

Attitude and Purchase Intent for Luxury Fashion Goods

: Cultural Differences between Americans and Chinese

Attitude and
Purchase Intent
for Luxury
Fashion Goods

Jung-Hwan Kim* · Bopeng Zhang

Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Dept. of Retailing, College of Hospitality, Retail, and Sport Management, University of South Carolina, USA*

Dept. of Apparel, Educational Studies, and Hospitality Management, Iowa State University, USA

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Abstract Expanding upon Zhang and Kim's (2013) study involving Chinese consumers, this study investigated key factors that influence U.S. consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods and purchase intent and examined what similarities and differences exist between the two consumer groups in relation to the key factors. A total of 414 respondents completed the online survey questionnaire. Structural Equation Modeling was utilized to analyze data. Brand consciousness, materialism, fashion innovativeness, and fashion involvement were significant factors that affect U.S. consumers' attitude towards luxury fashion goods. Overall, the findings of the current study were greatly inconsistent with Zhang and Kim's Chinese study. The inconsistency provides vital implications to luxury fashion retailers by showing that one size does not fit all and one strategy does not fit all markets.

Key words Brand consciousness, materialism, fashion innovativeness, fashion involvement, luxury fashion, attitude

Introduction

With the financial crisis in 2008 the total amount of luxury consumption in the U.S. crumbled. Sales of luxury fashion goods seemed to be at jeopardy with the widespread economic recession. Nevertheless, the U.S. has remained the world's largest luxury goods market, accounting for over one-fourth of the overall value sales of luxury goods in 2012 (CPP-LUXURY.COM, 2012) and has returned to pre-crisis sales levels (Luxurysociety, 2013). As the broader U.S. economic situation slowly improves, the growth of the U.S. luxury goods market is expected to be more positive (Brand channel, 2012). As the evidence of this positive trend leading luxury brands such as Hermes and Prada are launching shops or expanding existing stores in the U.S (Mail online, 2013).

While the U.S. market waxes and wanes and recovers, China has become one of the most valuable luxury markets. Zhang and Kim (2013) examined influencing factors which affect Chinese consumers' at-

titude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods and purchase intent. The five key factors considered were brand consciousness, materialism, social comparison, fashion innovativeness, and fashion involvement. According to the findings of the study, Chinese consumers buy luxury goods mainly for social recognition or to signal their wealth or to gain social status. However, the same attitude might not hold across cultures. In other words, consumers' motivation towards purchasing luxury fashion goods would differ by culture, especially between Eastern and Western cultures. For example, symbolic values would be important to people in Eastern collective cultures which emphasize dependence and social acceptance, whereas personal value would be critical to people in Western individualist cultures which emphasize independence and individual initiative (Hofstede, 1980). To support this notion, Shukla (2011) found in association with luxury purchase intentions that consumers in Indian, a developing collectivist market, were more vulnerable to normative interpersonal influences than consumers in the U.K., a developed individualist market. Expanding upon Zhang and Kim's (2013) study involving Chinese consumers, this study investigated key factors that influence U.S. consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods and purchase intent in comparison to the Chinese luxury consumer data.

Within the global market luxury retailers are well advised to understand consumers' attitudes towards luxury goods and purchase intent and the differences and similarities of consumers' attitude based on cultural and geographical matters to better address unique characteristics of consumers in various regions. In this sense, comparing consumer groups in two culturally dissimilar countries would be vital to better satisfy consumers' needs on a larger scale.

Literature review

Luxury fashion goods

The term "luxury" is defined as very high standard goods and services (Shukla, 2011), which are desirable and beyond necessary and ordinary (Heine & Phan, 2011). As a social phenomenon, luxury consumption has received considerable attention from both marketers and researchers for decades. Luxury fashion items comprise a wide range of product categories such as apparel, shoes, accessories, jewelry, perfume, and eyewear (Gao, Norton, Zhang, & To, 2009).

