.05	3.08
SD	0.90	0.97	1.16	1.17	0.98	1.04

Note: a measurement for all constructs were based on a five-point scale where 1 = “strongly agree” and 5 = “strongly disagree.” * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01 using a two-tail test.

Table 2. Correlation coefficients and descriptive statistics of model constructs. (n = 452)

Structural equation modeling analysis: Hypotheses testing

The SEM analysis was performed to test the hypotheses. The results of multiple group analysis testing the proposed structural model fit and path coefficients are shown in Figure 1. Figure 1 presents the results of testing relationships in the proposed conceptual model, including the standardized beta coefficients and t-values for each relationship as well as squared multiple correlations (R^2) for each endogenous construct. All hypotheses were statistically supported using a one-tail test ($p < .05$). H1a and 1b proposing positive and direct effects of importance of sustainability-related attributes when shopping for clothing in general on consumers' intention to adopt fashion subscription or rental services and purchase intention of second-hand luxury goods via DRPs (H1a: $\beta = .22^{***}$; H1b: $\beta = .10^*$) received statistical support. H2 a and 2b proposed positive and direct effect of materialism – success on one's importance of expressing taste through luxury goods (H2a: $\beta = .30$) and one's importance of signaling status through luxury goods (H2b: $\beta = .71$) and received statistical support. Lastly, H3 proposed positive and direct impact of importance of signaling status through luxury goods on consumers' intention to adopt fashion subscription or rental services and purchase intention of second-hand luxury goods via DRPs. SEM analysis provided statistical support to H3 (H3a: $\beta = .24^{***}$; H3b: $\beta = .14^*$). Additionally, the bootstrap sampling procedure showed that materialism – success had indirect effect on the two outcome variables through the importance of signaling status.

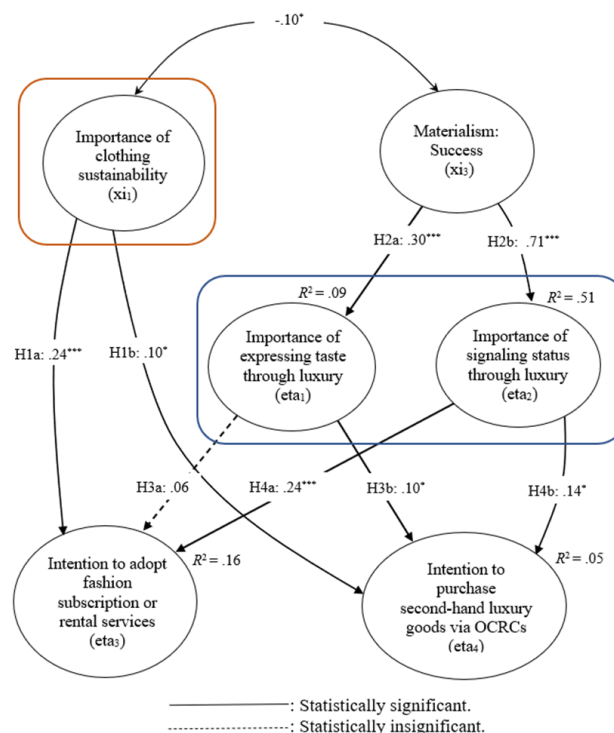


Figure 1. Structural equation modeling analysis of the proposed conceptual model.

Note: Standardized path coefficients and adjusted R^2 are reported.

\square $p < .05$; \square $p < .001$

χ^2 (df = 93) = 200.08
 $\chi^2/df = 2.15$
 $p < .001$
 NFI = .93; RFI = .91
 IFI = .96; TLI = .95
 CFI = .96; RMSEA = .05

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study expands the existing literature by unveiling the key motivators of Gen Z consumers to take part in the online collaborative consumption practices of second-hand luxury goods. Previous research separately examined motivation for renting and buying second-hand luxury fashion goods. However, this study further investigates in-

trinsic and internalized extrinsic motivations for adopting subscribing or renting services, and buying second-hand luxury fashion goods in one structural model to better understand the holistic behavioral intention toward those consumption options. By adopting goal-framing and self-determination theories, this research proposes that the importance of clothing sustainability and materialism lead consumers to subscribe and rent luxury fashion goods and purchase second-hand luxury fashion goods via DRPs. The importance of signaling one's status via luxury goods consumption mediated the relationships between materialism - success and two outcome variables. The results of the study provide academic and practical implications for collaborative luxury fashion consumption via online redistribution channels.

Theoretical implications

This study advances the knowledge of young adult consumers' shopping motivations for second-hand luxury fashion goods consumption using online collaborative consumption practices - fashion subscription or rental services and purchase second-hand luxury goods. The results demonstrated that the structural model met all statistical standards. Thus, the model could be used in the examination of online collaborative consumption for second-hand luxury fashion goods in other countries. The results empirically support previous research that found consumers' importance of sustainability positively and directly influences their purchase intentions towards collaborative consumption (Hamari et al., 2016; Lang and Armstrong, 2018; Ruan et al., 2022).

The impact of the importance of clothing sustainability is more substantial on the intention to subscribe or rent luxury fashion goods than the impact on intention to purchase second-hand luxury goods. This study reveals the crucial role of success dimension of the materialism in online collaborative consumption for luxury fashion goods. The results demonstrate that young adult consumers' materialism leads them to represent social status by wearing luxury fashion goods, which is consistent with previous research findings (Han et al., 2010; O'Cass and McEwen, 2004). Building on previous findings, the current findings add to the luxury fashion literature by identifying motivational factors that can lead young adult consumers to engage in collaborative luxury fashion consumption. The findings suggest that materialistic young adult consumers like to show their social/economic status to others by wearing second-hand luxury goods.

Practical implications

The findings of this study provide managerial insight for online collaborative luxury resale retailers and marketers on how to appeal to young adult consumers. The results suggest that young adult consumers who are concerned about sustainability are likely to use subscription or rental services and purchase second-hand luxury fashion goods. Those retailers need to devise ways to educate consumers that engaging in collaborative consumption through subscription or rental services. To help consumers better understand the benefits of the collaborative consumption, the luxury resale retailers could emphasize their company missions directly related to their sustainability strategy which can bring a greater efficiency to circular economy. These DRPs can initiate a marketing campaign that discourages consumers from buying new luxury goods but encouraging to take part in the collaborative consumption for renting, sharing, reusing, and reselling the luxury goods.

Based on our findings, DRPs and marketers should target young adult consumers who are greatly motivated by their materialism and care for sustainable practices. These consumers are eager to signal status through renting, subscribing, or purchasing luxury goods as well as expressing their commitment toward a sustainable future for the next generations. The marketing message should emphasize these benefits, which fulfil their multifaceted needs of hedonic goal through materialist possession and signaling status along with the normative goal through supporting the circular economy by consuming those goods through the collaborative redistribution channels.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Some limitations of this research suggest further investigation. First, the generalizability of the study is cautioned

against because the survey was conducted on college students in midwestern areas in the U.S. Most of the participants were White female Gen Z consumers (74%). As the participants may not characterize individuals from diverse backgrounds, a national sampling with a balanced gender distribution could be needed in future research. Secondly, this study identifies four constructs affecting subscribing, renting, and purchasing second-hand luxury fashion goods as manifestation of sustainable consumption based on the collaborative consumption literature. Although our research constructs play significant roles in enhancing collaborative and sustainable luxury consumption among young adult consumers, future studies can incorporate other factors that have the potential to contribute to the predictive power of the model.

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