

A Cross Cultural Examination of “Off-Price” Fashion Shopping

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Abstract:

Purpose - The “off-price” retailing concept is defined as the presentation of limited inventories of products in a “disorganised” retail environment which provides an extra level of “challenge” to the shopping experience. Research has identified “off-price” shoppers as those who approach this challenging experience in a purposeful, task-driven way. This current research contributes new knowledge by testing the impact of antecedents (i.e. involvement) on the “off-price” shopper experience and the moderating role of national culture across two distinct cultural groups.

Design/methodology/approach - Data were collected via a self-completed, anonymous, online survey provided to a sample of Australian ($n = 355$) and Chinese ($n = 400$) shoppers who were identified as regularly shopping for fashion in “off-price” retail stores.

Findings - The research found that the consumer's level of involvement positively impacted their “off-price” shopping experience in terms of effort/mastery and pride. However, in contrast to current knowledge of East-Asian and Western cultural variances, limited moderation effects were identified. All national cultural dimensions interacted with product involvement in influencing consumer pride. Whilst product involvement decreased with pride in higher individualism, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and indulgence cultures, these reversed in cultures with a lower score in these four dimensions.

Originality/value - This new research extends knowledge of “off-price” shopper behaviour by testing the levels of involvement and experience across two distinctly different cultures – East Asian and Western – and challenges existing knowledge of cultural variances. Further, the work extends the use of achievement goal theory as an approach to delineate these consumers from other cohorts.

Keywords: Off-price shopping | retail | fashion | cultural differences | East Asian consumers | Western consumers | Achievement goal theory

Article:

Introduction

“Off-price” retailing has expanded globally over the past several decades (Hess and Ring, 2014). Industry sources indicate “off-price” retailers have fared particularly well in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and have been known to thrive in times of market uncertainty (The Fashion Law, 2021). Today, “off-price” retail stores compete alongside full-price retailers and have become an important offering in shopping malls around the world (Bolton and Shankar, 2018). Brands such as Ross, Burlington, Marshalls, TJ Maxx and HULA Warehouse have expanded across North America, United Kingdom, Europe and China (Khouja *et al.*, 2020). Pureplay “off-price” retailers such as Bluefly, 6 p.m., Stein Mart and Overstock.com have penetrated the constantly growing online channel. Even traditional retailers have developed their own brands to compete against this emerging retail concept, such as Nordstrom “Rack” and Neiman Marcus’ “Last Call” (Panchamgam, 2011). Despite the growing popularity of this retail format globally, research has only recently started to investigate consumption behaviours in this context (Hess and Ring, 2014). The generation of such knowledge is important for both researchers and retail managers, enabling them to gain deeper insights into “off-price” shopper behaviours, experiences and responses to marketing tactics.

Researchers regularly seek to identify, define and measure consumer cohorts. Segmenting shoppers into distinct groups enables retailers to more effectively create offers and experiences that better connect with such segments (Lim *et al.*, 2013; Bockholdt *et al.*, 2020). Recent research has conceptualised and defined the “off-price” shopper, through an achievement goal theory lens (see O'Donnell *et al.*, 2016; Mortimer *et al.*, 2018). It is offered that such shoppers are attracted to the “off-price” retail format (Hess and Ring, 2014) and consider the experience of “off-price” shopping a competitive activity (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2016). These shoppers experience increased self-esteem when they believe they have outperformed other shoppers to secure products at heavily reduced prices. They appear motivated by the “thrill of the hunt”, the uncertainty and ambiguity of the “off-price” shopping experience in which apparel products are only available in limited quantities and presented in a “disorganised” and often chaotic manner (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012).

“Off-price” shoppers invest considerable effort, mastery and expertise in their shopping efforts; hence, they may be more highly involved in their consumption experiences (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2016). Consumer involvement has been shown to influence several attitudinal and behavioural outcomes, including search behaviour and information processing (Broderick, 2007; Mantel and Kardes, 1999). As such the “off-price” shopper's level of involvement may impact the amount of effort and mastery they exert, in addition to the pride they experience and the knowledge they wish to share with others (Tigert *et al.*, 1980). Further, whilst earlier research has investigated the “outcomes” (i.e. satisfaction, re-purchase intentions) of these shopping experiences (Mortimer *et al.*, 2018), “antecedents” such as the level of involvement, that might impact the experience, have not been examined.

In relation to cultural variation in consumption, extant literature indicates inconsistent and at times conflicting evidence. Research examining consumer innovation adoption found

cultural differences existed with respect to uncertainty avoidance, which may affect risk perceptions and fashion innovation (Jarvenpaa *et al.*, 1999; Rohrmann and Chen, 1999). Lee *et al.* (2007) analyses of fashion websites found Korean sites tended to provide group-oriented content designed to resonate with collectivist cultures, whereas North American sites illustrated individualistic content. Predominantly, the level of fashion involvement has been found to vary between East-Asian and Western cultures (Lang *et al.*, 2019; Kim and Zhang, 2015). However, in contrast, Choi and Geistfeld (2004) found overall behavioral mechanism underlying fashion choice was similar for East-Asian (Korean) and Western (American) consumers. O'Cass and Siahtiri (2013, 2014) found the level of consumerism of Chinese young adult consumers, had shifted from collectivism to more individual, fashion conscious, status-orientated consumption tendencies, more consistent with Western cultures. Wu and colleagues (2015) found relatively few differences in fashion purchasing behaviour, when comparing Taiwanese and British consumers. These contradictions in the literature provide an important basis from which to examine whether cross-cultural differences exist in the “off-price” fashion context. As fashion consumption research in East-Asian markets continues to emerge (Lee and Huang, 2020; Das and Jebarajakirthy, 2020), such an examination of the moderating effect of national culture may explain underlying systematic differences in “off-price” shopper involvement (Shankarmahesh *et al.*, 2003).