As the luxury industry becomes an influential sector in the field of fashion marketing, the concept of "luxury" has been updated with a more comprehensive understanding of luxury consumers' attitudes. According to Berthon, Pitt, Parent, and Berthon (2009), luxury had been primarily considered as quality goods and their durability. However, symbolic value and luxurious experiences have been included in the expanded concept of luxury (Berthon et al., 2009). With reflection of this change, Berthon et al. (2009) conceptualized the term luxury goods with three components: the material, the social, and the individual. In their view, functional value (e.g., physical objects/product quality), individual experiential value (e.g., personal thoughts/perceptions, hedonic value), and symbolic value (e.g., status and images) blend together to conceptualize luxury brands (Berthon et al., 2009). Today, non-tangible attributes of luxury goods are imperative considerations that need to be understood in relation to consumers' attitudes towards purchas-

ing luxury goods.

Independent and interdependent self-construals

This study used Markus and Kitayama's (1991) theory of independent and interdependent self-construals as the theoretical framework to examine if any significant cultural differences exist between U.S. consumers and Chinese consumers in relation to the key factors which affect consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods and purchase intent.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) outlined two construals of self (independent and interdependent) with regards to the relationship between the self and others in relation to cultures. According to their theory, Western cultures, mainly individualistic cultures such as the United States, are characterized as independent self-construals (i.e., distinct individuals are inherently separate), whereas non-Western cultures, mainly Asian cultures such as China, are characterized as interdependent self-construals (i.e., individuals cannot be considered as separate from the social context and actively make an effort to harmonize with relevant others) (Matsumoto, 1999; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). The two dissimilar concepts are analogous to Bowen's (1966) togetherness and individuality, Bowlby's (1969) attachment and separation, and Hofstede's (1992) collectivism and individualism (Matsumoto, 1999).

Markus and Kitayama's theory of independent and interdependent self-construals has been applied to various cross-cultural studies (e.g., Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Escalas and Bettman (2005) examined two culturally different consumers' association with brands based on the Markus and Kitayama approach. Wong and Ahuvia (1998) employed the theory to understand the cultural differences in luxury consumption between Western and Confucian Asian cultures.

In Markus and Kitayama's theory the fundamental difference between independent and interdependent self-construals is explained by the extent to which other people are integrated into the self-concept (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). The two concepts of independent and interdependent self-construals explain the distinctive ways that individuals think, perceive, feel, and act in dissimilar cultures. To support the concepts, previous cross-cultural luxury goods related research indicated different consumer perceptions and behaviors. For instance, interpersonal factors have dominance effects on the consumption of luxury goods in Asian cultures (Gao et al., 2009) whereas personal preferences, needs, and rights are the main motivation for luxury consumption among Western individualist consumers (Shukla & Purani, 2012). Overall, Markus and Kitayama's theory describes the view that culture affects individual self-construals which in turn impact a wide range of behaviors (Matsumoto, 1999). Thus, the theory of independent and interdependent self-construals is a useful framework to understand consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods in two culturally different countries.

Hypotheses development

As a follow-up study of Zhang and Kim's (2013) research with Chinese luxury consumers, this study examined significant factors that affect U.S. consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods

and purchase intent in order to compare how U.S. consumers differ from Chinese consumers. The five key factors included in this study are reviewed in the following section (See Zhang and Kim (2013) for an extensive discussion).

Brand consciousness

Brand consciousness refers to consumers' psychological orientation to choose highly advertised, well-known brand-name products (Shim & Gehrt, 1996; Sproles & Kendall, 1986). Brand consciousness has a crucial influence on consumption patterns (LaChance, Beaudoin, & Robitaille, 2003) and brand choice decisions (MacInnis, Shapior, & Mani, 1999). A brand conscious consumer tends to place more importance on well-known brand names (Jamal & Goode, 2001).

