



Mediating Impact of Fashion Consciousness on the Cosmopolitanism and Fashion-Oriented Lifestyle of Young Fashion Consumers in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The importance of knowledge about consumer behaviour in the fashion industry is felt now more than any other time. Fashion oriented lifestyle is identified as a significant aspects of consumer behaviour in the fashion industry. Fashion consciousness is also a central aspect of the self of the fashion consumer; and cosmopolitanism has also become an integral part of social systems. Thus, cosmopolitanism may become one of the key determinants of fashion consciousness in the world at large despite the geographical proximity and may consequently influence the fashion-oriented lifestyle. Although scholars have paid their attention around this area, none of them has studied the relationship among fashion consciousness, cosmopolitanism and fashion-oriented life style at once. Addressing such gap in the literature, this study aims to examine the mediating impact of fashion consciousness on cosmopolitanism and fashion oriented lifestyle of young consumers in the fashion industry in Sri Lanka. A survey is carried out with 458 structured questionnaires taking the individual young consumers of fashion products in Sri Lanka as the unit of analysis. The result uncovers that the fashion consciousness fully mediates the relationship between cosmopolitanism and fashion-oriented lifestyle of the young fashion consumers. Finally the paper makes important implications and suggestions for practitioners as well as for academics in the field of fashion and fashion related products.

Keywords: Cosmopolitanism; Fashion Consciousness; Fashion Oriented Lifestyle

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1. Introduction

Fashion industry is one of the most progressing industries in the world today [1] and the global fashion market is valued at 3 trillion dollars and accounts for 2 percent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). While considering countries such as France, Italy, United Kingdom, United States and Japan as global fashion hubs in the world [2] Asian countries also highly been benefited by the fashion industry. For instance, the Sri-Lankan fashion industry is one of the main contributors to the national economy in terms of foreign income, national production and employment opportunities over the last ten years [3], [4].

Today fashion industry is highly competitive as ever before mainly due to the dynamics of consumers to adopt new fashions. Thus, companies should focus on analyzing and predicting fashion lifestyle of the consumers [1]. It has been found that a typical consumer does not make purchases solely for utilitarian purposes [5] but also to gain desirable social rewards [6], where a large number of consumers are willing to pay higher prices for fashionable goods with the "benefits" of status and prestige [7]. Thus, even though several lifestyle patterns are discussed in the literature [8] fashion oriented lifestyle is attached with the fashion products and is embedded with some attributes, namely, fashion oriented consumers are more concern on their appearance, they mainly buy latest designs, and consider dressing smartly as an important part of their life.

In considering the significance of fashion consumer lifestyle, it was implied that cosmopolitanism and consequently fashion consciousness have brought significant changes in consumers' lifestyles. The literature states that an important dimension of a person's lifestyle is their fashion consciousness [9] and consumers, who are driven by cultural changes, recognize suitable fashion that strategically fit with their lifestyles [10]. Further, some studies disclose that Chinese consumers were influenced by western values and had moved away from a collectivist orientation and consequently their concern on products might also be changed [11].

Fashion consciousness refers as "a person's degree of involvement with the styles or fashion of clothing", [12]. An individual does not have to be either a fashion opinion leader or a fashion innovator to be considered fashion conscious. "Rather, fashion consciousness relates to a person's interest in clothing and fashion and his appearance" [13], [14]. Owing to the dynamic nature of the fashion market, an individual must frequently re-evaluate himself and the meanings attached to the styles that he has adopted to remain current (e.g. [15]. Further, individuals with persistent product involvement will exhibit an interest in a particular product class, regardless of, whether they anticipate in making a purchase [16]. It is also noted that an individual can improve his or her self-esteem and acceptance by other people through the right choice of clothing [17]. Thus, fashion consciousness, is also a central aspect of the self of the fashion consumer and influence their lifestyle consequently affects purchase decisions [9]. Influence of fashion consciousness to the style consumption has been highlighted in the literature [18].