The current research offers several contributions. Firstly, an examination of the “off-price” shopper experience across specifically East-Asian (Chinese) and Western (Australian) cultures increases the reliability and explanatory power of the concept and furthers knowledge of East-Asian consumption (Lee and Huang, 2020). This extension across national cultures aims to detect if variations in “off-price” shoppers' behaviours exist, enabling retailers to adapt marketing strategies accordingly. Secondly, whilst consumer involvement has been used to explain the differences in the degree of both mental and physical effort a consumer is willing to devote to consumption-related activities (Broderick, 2007; Laaksonen, 1994), it has not yet been tested as an antecedent to “off-price” shopping behaviour.

Theoretically, Hofstede's (1980) national cultural dimensions are widely accepted and have been used by marketing researchers to compare consumption behaviours (Steenkamp *et al.*, 1999), thus providing an appropriate theoretical lens through which to examine such “off-price” consumption behaviours in an international setting (Soares *et al.*, 2007; Nieves-Rodriguez *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, whilst achievement goal theory (Nicholls, 1992) has been employed across education, sports psychology and management literature (Higgins, 2006; King and Watkins, 2012), this current research applies this theory to explain how the “off-price” shoppers' level of involvement impacts their experiences, overall satisfaction and re-purchase intentions. For academics, such cross-cultural research will aid in understanding the generalisability of these theories in such settings (Durvasula *et al.*, 1993; Broderick, 2007), whilst offering retailers deeper insights into their target customers. Accordingly, the current study seeks to expand knowledge of this shopper type and address these research gaps.

Conceptual and theoretical development

The “off-price” shopper differs from other shopper cohorts in terms of their consumption experiences and behaviours. Compared with “compulsive” shoppers (Faber and O'Guinn, 1992), “off-price” shoppers do not feel obligated to purchase; instead, when a shopping trip results in disappointment, they are able to mitigate this dissonance as “training” for their next trip (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2016). Whilst “budget” shoppers seek out bargains due to financial need

(Bardhi and Arnould, 2005), the “off-price” shopper's goals are achieved when they “*save the most*” (off their favourite brands) rather than “*spend the least*” (on a less suitable brand) (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2016). Unlike “recreational” shoppers (Prus and Dawson, 1991) who seek the social elements that “shopping with others” brings (Borges *et al.*, 2010), research finds “off-price” shoppers undertake shopping with single-minded determination, preferring to shop solo. Finally, unlike Arnold and Reynolds' (2003) “hedonic” shopper, “off-price” shoppers are not drawn to the excitement of shopping, instead approaching the task in a purposeful way.

Achievement goal theory can explain why an individual's level of involvement can impact their consumption experiences, level of satisfaction, and repeat behaviours. Consider an athlete, highly involved in their sport, seeking to attain a personal best (i.e. being goal focussed). The higher the involvement, the more an athlete will display effort/mastery, experience pride and a willingness to share successes – which leads to a satisfactory performance and an intention to compete again. In a consumption setting, involvement has been shown to influence several attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, including search behaviour and information processing (Celsi and Olson, 1988; Mantel and Kardes, 1999). Consumption, education and sports psychology literature have consistently shown, through achievement goal theory, that higher involvement leads to positive outcomes (attitudes, behaviours), and that “high-involvement” individuals are more likely to invest more time, energy and resources into pursuing goals. The attainment of those goals then generates overall satisfaction, and motivates repeated behaviours (Park and Lee, 2008; Spray *et al.*, 2006; Webber *et al.*, 2013). Simply put, the more involved in a task a person is, the more likely they will experience positive outcomes (sense of mastery, pride and willingness to share knowledge), as they pursue goals (to locate a desired brand at an “off-price” retailer).

We employ the tenets of achievement goal theory to explain how the attainment of “goals” differentiates the “off-price” shopper from previously recognised cohorts. The theory proposes that goals can be categorised in three ways: *task-orientated*, *ego-oriented* and *social-approval oriented* goals (Maehr and Zusho, 2009). Task-oriented goals are attained when the “off-price” shopper invests effort and displays mastery to locate a desired product in a retail store, where limited ranges of apparel products are displayed in an almost disorganised manner. Ego-oriented goals are attained through “self-reflective” judgements of the “off-price” shopper's own capabilities. The ego-oriented goals result in feelings of pride or a “sense of winning” over other shoppers or even the “off-price” retailer (Weigel *et al.*, 1999). Finally, social-approval-orientated goals are attained when others recognise the skills and knowledge “off-price” shoppers have accumulated and that are demonstrated when they share such knowledge. Naturally, the achievement of those goals cultivates the “off-price” shoppers' sense of satisfaction, which encourages repeat purchase behaviours. Simply put, off-price shoppers are motivated to complete shopping-related goals and are satisfied by their achievement.

Finally, cultural limitations have been identified in the conceptual development and measurement of the “off-price” shopping experience. As noted above, despite inconsistencies and contradictions within the literature, previous research has identified that cultural values can vary, suggesting a shopper's national culture may impact their consumption behaviour (Soares *et al.*, 2007; Zhang *et al.*, 2008). In response to calls for greater non-Westernised, East-Asian research (Das and Jebarajakirthy, 2020), and to test whether national culture moderates the relationship between involvement and the “off-price” shopping experience, the current study seeks to improve the generalisability of “off-price” shopping across two distinct cultures – Australia and China. Sociologists have long argued that a significant amount of variation in

consumption behaviours can be attributable to culture (Steenkamp *et al.*, 1999; Zaichkowsky and Sood, 1989). Although earlier literature has recognised the potential influence of cultural intermediaries on involvement (Bloch and Richins, 1983), the relationship between culture and involvement remains largely unexplored (Coulter *et al.*, 2003; Broderick, 2007), a further gap this current research seeks to overcome.