Consumers utilize brand as a means of expressing their personal styles and preferences (Liao & Wang, 2009). According to Deeter-Schmelz, Moore, and Goebel (2000), brand name is the most important factor associated with prestige-shopping. Previous luxury research pointed out that recognized brand identity, customer awareness, exclusivity, and quality are critical elements of luxury (Fionda & Moore, 2009; Phau & Prendergast, 2000). To build a successful brand is identified as the key dimension of luxury products regardless of cultural base. Therefore, brand consciousness can be considered as an important factor that affects consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury goods worldwide. Based on the literature reviewed, we propose:

Hypothesis 1: Brand consciousness positively relates to U.S. consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods.

Materialism

Materialism is defined as "the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions (Belk, 1985, p.291)." Individuals who hold strong materialistic values tend to (1) place possessions to the center of their life; (2) perceive acquisition as the pursuit of happiness; and (3) define success with their own possessions (Richins, 1994; Richins & Dawson, 1992).

Little research has examined the direct relationship between materialism and attitude towards purchasing luxury goods. However, it is not difficult to find research which points out the connection between materialism and conspicuous consumption related to status in society and quality of possessions. For instance, in some research, materialism is inseparably associated with conspicuous consumption (Fournier & Richins, 1991; Graham, 1999; Mason, 1981; Richins, 1994; Wong, 1997).

In relation to Markus and Kitayam's theory, Liao and Wang (2009) noted that materialism which focuses on individual hedonic values is closely related to western individualistic culture. In general materialistic people are self-centered, hedonic, and consume brand-name products (Richins & Dawson, 1992). According to Aaker and Schmitt (2001), people with an independent self-construal are likely to consume for self-expression, while interdependent people consume to be more closely suited to their reference

group. Luxury consumers possess luxury products to show success and social status or to reward own self (Liu, Li, Mizerski, & Soh, 2012). Kamal, Chu, and Pedram (2013) showed a strong positive relationship between materialism and purchase intention of luxury goods among American users. With an individualistic culture, U.S. consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods can be related to materialism which prices a consumer's life. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 2: Materialism positively relates to U.S. consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods.

Social comparison

Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) proposes that individuals usually evaluate their opinions and abilities by comparing them with the opinions and abilities of other people when objective criteria are not available. When individuals categorize themselves in a certain social group, this group functionalizes as a reference for social comparison, and these individuals adopt the in-group attitude as their own (Tajfel, 1981; 1982). In a similar vein, when a discrepancy exists in regards to opinions, people tend to change their own positions to be closer to others in a social group (Festinger, 1954).

Several previous studies reflected on the power of social comparison regarding luxury consumption. In Han, Nunes, and Dreze's (2011) profile of luxury consumers, four types of consumers were identified based on wealth and need for status. One of the four types of consumers, "Parvenus," refers to individuals who can afford luxury goods and highly crave social status. "Parvenus" individuals purchase luxury goods with prominent cues of "luxury" because they tend to assess themselves to be like people who are as wealthy or wealthier than they are and at the same time to dissociate themselves from those who are less affluent. Due to upward social comparison, "parvenus" favor luxury goods, particular those with salient luxury brand logos and icons.

According to Grossmand and Shapiro (1988), luxury goods are defined as goods that people use to express prestige and status, even if there is almost no difference in functional utility as compared to other goods (Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2013). In many East Asian cultures, people possess goods to publicly display their wealth and social status. Expensive luxury goods are signs of prosperity and status (Darian, 1998). Well-known brand names are generally acknowledged as a social assurance about an individual's status (Ghazali & Abidin, 2011).