Cosmopolitanism, which refers as an adopting cultures, values, and lifestyle from other countries without abandoning one's own cultural values [19], [20], importantly shapes the consumption in the global arena through influencing consumer attitudes and values (Eg: [20], [21], [22], [23]. Some studies on culture reveal that cosmopolitanism has brought significant changes in consumers' lifestyles. For instance, the literature discloses that Chinese consumers were influenced by western values and had moved away from a collectivist orientation, [11]. At present, people's lifestyle activities including also the selection of products such as food, fashion and beverages are influenced by the continuous adoption of western lifestyle [24]. Many researchers have examined

acceptability of global culture and lifestyle among Indian consumers [eg: 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30]. This was more prominent among Indian youth where they exhibited high degree of acceptability of global culture and endorsed global brands, products, and lifestyle.

Scholars have paid the attention on exploring the association and/or influence of cosmopolitanism orientation and/on fashion consciousness. It is highlighted that fashion may seem more appropriately linked to cosmopolitanism than to nationalism [31]. This is further proven stating that cosmopolitanism enables fashion designers to use their awareness of cultural heritage for creative inspiration, enabling openness towards others and the negotiation of contradictory cultural experiences [32]. Existing knowledge also shows that global value and culture influence consumers' involvement with and choice of fashion clothing [33]. Also, cosmopolitanism has been identified as an antecedent to fashion clothing involvement, [34]. It is also been disclosed that fashion consciousness of the young educated generation in Sri Lanka is discriminated by their cosmopolitan orientation [35].

Cosmopolitanism, fashion consciousness and fashion oriented lifestyle are inter-connected as implied in some existing studies. It has been stated that consumers who are driven by cultural changes, recognize suitable fashion that strategically fit with their lifestyles [10]. Further, it is noted that global value and culture influence consumers' lifestyle with their choice of fashion products [33]. These fashion products, viz, clothing, accessories, and foot wear are known to have close association with self-identify and consumer lifestyle. Further it is noted that highly fashion involve consumers have a more positive attitude towards fashion-oriented lifestyles and have a higher tendency to buy luxury fashion brands [36]. The rationale behind this is that highly fashion conscious consumers are likely to express their status outwardly in their individual lifestyles.

Despite the significance of fashion oriented lifestyle and implications of fashion consciousness and cosmopolitanism in the fashion industry, the minimum attention of the scholars have been paid for comprehensive explicit investigation of the influence of cosmopolitanism and fashion consciousness on fashion oriented lifestyle in the fashion industry. As per the above summarized existing knowledge the mediating impact of fashion consciousness on the cosmopolitanism and consumers fashion oriented lifestyle is yet an explored knowledge. Addressing such gap, the purpose of this paper is to *examine the mediating impact of fashion consciousness on the cosmopolitanism and fashion oriented lifestyle in the fashion industry.*

Supporting the above discussed literature the following hypothesis is derived

H1: Fashion consciousness mediates the relationship between cosmopolitanism and fashion oriented lifestyle of the fashion consumers in Sri Lanka.

The conceptual framework of the study is given in Figure 1

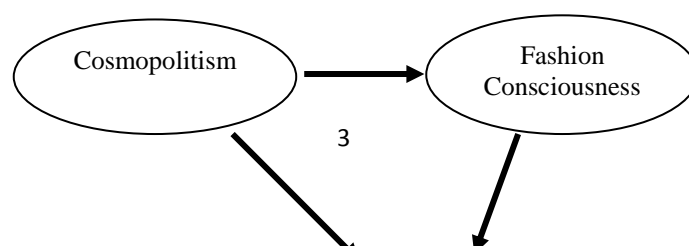


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

It is worth noting that most of the studies centered on cosmopolitanism and fashion related concepts are based upon developed countries reflecting the seldom of developing country based research. As the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of fashion consumers in developed countries are different in a significant manner from those in developing countries [37], exploring new insights in developing countries is in a need today. As a developing country Sri Lanka is a country with a unique and strong culture thus has its own beliefs, norms and attitudes which might shape consumers' behaviour [38]. Sri Lankan young consumers are exposed to many fashion trends and are identified to be adopting Western styles [35]. Therefore, Sri Lanka provides a suitable platform for investigating the cosmopolitanism and fashion consciousness on fashion oriented lifestyle of young generation in the fashion industry.