Nationality remains a viable proxy for culture, as members of a society share an understanding of institutional systems, bonds and identity (Hofstede, 1983). Values are activated in response to cues in the environment, and shape individuals' interpretations of external stimuli as well as guide their behaviour (Brumbaugh, 2002). As values are shared by people within a culture, they can be used to distinguish psychological similarities or differences across cultures (Grunert and Muller, 1996). The moderating effect of national culture on individual difference variables (Shankarmahesh *et al.*, 2003) may be pertinent in explaining underlying systematic differences in consumer involvement, and outcomes of “off-price” shopping behaviours. Hofstede (1980) identifies several dimensions of national culture theoretically relevant to consumer involvement in “off-price” shopping: *individualism*, *uncertainty avoidance*, *long-term orientation* and *indulgence*. For example, in higher “uncertainty avoidance” cultures, individuals prefer clarity, certainty and less purchase risk, whereas in lower “uncertainty avoidance” cultures, individuals are more likely to be active information seekers who demonstrate innovative behaviours (De Mooij *et al.*, 2002). The expressive nature of fashion is an important aspect in cultures where consumerism, indulgence and status-seeking are a priority (Nieves-Rodriguez *et al.*, 2017). Fashion clothing has become a vehicle for conspicuous consumption for aspirational consumers (Eastman and Eastman, 2011) and is often employed to signal individualism and achievement to others (Husic and Cicic, 2009). Mindful of existing ambiguities relating to the effect of national culture on fashion consumption, we also draw upon Hofstede's cultural dimensions to test the moderating role of national culture between consumer involvement and the “off-price” shopping experience (Hofstede, 2007).

Literature review

Antecedents of “off-price” shopper behaviour. “Off-price” shoppers will invest significant effort, demonstrate mastery and expertise, and be more likely to share their consumption experiences when purchasing apparel products with which they are more highly involved (Mortimer *et al.*, 2018). Consumer studies regularly employ the enduring psychological construct of *involvement* (Menidjel *et al.*, 2019; Zaichkowsky, 1985, 1986) to understand consumers' behaviour related to purchasing products in a physical (Behe *et al.*, 2015), online (Sharma and Klein, 2020), and cross-cultural context (Isaacson *et al.*, 2018). Involvement is accepted as being at the centre of the “person–object relationship” (O'Cass, 2004) and one of the most predictive variables of purchase intention and behaviour (Kim and Ko, 2010). In this context, involvement is defined as the extent to which the shopper views the search, purchase and consumption of the product as central to their life (O'Cass, 2004), and thus will act as an antecedent or predictor of the shopping behaviour.

Consumer behaviour literature indicates several types of involvement (Mittal, 1989). To fully understand the nuances of “off-price” shopping involvement, we examine three; product involvement, purchase decision involvement, and advertising involvement (O'Cass, 2004). Encapsulating these varying involvement dimensions enables this work to develop a more holistic understanding of “off-price” shopper behaviour. Involvement can be considered to range from low to high (Bloch, 1986). It has been previously identified that “off-price” shoppers are

highly involved with discounted fashion products (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2016) and this deep involvement with the product motivates the “off-price” shopper to invest effort towards, and eventually gain mastery of, bargain shopping (Mortimer *et al.*, 2018). In contrast, such shoppers will limit effort when the level of involvement with the product is low. As Hayashi (1996) identified, individuals who are motivated by goals (Urda and Maehr, 1995) experience a sense of pride towards their important achievements. Finally, “off-price” shoppers also share knowledge of the focal product with others. Accordingly, the more involvement the shopper has with the focal product, the higher their willingness will be to share such knowledge about the product with others. Accordingly, we hypothesise:

H1. The “off-price” shopper's level of product involvement will positively impact their degree of (a) effort and mastery invested, (b) authentic pride experienced and (c) knowledge shared.

Whilst a consumer may be highly involved with the product, they may not necessarily be highly involved in the purchase of the product. Consider an adolescent receiving a new video game; they are likely more interested in the product than the purchase process. In contrast, the “off-price” shopper is highly engaged in the purchase decision-making process. It has been identified that these shoppers invest significant effort and time into the purchase decision-making process by visiting multiple retailers, both instore and online, comparing brands, engaging in research and searching through racks of clothing (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2016). We argue that an “off-price” shopper who is highly involved in the purchase process will invest a high degree of effort and mastery and experience pride and a willingness to share their expertise with others. It is hypothesised:

H2. The “off-price” shopper's level of purchase decision involvement will positively impact their degree of (a) effort and mastery invested, (b) authentic pride experienced and (c) knowledge shared.

A shopper may also be involved not only with the product of interest and with the purchase decision-making process but also in the marketing communications surrounding the product. Advertising involvement is defined as an individual-level, internal-state variable with motivational properties that are induced by a stimulus (Muehling *et al.*, 1993). For example, a shopper interested in a fashion brand may attend more frequently to an advertisement about the brand, and investigate ways to locate and purchase the brand (Taylor and Costello, 2017). A shopper with no interest in the product will demonstrate less involvement in the advertising stimulus. Advertising that stimulates the “off-price” shoppers' interest and awareness should motivate them to invest more effort and energy into seeking out and attaining the product (Wijaya, 2015). The attainment of a highly promoted product may also provide the shopper with an improved sense of pride and self-satisfaction, further encouraging them to share their experience with others. For example, after seeing the advertisement, the shopper seeks out and purchases the promoted brand, experiences a heightened level of self-esteem post-purchase, and accordingly informs their social groups via a social media post. With this in mind, we hypothesise:

H3. The “off-price” shopper's level of advertisement involvement will positively impact

their degree of (a) effort and mastery invested, (b) authentic pride experienced and (c) knowledge shared.