According to previous research, U.S. consumers give emphasis to their own needs whereas Chinese consumers emphasize status symbols since they put more value on the need to be associated with the group rather than their own needs (Adams, 2011). Therefore, Chinese consumers purchase luxury goods to try to copy higher social class consumption to be associated with the higher class (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012). In this sense, social comparison would be a key factor that affects Chinese consumers but not to U.S. consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 3: Social comparison has no influence on U.S. consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury

Fashion innovativeness

Innovativeness is defined as a predisposition to adopt new things earlier than most members of a social structure (Goldsmith, Kim, Flynn, & Kim, 2005). Fashion innovativeness is salient to fashion marketers and psychological scholars because it contributes to the knowledge of fashion innovators and the process of fashion diffusion (Goldsmith, Moore, & Beaudoin, 1999). Fashion innovators are among the first buyers of the latest styles and product lines. Their reactions towards new styles and product lines may influence later adopters.

According to previous research, fashion innovators tend to spend more money on fashion clothing (Goldsmith, 1998), especially new fashions (Goldsmith & Stith, 1993), and act as fashion opinion leaders (Goldsmith, 2000). In addition, fashion innovators are less price-sensitive (Goldsmith et al., 2005) and tend to shop at specialty stores and department stores (Phau & Lo, 2004). Compared to price sensitive consumers, price insensitive consumers are inclined to pay higher prices for the same goods and are more willing to pay if prices increase (Goldsmith et al., 2005). In this sense, fashion innovators are more likely to spend money on relatively high-priced fashion items.

Little research has investigated the relationship between fashion innovativeness and luxury fashion consumption. However, the numerous concepts addressed above support the link between fashion innovativeness and luxury fashion consumption. Thus it is plausible to assume that fashion innovativeness would be a key factor that influences consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods regardless of cultural background. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 4: Fashion innovativeness has a positive impact on U.S. consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods.

Fashion involvement

Fashion involvement is described as consumer involvement or product involvement specific to fashion items (Sullivan, Kang, & Heitmeyer, 2012). Zaichkowsky (1985, p. 342) defined involvement as "a person's perceived relevance of an object based on inherent needs, values, and interests." Fashion involvement is a key concept in market segmentation since highly involved consumers are usually considered as heavy buyers of fashion products and opinion leaders (Hong & Rucker, 1995). Highly fashion involved consumers have been indicated as the drivers of and highly influential of the overall fashion adoption process (Goldsmith et al., 1999; Naderi, 2013; Tigert, Ring, & King, 1976). They are likely to early adopt new products, highly interested on fashion and knowledgeable about fashion styles and trends (Zhang & Kim, 2013). Their attitudes towards new styles have a significant influence on the success or failure of products (Goldsmith et al., 1999; Naderi, 2013).

In the context of attitudinal research, consumer involvement is an important antecedent of attitude

formation (Summers, Belleau, & Xu, 2006) and brand attitude (e.g., O’Cass & Choy, 2008; Poiesz & de Bont, 1995; Suh & Yi, 2006). Fashion involvement has received little attention in the context of luxury research. However, several involvement related studies support a possible relationship between fashion involvement and attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods among U.S. consumers. For instance, Goldsmith (2002) indicated that U.S. heavy users of fashionable clothing, who are considered as highly involved consumers, are related to lower price sensitivity. In Summers, Belleau, and Xu’s (2006) study, high fashion involvement influenced U.S. consumers’ purchase intention of a controversial luxury product. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed:

Hypothesis 5: Fashion involvement is positively related to U.S. consumers’ attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods.

Attitude and purchase intent

The attitude towards performing a behavior is widely accepted as the determinant of the intent of the behavior performance. The theory of reasoned action developed by Fishbein and Ajzen proposes that attitudes towards the behavior are associated with the behavior intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). A wide range of studies has provided solid support of the positive prediction of attitudes on purchasing intention (e.g., Bellman, Teich, & Clark, 2009; Yoh, Damhorst, Sapp, & Lazniak, 2003). In the context of luxury consumption, previous research found positive relationship between U.S. and Chinese consumers’ attitude towards luxury brands and purchase intent for luxury brands (Bian & Forsythe, 2012). As a result, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 6: Attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods positively relates to purchase intent of luxury fashion goods.