The paper is structured as follows. Section two of the paper discusses materials and methods used as the section one summarizes the relevant literature. Thereafter, the validation of measurement properties and analysis are presented. In the fourth section the findings are discussed linking with the literature. Finally the paper makes the concluding remarks with the clarification of theoretical contribution and suggests direction for future studies.

2. Material and Method

This is an explanatory study which aims to examine the mediating impact of fashion consciousness on the cosmopolitanism and fashion oriented lifestyle. As the youth market offers an important target market for fashion and apparel marketers [39], and they are more fashion concern than other age groups [40] young consumers of fashion related products (clothing, accessories, and footwear) in Sri Lanka is considered as the population of the study. Undergraduate and postgraduate university students were selected through judgmental sampling techniques as the proxy. 458 questionnaires were used. Table 1 presents the profile of respondents.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Classification	Frequency	Percent
Gender		

Male	206	45
Female	252	55
Age group		
18-24	192	42
25-34	142	31
35-40	124	27
Parents income level		
<25,000	83	18
25,000-50,000	110	24
50,001-100,000	124	27
101,000 – 200,000	77	17
>200,000	64	14

Measurement scales developed on a priori basis have been used in the study. [41], [12] and [42] are used for cosmopolitanism, fashion consciousness, and consumer fashion oriented lifestyle respectively. The proposed hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The data was analyzed using AMOS version 23 and maximum likelihood estimation. First examine common method bias through Shapiro-Wilk test, followed by examining the psychometric properties of the constructs through the measurement model analysis. Then, the structural model analysis was proceeded to test the hypotheses.

3. Results

3.1 Psychometric Properties

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was assessed for cosmopolitanism, fashion consciousness, and fashion oriented lifestyle in order to ensure the unidimensionality. Then, inter-item consistency and validity of the scales were ensured. The results of the CFA are summarized in Table 2, together with information on inter-item consistency and validity. Notes given below the Table 2 show all the required indicators. Content validity is ensured through the regions literature review in the relevant area.

Table 2: Summary of the Measurement Model Statistics

Construct	Statement	FL
Fashion	I am conscious of my appearance	0.75
Consciousness (FC)	Fashionable, attractive styling is very important to me. I think people should try to dress in style.	0.83 0.76
AVE (0.635), CR (0.802), $\alpha = 0.81$	I am conscious about how my appearance looks in the public.	0.82
Cosmopolitanism (COS)	In selecting fashion goods the production location does not affect my purchasing decision.	0.79
AVE (0.752), CR (0.81), $\alpha = 0.88$	In our world, no particular culture in this world is superior to that of others. I am interested in learning of new things in the world of arts and	0.88 0.87

	culture	
Consumer	I enjoy travelling to different countries	0.90
Fashion lifestyle	I often try the latest hairdo styles as they change	0.67
(CFL)	I usually pay attention to fashion information.	0.79
AVE (0.57),	Fashionable goods are very important to me.	0.73
CR (0.832),	In my leisure time I like to go shopping for fashion goods	0.72
$\alpha = 0.809$	Fashion goods have become one of the necessities in my life.	0.70

Notes: Fit indices $X^2 (458) = 456.43$, ($p < 0.01$), comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.97, goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.91, normed fit index (NFI) = 0.91, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.97, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.032, standardized root mean residual (SRMR) = 0.05; FL= factor loading; AVE= average variance extracted; CR=composite reliability; α = Cronbach's Alpha; X^2 = Chi-square.