Consequences of “off-price” shopper behaviour. As offered previously, “off-price” shoppers pursue products and brands in a determined, effortful and task focussed way, exhibiting a highly evolved skill and mastery (Mortimer *et al.*, 2018). As the “off-price” shopper's task-related confidence increases, the determination demonstrated toward finding a focal product equally rises, leading to increased levels of satisfaction with the shopping experience (Barling and Beattie, 1983). Additionally, “off-price” shoppers feel a sense of authentic pride in completing the task well (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2016; Lazarus, 2000). Social cognitive theory explains how an “off-price” shopper's pride in achieving their goals connects to their overall satisfaction when shopping. The theory proposes that a person evaluates their present performance with their target goals. Their level of satisfaction is then accordingly impacted by the criteria they set themselves, and the significance of the goal (Zimmerman and Schunk, 2001). Recent research has demonstrated that shoppers who provide advice to others, and act pro-sociality, experience pride (Clark *et al.*, 2008; Zhang and Lee, 2014). This relationship is consistent with the findings relating to “off-price” shoppers (Mortimer *et al.*, 2018); that is, “off-price” shoppers will have a higher level of overall satisfaction when they experience pride in achieving goals that they value. Finally, “off-price” fashion shoppers consider themselves to be informed about fashion brands and ways to attain such brands. To achieve social approval goals, they wish to be identified as authorities by disclosing their “know-how” and tactics with social groups (Mortimer *et al.*, 2018). Social-approval-oriented goals are attained when an “off-price” shopper achieves social validation from others by having one's expertise acknowledged (Stuntz and Weiss, 2009). We argue that by being recognised as an expert and exchanging knowledge with others, “off-price” shoppers experience overall satisfaction. Based on the above evidence it is hypothesised:

H4. The “off-price” shopper's level of effort and mastery will have a positive impact on their overall satisfaction with the shopping experience.

H5. The “off-price” shopper's level of authentic pride will have a positive impact on their overall satisfaction with the shopping experience.

H6. The “off-price” shopper's level of knowledge will have a positive impact on their overall satisfaction with the shopping experience.

Finally, Seiders *et al.* (2005) have long confirmed the satisfaction–repurchase intention relationship. We propose that “off-price” shoppers' overall satisfaction with their shopping experience will motivate them to repurchase and re-visit retailers that offer such experiences. We suggest that as an outcome of the effort invested, sense of achievement attained, and the knowledge accrued and shared, “off-price” shoppers will experience overall satisfaction in the shopping experience (Verhoef, 2003). Hence, it is hypothesised:

H7. The “off-price” shopper's level of overall satisfaction with the shopping experience will have a positive impact on their intentions to repurchase brands.

Cross-cultural variations. Acknowledging inconsistent and at times conflicting evidence relating to the effect of national culture on fashion consumption, and in response to calls for more consumer research from non-Westernised, East-Asian regions, the current study seeks to improve the generalisability of the “off-price” shopping experience across two diverse regions – China and Australia. We adopt the consensus view that national-cultural variances exist and theoretically derive our moderation hypotheses accordingly (Hofstede, 2007; Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). There is support for exploring between-country cultural variations (Broderick, 2007; Steenkamp *et al.*, 1999; Su *et al.*, 2019; Gilboa and Mitchell, 2020). Previous work has demonstrated that despite globalisation, the cultural values of a region persist (de Mooij, 2004; Zhang *et al.*, 2008), suggesting a shopper's national culture may impact their consumption behaviour.

The expressive nature of fashion has become a vehicle for conspicuous consumption for aspirational consumers (Eastman and Eastman, 2011) and is often employed to signal an individual's status and achievement to others (Husic and Cicic, 2009). Despite a burgeoning middle class and an appetite for Western brands (Wu and DeLong, 2006; Dong and Tian, 2009), East-Asian (Chinese) consumers remain culturally different from Western (Australian) consumers (Hofstede, 2007; Das and Jebarajakirthy, 2020). Highly individualistic cultures, such as Australia, tend to be more innovative and fashion-forward (Taylor, 2005) in contrast to collectivist cultures, such as China. Explicit to fashion consumption, previous research has evidenced significant differences in “collectivist-individualist” behaviours between East-Asian and Western consumers (Lee *et al.*, 2007). East-Asian consumers are more concerned with interdependence and communal relationships, whereas Western consumers are more inclined to seek individualised, hedonic fashion purchases (Lee *et al.*, 2007). An important component of the “off-price” shopping experience is the “thrill of the hunt” and the uncertainty associated with shopping at “off-price” fashion discount retailers (Mortimer *et al.*, 2018). We argue that variance may also exist between high/low “uncertainty avoidance” cultures. Equally, the long-term orientation of East-Asian culture suggests consumption behaviours aligned to delayed gratification, as opposed to Western hedonic, instant gratification motives (Chen and Kim, 2013). Variances may be explained by these cultural differences, for example, a willingness to wait and patiently take time carefully browsing, versus immediate purchasing. Finally, indulgent fashion brands that convey social status and symbolic value present in Western consumers have tended to be traditionally avoided amongst Chinese consumers (Taylor *et al.*, 2009). As “off-price” shoppers aim to save the most on desired products, rather than spending the least on something less extravagant (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2016), behavioural differences may exist between high- and low-indulgence cultures.

As discussed earlier, Hofstede (1980) identified several dimensions of national culture that can be related to consumer involvement in fashion consumption: *individualism*, *uncertainty avoidance*, *long-term orientation* and *indulgence*. Based on the discussion above, we turn now to theorising how these dimensions of national culture may moderate the relationship between involvement and the “off-price” shopper's experience. Nationality remains a viable proxy for culture because members of a society share an understanding of the institutional systems, a bond of identity, and an experiential understanding of the world (Hofstede, 1983). Values are activated automatically in response to cues in the environment. Once activated, they shape individuals'

interpretations of external stimuli (i.e. product displays, purchase processes, advertising), and guide their behaviour (Brumbaugh, 2002). As values are shared by people within a culture, they can be used to characterise the psychological similarities within—and differences across—cultures (Grunert and Muller, 1996).