Based on the literature reviewed and hypotheses developed, the following model is proposed (See Figure 1).

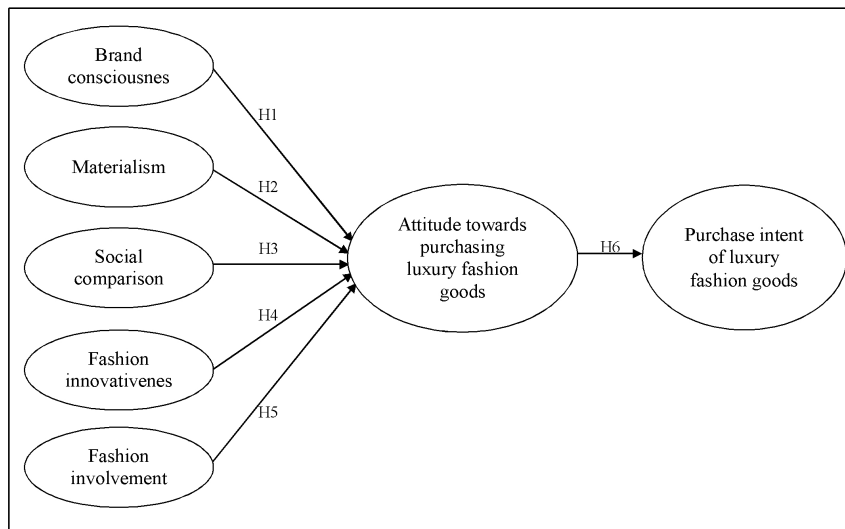


Figure 1.
Proposed model

Research method

Data collection and procedure

An online survey through Survey Monkey.com was utilized to collect data. The original English version of the survey questionnaire utilized by Zhang and Kim (2013) was employed for this study. The survey questionnaire consisted of three sections. In the first section, respondents were asked to evaluate five main factors included in the study (i.e., brand consciousness, materialism, social comparison, fashion innovativeness, and fashion involvement). In the second section, respondents were asked to evaluate their attitudes towards purchasing luxury fashion goods and purchase intent of luxury fashion goods. In the third section, respondents were asked to provide general demographic information and purchase experience of luxury fashion goods. Before the survey was disseminated, three graduate students pre-tested the survey to confirm that the survey questionnaire was clear and understandable. The pre-test data were not included in the main data analysis. To be comparable with the previous Chinese data, the quota of the sample for this study was set based on the respondent profile of the Chinese data. Additionally, an independent sample t-test was used to compare differences in demographic variables between the two sets of data.

Instruments

developed by Tai and Tam (1977) were employed. Materialism was measured using 15 items developed by Richins (2004) and Richins and Dawson (1992). Social comparison was measured using four items developed by Chan and Prendergast (2007). Six items developed by Goldsmith and Hofacker (1991) were employed to measure fashion innovativeness, and 15 items developed by Chae, Black, and Heitmeyer (2006) were utilized to assess fashion involvement. All of the items were measured using seven-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Four items which assessed attitude towards buying luxury fashion goods were developed by Park, Burns, and Rabolt (2007). The items were evaluated on seven-point semantic differential scales. To measure purchase intent of luxury fashion goods, two items developed by Summers et al. (2006) were employed. The items were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Detailed scale item descripts are presented in Appendix I of Zhang and Kim (2013).

Results

Sample

A total of 414 respondents completed the online survey questionnaire. After removing incomplete responses, this study obtained a valid sample of 401 respondents. Approximately 68% of the sample was female ($n = 273$), and 71% of the sample was single. Over 76% of the sample was between 24 and 30 years old, and one-fifth of the sample was between 19 and 23 years old. With regards to education level, 40.1% had a college degree and 12.1% had a graduate degree. Approximately 51% of average household incomes were between \$25,000 and \$74,999. With regards to purchasing experience of luxury fashion goods, 24.2% of the sample purchased 1-3 luxury fashion items in the last six months and 25.4% spent between \$101 and \$500 on one item when purchasing luxury fashion goods. Table 1 summarizes the demographic profiles of the sample. The results of the independent sample t-test revealed that there were no significant statistical differences in age, gender, marital status, and household income between the United States and the Chinese data at the p -value of .05 level.

