

Influences of Fashion Leadership, Preference for Exploratory Behavior, and Need for Cognition  
on Consumers' Use of Internal Information and Tolerance for Risk-Taking

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*Introduction.* Consumer Decision Process Model by Blackwell, Miniard, and Engel (2005) is a theoretical description of decision-making from need recognition to post-purchase satisfaction. The model “shows how different internal and external forces interact and affect how consumers think, evaluate, and act” (p.71). There is a long history of research showing that fashion leadership is an internal factor influencing individual consumer’s shopping behavior (e.g., Kim & Hong, 2011). In terms of fashion leadership, fashion leaders are the instigators of fashion change--the first to buy and wear new fashions (i.e., fashion innovators), persuade others to buy and wear new fashions (i.e., fashion opinion leaders) or carry out both roles (i.e., innovative communicators), while fashion followers wait to purchase until a style is at its peak of acceptance (Workman & Freeburg, 2009). Therefore, compared to fashion followers, fashion leaders may use internal information (i.e., knowledge and experience from memory) more because they probably have gained and stored more information from their own trial experiences as well as from various marketer-dominated information sources. Furthermore, fashion leaders are expected not to be afraid of taking risks because they are eager to find out about new products and take the initiative in trying them. *The purpose of this study* was to examine the influences of fashion leadership on consumers’ use of internal information and tolerance for risk-taking in apparel shopping. To examine the relationships, the current study includes two mediating variables: consumers’ preference for exploratory behavior (i.e., preference for investigating new brands/products, switching brands, and seeking information out of curiosity) and need for cognition (i.e., tendency to enjoy thinking). Hypotheses include: H1. Fashion leadership influences preference for exploratory behavior (H1a) and need for cognition (H1b); H2: Preference for exploratory behavior influences the tolerance for risk-taking; H3. Need for cognition influences the frequency of using internal information.

*Method.* A survey was conducted using a convenience sample of 351 US college students. Hirschman and Adcock's (1978) Measure of Fashion Innovativeness and Opinion Leadership was used to measure fashion leadership. Preference for exploratory behavior and tolerance for risk-taking were measured using scales by Raju (1980). Need for cognition was measured using a scale by Cacioppo, Petty, and Kao (1984). Use of internal information was measured by a single item adapted from the study by Dodd, Laverie, Wilcox, and Duhan (2005). Descriptive statistics were used to report means and standard deviations. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the hypotheses.

*Findings.* According to the Measure of Fashion Innovativeness and Opinion Leadership, participants were categorized in fashion leaders ( $n = 99$ ) and fashion followers ( $n = 252$ ). Compared to fashion followers, fashion leaders showed higher mean scores in preference for exploratory behavior ( $m = 37.35$  vs.  $27.54$ ), need for cognition ( $m = 61.49$  vs.  $58.87$ ), frequency

of using internal information ( $m = 3.74$  vs.  $3.35$ ), and tolerance of risk-taking ( $m = 22.97$  vs.  $19.14$ ). Reliability of all scales was acceptable. The fit of SEM model was acceptable after adjustments according to modification indices [ $\chi^2(5) = 10.570$ ;  $p = .061$ , GFI = .99, AGFI = .97, IFI = .98, CFI = .98, NFI = .96, RMSEA = .06).

*Discussion.* Results showed that fashion leaders (vs. fashion followers) had greater preference for exploratory behavior and need for cognition. Participants who had greater (vs. less) preference for exploratory behavior and need for cognition used internal information more frequently. Participants who had greater (vs. less) preference for exploratory behavior showed greater tolerance for risk-taking. Results indicate that use of internal information and tolerance of risk-taking were indirectly influenced by fashion leadership via preference for exploratory behavior and need for cognition. Fashion leaders, compared to fashion followers, may use their knowledge and previous experience more frequently and are willing to take more risks during apparel shopping. These behaviors are possibly because they (a) like to investigate new brands/products, switch brands, and seek information out of curiosity and (b) have greater tendency to enjoy thinking.

*Implications.* Results of the current study provide theoretical implications of the Consumer Decision Process Model by Blackwell *et al.* (2005). The study extends the current understanding of fashion leaders and explains their unique apparel shopping behavior using individual differences as internal forces. In the study, psychographic constructs of fashion leadership, preference for exploratory behavior, and need for cognition are combined to provide new insights into consumers' use of information sources and risk-taking behavior during apparel shopping. Results of this study may help marketers in predicting consumer reaction to advertisements and other marketing techniques. For example, it might be interesting to challenge the thinking of fashion leaders using advertisements with obscure meanings as a way of sustaining their attention. Presumably, the longer they pay attention to an advertisement, the more likely they will be to remember the information presented in it.

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