The moderating effect of national culture on individual differences may be pertinent in explaining underlying systematic differences in consumer involvement (Shankarmahesh *et al.*, 2003). Thus, consumers of one cultural group may be more highly involved in their consumption of “off-price” fashion than consumers from another cultural group due to systematic differences in national environments (Gatignon *et al.*, 1989), which in turn affects their consumption experience. The level of fashion *product involvement* has been demonstrated to vary between East-Asian and Western cultures, particularly fashion innovativeness and fashion involvement which are significant factors that affect Western consumers' attitude towards fashion products (Zhang and Kim, 2013; Kim and Zhang, 2015). Previous research indicated that materialism associated with fashion is associated with an individualistic culture which emphasises independent self-concept (Liao and Wang, 2009; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). The non-significant effect of fashion product involvement on Chinese consumers' attitude towards purchasing fashion goods supports this perception (Kim and Zhang, 2015). Hence, we expect to see national-cultural dimensions moderate the relationship between involvement and the “off-price” shopping experience. Additionally, the level of consumer *purchase involvement*, according to Schiffman *et al.* (2005), can be related to the search activity required. The presentation of “off-price” fashion in a disorganised manner requires a higher level of purchase involvement, which logically impacts on the amount of time, effort, sense of accomplishment (pride) and desire to share purchase outcomes with others (Parkvithee and Miranda, 2012). Involvement with the purchase can provoke higher concern (uncertainty) arising from substantial monetary outlay (indulgence, long-term orientations) and risk of social non-acceptance (individual-collectivist), which would impact of the overall experience (Parkvithee and Miranda, 2012). Finally, Gevorgyan and Manucharova (2015) identified that collectivistic advertisements triggered a greater number of positive responses amongst Chinese respondents, whereas individualistic appeals enhanced brand attitudes amongst American participants. Yet, analysis of 47,131 online advertisements indicated most firms consistently use individualist appeals, which would contrast with collectivist cultures (Li and colleagues, 2009), as the very nature of “off-price” fashion advertising promotes the individualist narrative, that is, limited stocks, final calls, one-off, and unique (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012; Panchamgam, 2011). Hence national-cultural dimensions are predicted to moderate the relationship between *advertising involvement* and the “off-price” shoppers' experience. Accordingly, it is hypothesised:

H8a. National cultural individualism moderates the effect of (a) product, (b) purchase and (c) advertising involvement on the “off-price” fashion shopper's (1) effort/mastery, (2) pride and (3) knowledge shared.

H8b. National cultural uncertainty avoidance moderates the effect of (a) product, (b) purchase and (c) advertising involvement on the “off-price” fashion shopper's (1) effort/mastery, (2) pride and (3) knowledge shared.

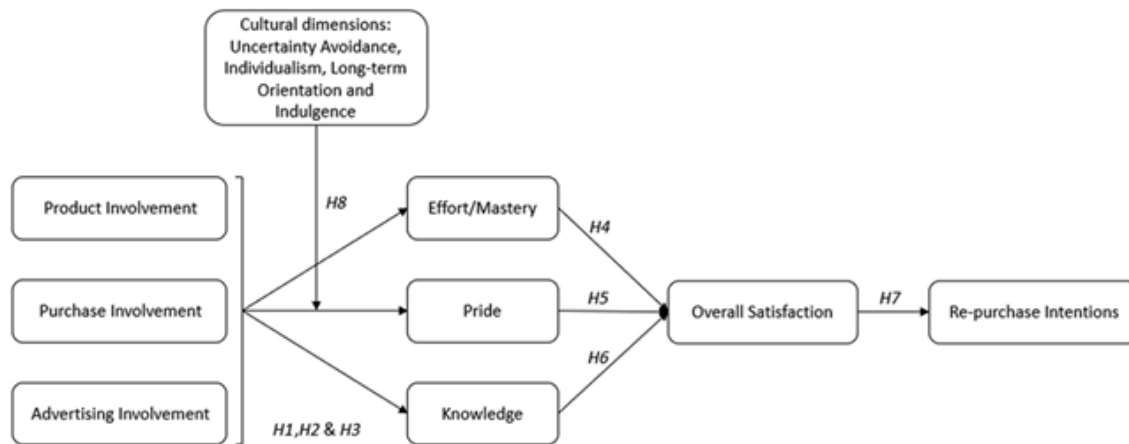
H8c. National cultural long-term orientation moderates the effect of (a) product, (b) purchase and (c) advertising involvement on the “off-price” fashion shopper's (1) effort/mastery, (2) pride and (3) knowledge shared.

H8d. National cultural indulgence moderates the effect of (a) product, (b) purchase and (c) advertising involvement on the “off-price” fashion shopper's (1) effort/mastery, (2) pride and (3) knowledge shared (Figure 1).

Method

Data were collected via an online survey, administered to respondents living in Australia and China between January and March 2021. Online surveys, combined with necessary controls (randomisation of items, integrity checks, screening questions) are widely accepted as a viable tool for data capture (Sue and Ritter, 2012). Respondents were identified as regularly shopping for fashion in “off-price” retail stores (i.e. T.J.Maxx, HULA Warehouse). As previously noted, Australia and China were chosen because previous research has identified varying levels of fashion involvement in both countries (Zhang and Kim, 2013; Kim and Zhang, 2015; Su and Tong, 2020), whilst being culturally different (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010).