Table 1.
Profiles of respondents

Measure	Items	United States(%)	Chinese(%)
Gender	Male	31.9	32.3
	Female	68.1	67.7
Age	19-23	20.2	39.1
	24-30	76.8	46
	31-40	.7	13.7
	41-50	1.5	.6
	51 or older	.7	.6

Measure	Items	United States(%)	Chinese(%)
Education	High school or less	25.2	2.5
	Junior college	20.9	7.5
	Bachelor's	41.4	55.3
	Master's	10.0	32.9
	Ph.D.	2.5	1.9
Marital status	Single	73.6	75.2
	Married	24.7	24.2
	Divorced/Separated	1.7	.6
Employment status	Full-time	58.9	48.4
	Part-time	14.5	-
	Housewife	1.7	2.5
	Student	17.7	33.5
	Retired	.2	-
	Other	.2	15.6
Annual income	Under 25,000	21.4	27.0
	25,000-49,999	29.7	35.3
	50,000-74,999	23.4	11.2
	75,000-99,999	13.2	13.0
	100,000-149,999	8.7	6.2
	150,000-199,999	2.0	2.5
	Over 200,000	1.5	4.8

Data analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to test validity of the measurement model, and structural equation modeling was applied to test hypotheses. Four different fit indices were utilized to assess model fit: non-normed fit index (NNFI), comparative fit index (CFI), incremental fit index (IFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). CFA was conducted using LISREL 8.80. After removing some items that possessed low factor loadings and/or large standardized residuals, the final model resulted in satisfactory fit to the data: $\chi^2 = 453.54$, $df = 160$, $p = .000$, NNFI = .98; CFI = .99, IFI = .99; RMSEA = .068. All factor loadings were greater than the recommended .40 cutoff.

As indicated in Tables 2, the CR values were greater than .60 and the AVEs were above .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Also, the AVEs were greater than the squared multiple correlation. These results confirmed satisfactory convergent validity and discriminant validity. Table 2 shows the detailed re-

sults of a confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model. Table 3 shows correlation matrix with means and standard deviations.

Table 2.
CFA results

Factors and items	Factor loading	t-value
<i>Brand consciousness</i> ($\alpha = .89$; AVE = .71; CR = .91)		
2. The more expensive brands are usually my choice.	.87	- ^a
3. The higher the price of a product, the better its quality	.86	22.87
8. I am willing to pay higher prices for famous brands.	.90	25.05
10. I prefer to buy foreign brands than local brands.	.73	17.32
<i>Materialism</i> ($\alpha = .89$; AVE = .61; CR = .91)		
1. How do you feel about people who own expensive homes, car and clothes? (Do not admire - Greatly admire)	.81	-
3. How do you feel about owning things that impress people? (Makes me uncomfortable - Makes me feel great)	.83	19.35
4. How do you feel about acquiring material possessions as an achievement in life? (Not important - Very important)	.89	21.41
6. Would your life be any better if you owned certain things that you don't have now? (Not any better - Much better)	.66	14.32
10. What do the things you own say about how well you are doing in life? (Very little - A great deal)	.77	17.35
14. How do you feel about the things you won? (No all that important - Very important)	.73	16.17
<i>Social comparison</i> ($\alpha = .94$; AVE = .90; CR = .95)		
3. I pay attention to what brands my favorite movie stars and pop singers are using.	.95	-
4. I pay attention to the fashion styles of celebrities.	.95	37.79
<i>Fashion innovativeness</i> ($\alpha = .92$; AVE = .82; CR = .93)		
1. In general, I am the last in my circle of friends to know the names of the latest new fashions.	.92	-
2. In general, I am among the last in my circle of friends to buy a new fashion item when it appears.	.94	30.69
3. Compared to my friends, I own few new fashion items.	.84	24.69