As can be seen in the CFA results (Table 2), all the standardized factor loadings were significant ($p < 0.001$) and ranged from 0.67 to 0.90 that were far above the required value of 0.60, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for all constructs were exceeded threshold of 0.7, indicating acceptable inter-item consistency levels [43, 44]. AVE values of all constructs were above 0.5, excluding the minimum threshold value [45]. The results of the standardized factor loadings and AVE confirmed strong convergent validity of measures [46]. Discriminant validity was assessed using the procedure has been suggested by [47]. Hence, the square root of the AVE (as presented in Table 3 the upper diagonal) for each construct were greater than the correlation coefficient between that construct and all other construct and therefore, ensure the discriminant validity [47].

Table 3: Correlation matrix for Discriminant Validity

Construct	1	2	3
1. Fashion Consciousness	0.796		
2. Cosmopolitanism	0.035	0.867	
3. Consumer Lifestyle	0.268	0.01	0.757

Notes: Diagonal value are the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of individual construct. Values in italic are the correlation coefficients.

3.2 Structural Model Analysis

Two models were tested in SEM. Model 1 is the direct effect model and Model 2 is the mediation model. Results of both, Model 1 and Model 2, collectively been used for testing the hypothesis. The underlying assumptions for SEM were checked and satisfied. Those were independence of observations, adequate normality, no extreme outliers and multicollinearity, and sampling adequacy [45].

3.2.1 Model 1 (Direct effect model)

The Model 1 analyzes the direct impact of cosmopolitanism on fashion-oriented lifestyle, however the mediating variable of fashion consciousness is excluded. The Model 1 yields acceptable fit to the data: $X^2 / df = 1.45$, GFI = 0.938, RMSEA = 0.051, NFI = 0.928, CFI = 0.947, TLI = 0.927, AGFI = 0.892, and PNFI = 0.67 [48,

50,45,49,50,51]. Cosmopolitanism has a significant positive direct impact on fashion oriented lifestyle ($\beta = 0.154$, $p < 0.05$).

3.2.2 Model 2 (Mediation Model)

In Model 2, cosmopolitanism, fashion consciousness and fashion-oriented life style were the latent variables. As can be seen in the Figure 1, the direct effect of cosmopolitanism on fashion-oriented lifestyle, and the indirect effect of cosmopolitanism on fashion-oriented lifestyle through fashion consciousness were examined in Model 2.

The goodness-of-fit indices for the Model 2 were met: $X^2/df = 1.779$, GFI = 0.922, RMSEA = 0.04, NFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.937, TLI = 0.921, AGFI = 0.886, and PNFI = 0.72. Overall, the fit indices provided evidence of a reasonably good model fit.

The results of the SEM for Model 2 are displayed in Table 4. Cosmopolitanism has a positive but not significant impact on fashion oriented lifestyle of the young fashion consumers in Sri Lanka ($\beta = 0.14$, $p = 0.425$). Cosmopolitanism has a significant positive impact on the fashion consciousness of the young generation in Sri Lanka ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.01$). Fashion consciousness has a positive and statistically significant impact on the fashion oriented lifestyle of the young fashion consumers in Sri Lanka ($\beta = 0.488$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 4: SEM Results for Model 1 (Full Mediation)

Hypothesized path	Standardized path estimates
COS → FOLS	0.14
COS → FC	0.24***
FC → FOLS	0.488***

Note: ** $p < 0.001$; COS = cosmopolitanism, FC = fashion consciousness, and FOLS = fashion oriented lifestyle.