Figure 1. Conceptual model



Sample and procedure. We employed research service providers in both Australia and China to access appropriate samples. Online surveys were sent to respondents identified as regularly shopping for fashion in “off-price” retail stores via *Qualtrics* (in Australia) and *Wenjuan* (in China). Respondents who completed the survey too quickly, responded repetitively/inconsistently or failed “integrity check” items were removed. After the removal of outliers, partially completed surveys and any respondents who failed to meet built-in “integrity checks”, a final sample of 735 responses (335 in Australia and 400 in China) was attained (Table 1). Participants had similar age and gender distribution ($p > 0.05$).

Measurements. We employed three elements of involvement: “product involvement”, “purchase decision involvement” and “advertising involvement” (O’Cass, 2004). To measure the experience of “off-price” shopping, we utilised Mortimer *et al.* (2018) dimensions of “effort/mastery”, “authentic pride” and “knowledge”. Overall purchase satisfaction was measured with Mattila and Wirtz’s (2001) scale, and the respondent’s intention to repurchase discounted fashion clothing was captured using Chan *et al.* (2015) scale. Each item was operationalised on a seven-point Likert-type scale, from (1) “Never/Strongly Disagree” to (7) “Very Frequently/Strongly Agree” (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

Hofstede's cultural dimensions are used as the measure of national cultures in the current study. Kirkman *et al.* (2006) conducted a comprehensive review of the studies which employed Hofstede cultural dimensions and scores and concluded that Hofstede national cultural scores have important effects on several relationships between different countries amongst multiple disciplines. The current researchers followed previous researchers' approach in using Hofstede's four cultural dimension scores directly (e.g. Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2004; Broderick, 2007; Steensma *et al.*, 2000). More specifically, the current study used the following national cultural scores (Hofstede, 2001): *individualism* (Australia – 90; China – 20), *uncertainty avoidance* (Australia – 51; China – 30), *long-term orientation* (Australia – 21; China – 87), and *indulgence* (Australia – 71; China – 24). Following Laitinen *et al.* (2016), interaction terms were added to the model to examine the moderating roles of the four national cultural dimensions.

Table 1.
Sample characteristics

Australian sample (<i>n</i> = 355)		Chinese sample (<i>n</i> = 400)	
Gender		Gender	
Male	163 (45.9%)	Male	180 (45.0%)
Female	192 (54.1%)	Female	220 (55.0%)
<i>Age</i>		<i>Age</i>	
18-24 years	54 (15.2%)	18-24 years	72 (18.0%)
25-35 years	81 (22.8%)	25-35 years	88 (22.0%)
36-45 years	63 (17.7%)	36-45 years	88 (22.0%)
46-55 years	48 (13.5%)	46-55 years	72 (18.0%)
56-65 years	36 (10.1%)	56-65 years	40 (10.0%)
65+ years	73 (29.6%)	65+ years	40 (10.0%)
<i>Annual Income (AUS\$)</i>		<i>Annual Income (RMB)</i>	
Less than \$30,000	77 (21.7%)	¥30,000–¥49,999	4 (1.0%)
\$30,001 – \$50,000	81 (22.8%)	¥50,000–¥99,999	69 (17.3%)
\$50,001 – \$70,000	69 (19.4%)	¥100,000–¥149,999	114 (28.5%)
\$70,001–\$90,000	36 (10.1%)	¥150,000–¥199,999	102 (25.5%)
\$90,001–\$110,000	28 (7.9%)	¥200,000–¥249,999	66 (16.5%)
\$110,001 – \$130,000	20 (5.6%)	¥250,000–¥299,999	22 (5.5%)
Over \$130,000	22 (6.2%)	¥300,000–¥399,999	13 (3.3%)
Prefer not to answer	22 (6.2%)	¥400,000 or more	4 (1.0%)

Analysis and results

A Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach was the main analytic tool using SmartPLS 3.3.2. Amongst PLS-SEM's multiple advantages such as hypotheses testing and complex modelling (Hair *et al.*, 2012, 2017), its ability to assess moderations using latent constructs is critical in the current study. Measurement reliability and validity were examined using the outer models whilst the hypotheses were tested using the inner models, following previous approaches (e.g. Hair *et al.*, 2017).

Measurement reliability and validity

As shown in Table 2, the measures for each of the constructs also show high reliabilities, Cronbach's Alpha (α) ranging from 0.84 to 0.95 and Composite Reliability (CR) ranging from 0.89 to 0.95, and much greater than the 0.70 (α) and 0.60 (CR) cut-off point respectively (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994; Hair *et al.*, 2006). Convergent validity was achieved as shown by path coefficients (ranging from 0.77 to 0.91) greater than 0.6 and average variance extracted (AVE ranging from 0.64 to 0.80) greater than 0.50 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013; Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was achieved through the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios (ranging from 0.27 to 0.89) lower than 0.90 (Hensler *et al.*, 2015).

Hypothesis testing

Following Hair *et al.* (2014), R^2 (greater than 0.25) and Q^2 (greater than 0) were employed to assess the predictive relevance of the model using bootstrapping (5,000 samples). As shown in Table 3, the model achieved very good predictive relevance, and explained 30% of the variation in effort/mastery, 28% for pride, 45% for knowledge, and 52% for both overall satisfaction and re-purchase intentions, with all Q^2 statistics greater than 0.