Factors and items	Factor loading	t-value
<i>Fashion involvement</i> ($\alpha = .95$; AVE = .82; CR = .96)		
1. Fashion goods matter to me.	.89	-
2. My friends turn to me for advice on fashion goods.	.91	27.90
3. I usually have one or more of the very latest style fashion goods.	.95	31.30
4. I like to shop for fashion goods.	.88	26.03
5. I usually dress for fashion not comfort.	.90	27.10

Note: AVE = average variance extracted; CR: composite reliability
^aSet to 1 therefore no t-values are given.

Table 3.
Means, standard deviations, and correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Brand consciousness	3.67	1.39	1				
2. Materialism	3.91	1.27	.58	1			
3. Social comparison	3.27	1.81	.65	.56	1		
4. Fashion innovativeness	3.56	1.55	-.04	.00	.04	1	
5. Fashion involvement	3.55	1.64	.67	.65	.78	.19	1

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The overall model fit was satisfactory ($\chi^2 = 1164.67$, $df = 283$, $p = .000$, NNFI = .97; CFI = .97, IFI = .97; RMSEA = .088). As shown in Figure 2, the effects of brand consciousness ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$), materialism ($\beta = .24$, $p < .001$), fashion innovativeness ($\beta = .18$, $p < .001$), and fashion involvement ($\beta = .42$, $p < .001$) on attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods were positive and significant. Thus, H1, H2, H4, and H5 were confirmed. As proposed, the effect of social comparison on attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods was not significant, supporting H3. In addition, a positive significant relationship between attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods and purchase intent ($\beta = .79$, $p < .001$) was existed, confirming H6 (See Figure 2).

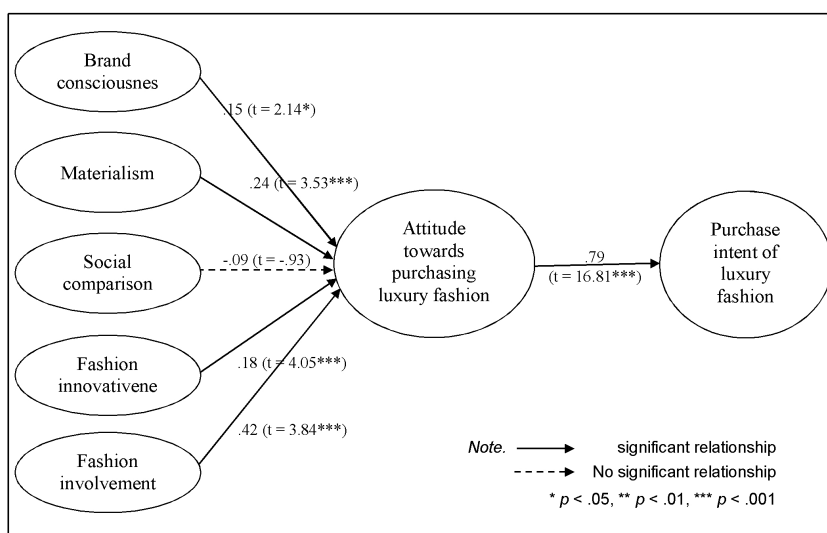


Figure 2.
Standardized path coefficients

The Chinese data in Zhang and Kim (2013) were analyzed using Regression owing to the small sample size. To make sure the methods utilized to analyze the data did not affect the comparisons of the two sets of data (Chinese data vs. U.S. data), the U.S. data were re-analyzed using Regression and the same results were achieved. This re-analysis confirmed that a different data analysis method utilized in this study would not be a matter to consider.