To establish the existence of mediation effect, four conditions should be satisfied [52] and meet in Model 1 and 2. Firstly, cosmopolitanism significantly influences the fashion oriented lifestyle (model 1). Secondly, fashion consciousness statistically significantly affects the fashion oriented lifestyle (model 2). Thirdly, cosmopolitanism significantly influences the fashion consciousness (model 2). Fourthly, the power of the cosmopolitanism in explaining the variance of the fashion oriented lifestyle should be weakening in strength or should be insignificant (mediation), after control for the mediator, fashion consciousness, [52]. The standardized beta in Model 1 (direct effect of cosmopolitanism on fashion-oriented lifestyle) was 0.154 ($p < 0.05$) and in Model 2, after including of fashion consciousness as a mediating variable it was not significant ($\beta = 0.14$, $p = 0.425$). Thus, fashion consciousness fully mediates the relationship between cosmopolitanism and fashion oriented lifestyle, and the hypothesis is supported at the 95% confidence level (model 2).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper is aimed for investigating the mediating impact of fashion consciousness on the relationship between cosmopolitanism and fashion oriented lifestyle of young fashion consumers in Sri Lanka. Using the direct (cosmopolitanism on fashion –oriented lifestyle) and indirect models (cosmopolitanism on fashion-oriented lifestyle through fashion consciousness) mediating impact of the fashion consciousness has been examined. The first model reflects that cosmopolitanism of the young fashion consumers in Sri Lanka significantly influence their

fashion oriented lifestyle. This finding is an addition to the existing knowledge on how openness to global cultural values would leads for lifestyle of the community. It enriches the current knowledge as scholars who investigate such relationship (eg: [18] [21], [27], [30], [33]) have not explicitly and empirically studied cosmopolitanism and fashion-oriented lifestyle. Instead, they disclose that high degree of acceptability of global culture may influence the acceptance of global products and lifestyle. Such implied influence of cosmopolitanism on fashion-oriented life style is empirically and comprehensively been investigated by the current study. Further, this study can be considered as the foremost investigation of influence of cosmopolitanism on fashion-oriented lifestyle done in the context of a developing country.

The study discloses that fashion consciousness fully mediates the influence made by cosmopolitanism on fashion-oriented lifestyle of the young fashion consumers in Sri Lanka. It reflects that Sri Lankan young fashion consumers would be more open to accept the western/global cultural values, called as cosmopolitanism; but the extent of its influence on their fashion-oriented lifestyle depends upon their fashion consciousness. It means that fashion consciousness of the young fashion consumers in Sri Lanka is more influencing the fashion lifestyle than their cosmopolitan orientation. This empirical and comprehensive investigation of mediating impact of fashion consciousness on the relationship between cosmopolitanism and fashion-oriented lifestyle of the young fashion consumers is the first explicit investigation; thus a paramount contribution to the existing knowledge in consumer behaviour in general and in fashion related knowledge in particular. Because, none of the previous published studies has explicitly and comprehensively investigated such mediating relationship.

Mediating impact of fashion consciousness means that cosmopolitanism influences the fashion consciousness and then fashion consciousness influence the fashion-oriented lifestyle. It further confirms the findings of [35] reflecting that cosmopolitan orientation discriminates the fashion consciousness of the young generation in Sri Lanka. Further the current study is in line with outcomes of the studies of [33,34], though none of such study specifically addressed the knowledge contributed by this study. The study of [36] note that highly fashion involve consumers have a more positive attitude towards fashion-oriented lifestyles and have a higher tendency to buy luxury fashion brands. It is been confirmed by this study with more empirical findings disclosing that fashion conscious consumers are more prone toward the fashion-oriented lifestyle.

In summary, this study not only adds new knowledge to the consumer behaviour in general and to the fashion related areas in particular, but also addresses the lack of research in the developing countries. Such findings and the conceptual framework can be applied to examine the same theoretical association in other similar industries for instance toys industry as well as in similar context (other developing countries). Testing such applicability would provide an interesting area for future researchers.

Findings also provide valuable insights for marketers, managers and for companies at large to successfully design and maintain their competitive strategies in the fashion product category. Findings can be used by retailers in the fashion category targeting Sri Lankan youngsters in selecting their styles, in deciding the varieties of the product ranges, frequency in changing designing, and in launching promotion campaigns. Also practitioners should focus on how favorable acceptance of others' cultural attributes should direct toward the fashion consciousness expecting lifestyle change in a way its favor the fashion product category. Owing the

significance of fashion industry in the world economy and market/economic boom in the Asian Countries more academic research is needed focusing on such region.

5. References

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