H1 to H7 testing results are also listed in Table 3. Product involvement was positively associated with knowledge (PC = 0.32, $t = 4.41$, $p < 0.001$) but negatively associated with pride (PC = -0.16, $t = 2.36$, $p < 0.01$) and was not related to effort/mastery ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, H1c was supported, H1a and H1b were rejected. Purchase decision involvement was positively associated with effort/mastery (PC = 0.33, $t = 4.16$, $p < 0.001$), pride (PC = 0.55, $t = 9.63$, $p < 0.001$), and knowledge (PC = 0.32, $t = 4.41$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, H2a, H2b and H2c were all supported. Advertising involvement was positively associated with effort/mastery (PC = 0.21, $t = 3.92$, $p < 0.001$), pride (PC = 0.14, $t = 2.84$, $p < 0.01$), and knowledge (PC = 0.26, $t = 4.82$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H3a, H3b and H3c were all supported. Whilst effort/mastery (PC = 0.20, $t = 4.26$, $p < 0.001$) and pride (PC = 0.59, $t = 10.00$, $p < 0.001$) were both positively associated with overall satisfaction, knowledge was not ($p > 0.05$). Lastly, overall satisfaction was positively associated with re-purchase intentions (PC = 0.72, $t = 23.30$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H4, H5 and H7 were supported, but H6 was rejected.

To test the moderating role of national culture on the relationships between involvement, effort/mastery, pride and knowledge (H8), the four Hofstede national cultural dimensions (*individualism*, *uncertainty avoidance*, *long-term orientation* and *indulgence*), and their interaction terms were added to the model. The results of the interaction terms and the R^2 of effort/mastery, pride and knowledge were presented in Table 4.

As shown in Table 4, national cultural dimensions do not moderate the relationship between involvement dimensions and the “off-price” shoppers' effort/mastery or knowledge ($p >$

0.05). However, national cultural dimensions did interact with product involvement in influencing “off-price” shoppers' pride, thus H8aa2, H8ba2, H8ca2, and H8da2 were supported. Specifically, in the country with higher individualism (Australia – 90, Figure A1a), uncertainty avoidance (Australia – 51, Figure A1c), long-term orientation (China – 87, Figure A1d), and indulgence (Australia – 71, Figure A1e), higher product involvement was associated with reduced pride, this relationship was reversed in the country with a lower score in these four dimensions (See Appendix - Moderation Effects).

Scale items	PC	<i>a</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>
<i>Product involvement</i>		0.89	0.92	0.69
I Find Fashion Clothing Avery Relevant Product In My Life	0.84			
Fashion Clothing Is Important To Me	0.86			
Fashion Clothing Means a lot to me	0.77			
I Would Say Fashion Clothing Is Central To My Identity	0.82			
I am very much involved in/with fashion clothing	0.85			
<i>Purchase Decision Involvement</i>		0.92	0.94	0.65
Making purchase decisions for fashion clothing is significant to me	0.80			
I think a lot about my choices when it comes to fashion clothing	0.79			
I place great value in making the right decision when it comes to fashion clothing	0.77			
Purchase decisions for fashion clothing are very important to me	0.82			
I attach great importance to purchasing fashion clothing	0.83			
I like being involved in making purchases of fashion clothing	0.79			
The purchase of fashion clothing is important to me	0.84			
Purchasing fashion clothing is significant to me	0.83			
<i>Advertising involvement</i>		0.94	0.95	0.80
I like to watch adverts about fashion clothing	0.90			
I pay a lot of attention to ads for fashion clothing	0.91			
Adverts about fashion clothing are relevant to me	0.89			
Adverts about fashion clothing are important to me	0.91			
Adverts about fashion clothing are interesting to me	0.87			

<i>Efforts/Mastery</i>	0.84	0.89	0.68
I will put in maximum effort in order to attain a discount on an exclusive fashion brand	0.78		
To secure a luxury item at a heavily reduced price, I am willing to shop for hours	0.81		
I have extensive experience in hunting for products that have been heavily discounted	0.85		
When I'm committed to finding a discounted fashion item	0.84		
<i>Pride</i>	0.95	0.90	0.70
I feel a sense of personal triumph when I find an expensive fashion product at a heavily reduced price	.81		
I feel the "thrill of victory" when I find a designer brand at a reduced price	0.86		
Finding a fashion item at a significant discount feel like a great shopping victory	0.86		
I experience a sense of pride when I purchase fashion clothing at heavily reduced prices	0.81		
<i>Knowledge</i>	0.93	0.94	0.74
I have a lot of knowledge about shopping for deluxe fashion brands at heavily reduced prices	0.85		
I'm an expert on finding deeply discounted designer brands	0.88		
I know exactly where to shop to find deep discounts on highly desired fashion brands	0.87		
My friends ask me about where to shop for exclusive fashion brands at discounted prices	0.85		
I know exactly when to shop to secure the biggest savings on highly desired fashion brands	0.86		
I am very good at locating fashion brands at highly discounted prices	0.84		
<i>Satisfaction</i>	0.86	0.90	0.65
I am satisfied with my decision to buy discounted fashion brands	0.82		
My choice to buy a reduced-price fashion brand was a wise one	0.78		

Table 2
Off-price fashion shopping

Scale items	PC	α	CR	AVE
I have truly enjoyed the experience of purchasing a luxury fashion brand at a special price	0.80			
Purchasing reduced-price fashion brands has been a good experience	0.80			
Overall, I am satisfied with my decision to purchase discounted fashion product	0.82			
<i>Repurchase intentions</i>		0.86	0.90	0.64
<i>Next time I go shopping, I would buy discounted fashion brands again</i>	0.79			
Buying reduced-priced fashion brands will fulfil my shopping requirements in the future	0.80			
In the foreseeable future, I will consider purchasing more discounted fashion brands	0.77			
In the future, I intend to keep shopping for discounted fashion	0.84			
When I go shopping again for fashion clothing, I will be looking for heavily discounted items	0.81			

Note(s): PC – Path coefficient; α - Cronbach's alpha; CR – composite reliability; AVE – average variance extracted