Conclusions and implications

The aim of this study was to examine the key factors that affect U.S. consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods and purchase intent and to investigate if similarities and differences exist between two culturally dissimilar countries (U.S. vs. China) as to the factors that affect consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods and purchase intent as a follow-up study of Zhang and Kim (2013). In accordance with the current luxury market situation of the emerging middle class consumers, over 50% of the Chinese respondents in Zhang and Kim (2013) were categorized as middle class. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the middle 60% of U.S. household incomes range between \$20,600 and \$102,000 (USA Today, 2013); approximately 66% of the U.S. respondents in this study were within that range. Thus, the results of the two sets of data were comparable and provided insightful implications to academics and practitioners.

In the current study, brand consciousness and fashion innovativeness were significant factors that affect U.S. consumers' attitude towards luxury fashion goods. These results were consistent with the find-

ings of Zhang and Kim (2013). Despite regional and cultural boundaries, brand consciousness and fashion innovativeness were reliable factors which influence consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods. The meaning of luxury fashion brands cannot be disconnected from upscale, high-price, prestige, reputation, and rarity (e.g., Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012). The obvious implication is that brand name, image, reputation, and uniqueness play an important role in luxury consumers' purchasing behaviors. In any culture, consumers are willing to pay a premium for a luxury brand because of the name of the brand and exclusivity. In this sense, it is very important for luxury fashion retailers to create/maintain widespread recognition of the brand and to carefully monitor the degree of diffusion to be successful in the global luxury market. High-end brand image is not enough to attract luxury consumers worldwide. Luxury brands lose their character when they are over diffused (Dubois & Paternault, 1995). To create exclusive limited edition seasonally or yearly would be an idea to avoid this issue.

Materialism was a significant factor which affects U.S. consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods. However, as expected, social comparison did not have a significant effect on U.S. consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods. With regards to the Chinese consumer data, the relationship between materialism and attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods was marginally significant. However, the relationship between social comparison and attitude was significant. The significant dissimilar effects of materialism and social comparison between the U.S. consumers and the Chinese consumers can be understood based on the Markus and Kitayama's theory of independent and interdependent self-construals. Previous research indicated that materialism is associated with an individualistic culture which emphasizes independent self-concept (Liao & Wang, 2009; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, in an interdependent self-construal culture, face plays a crucial role in affecting consumers' luxury fashion consumption. Chinese consumers are interested in purchasing luxury fashion goods in interpersonal relationships. They seem to purchase luxury fashion goods not for individual hedonic values but for social status and reputation. The non-significant effect of fashion involvement on Chinese consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods supports this perception. In addition, they compare themselves with others in higher social status and consume luxury fashion goods as a token to belong to the class (Chen & Sethi, 2007; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). In contrast, U.S. luxury consumers are highly involved with fashion and purchase luxury fashion goods based on personal preferences and put more meanings on the possessions of prestige goods than social reputation and status.

Overall, the findings of the study support Markus and Kitayama's theory of independent and interdependent self-construals. Important cultural differences were identified between the two countries when purchasing luxury fashion goods. In comparing factors affecting consumers' attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods, we found that the U.S. consumers' motivating attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods was associated more with personal needs, knowledge, and self-directed pleasure, while Chinese consumers' were closely related to social status and social influence. These results suggest that luxury fashion goods marketers should make a strong effort to understand the similarities and differences of consumer values in different cultures, such as attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors, to be successful in global business by better positioning their goods for different markets.

Despite the increasing advent of luxury studies in the field of retailing, little research has been done on a cross-cultural basis. This study examined two of the world's largest luxury goods markets in culturally different countries. The findings of the current study were greatly inconsistent with Zhang and Kim's Chinese study. The differences provide vital implications to luxury fashion retailers by showing that one size does not fit all and one strategy does not fit all markets. Luxury fashion retailers should seriously consider consumers' unique characteristics associated with luxury consumption in each culture to better answer and satisfy consumers' needs.

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