Table 3
H1-H7 testing results

	Hypotheses tests	PC	t -value	Note
H1a	Product Involvement →	0.07	0.80 ^{ns}	Reject
H1b	Product Involvement →	-0.16	2.36**	Reject (-)
H1c	Product Involvement →	0.32	4.41***	Accept
H2a	Purchase dec. involvement →	0.33	4.16***	Accept
H2b	Purchase dec. involvement →	0.55	9.63***	Accept
H2c	Purchase dec. involvement →	0.32	4.41*	Accept
H3a	Advertising Involvement →	0.21	3.92***	Accept
H3b	Advertising Involvement →	0.14	2.84**	Accept
H3c	Advertising Involvement →	0.26	4.82***	Accept
H4	Effort/mastery → Overall satisfaction	0.20	4.26***	Accept
H5	Pride → Overall satisfaction	0.59	16.00***	Accept
H6	Knowledge → Overall satisfaction	-0.03	0.65 ^{ns}	Reject
H7	Overall satisfaction → Re-purchase Intentions	0.72	23.30***	Accept

Model Statistics	R^2	Q^2
Effort/mastery	0.30	0.20
Pride	0.28	0.19
Knowledge	0.45	0.33
Overall satisfaction	0.52	0.34
Re-purchase intentions	0.52	0.33

Note(s): PC = Path coefficient; ns = not significant; * = significant at 0.05 level; ** = significant at 0.01 level; *** = significant at 0.001 level

Discussion

The current research extends our understanding of the “off-price” fashion shopping experience across Western (Australian) and East-Asian (Chinese) cultures, finding such experiences are present in both national cultures. The results indicate *product involvement* did not positively predict the “off-price” shopper's level effort/mastery or pride experienced for either Australian or Chinese consumers. Interestingly, these findings are contrary to what was predicted; deeper involvement with a product did not motivate the “off-price” shoppers to invest time and effort to gain mastery of bargain shopping. This suggests that if “off-price” fashion clothing is an important part of this shopper's life, then attaining an expensive fashion product at a discounted price may not necessarily be considered a great achievement. As such shoppers have already amassed significant knowledge of “off-price” brands, retailers, frequency of discounts and deliveries of inventory, they really do not need to invest significant effort or experience pride when shopping (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2016). Product involvement did however positively predict a willingness to share information with others, which aligns to earlier research that inferred “off-price” shoppers do regularly share and recount (via social media and in person) their shopping expeditions (Mortimer *et al.*, 2018).

In contrast, *purchase decision involvement* was found to positively predict a higher degree of effort and mastery for “off-price” shoppers, as well as a greater experience of pride and a willingness to share knowledge with others for both national cultures. These results illustrate the essence of the “off-price” shopping experience that involves the shopper comparing brands, engaging in search behaviour, and visiting multiple retailers. In this regard, “off-price” shoppers appear to be more involved in the “process” of shopping and less upon the product itself (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2016). Similarly, *advertising involvement* positively predicted “off-price” shoppers' effort and mastery invested, delivering authentic pride and shared knowledge for both the Australian and Chinese samples. In a similar manner to purchase decision involvement, advertising involvement also seems to concern the “process” of shopping; referring to advertising mediums and attending to regular discounting practices (Taylor and Costello, 2017; Wijaya, 2015).

Effort/mastery positively predicted the overall satisfaction with purchasing discounted fashion products for both Australian and Chinese samples, suggesting that such individuals are more likely to devote time and effort to actions for which they have a high self-efficacy

(Bandura, 1999). Thus, effort and mastery of this activity lead to satisfaction (Barling and Beattie, 1983). Similarly, *authentic pride* positively predicted overall satisfaction. “Off-price” shoppers feel pride in completing the shopping task well, which then leads to the experience of satisfaction. This can also be explained by achievement goal theory, as satisfaction arises from the attainment of an ego-oriented goal (Maehr and Nicholls, 1980). Interestingly, the sharing of *knowledge* was not found to predict overall satisfaction. It seems that the experience of expertise in “off-price” fashion shopping and the sharing of such knowledge do not lead to satisfaction; rather, satisfaction appears to be a product of effort/mastery and pride. This is contrary to what was expected under achievement goal theory, namely, that the sharing of expert knowledge would fulfil a social-approval-oriented goal; that is, the desire for social validation (Stuntz and Weiss, 2009). This may have been the case because whilst effort/mastery and pride are internal experiences, the sharing of knowledge and the social validation said to be achieved is external in its orientation and thus dependent on others (Verhoef, 2003).

In relation to national cultural variations in the “off-price” fashion shopping experience, limited moderation effects were identified. Only one of the path relationships concerning product involvement predicting pride differed between Australian and Chinese consumers - suggesting the main difference between the two cultures revolves around the construct of “pride”. As noted above, Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions proposes that Chinese consumers are less individualistic and less indulgent than Australian consumers; this perhaps explains their lesser experience of pride as a result of either their product or advertising involvement (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). The results indicate overall that the “off-price” shopper experience is less to be driven by how involved such shoppers are in the actual product (for both the Australian and Chinese samples), but rather purchase decision involvement (i.e. thinking a lot about and making the right purchase choices), and advertising involvement (i.e. paying a lot of attention to advertisements for fashion). In other words, it is engaging in the process of shopping that fuels the experience, not necessarily the product itself. In this regard, “off-price” shopping seems to be driven by consumers' need to conduct a lot of research first and think about making the correct purchase choices. It may be that there is a sense of risk-aversion at play here, or it could simply be that “off-price” shopping is very much about the “thrill of the hunt” - it is more about the journey and not necessarily the destination. This is an important contribution of this research. The research also shows that, notwithstanding the findings concerning pride, there are not a great number of differences between Australian and Chinese “off-price” shoppers.

Table 4
H8 Testing Results

Hypotheses tests	PC	<i>t</i> -value	<i>R</i> ²	Note
Model 1 - $R^2_{\text{Effort/Mastery}} = 0.31$				
H8aa1 Individualism * Product involvement → Effort/Mastery	-0.06	0.87 ^{ns}		Reject
H8ab1 Individualism * Purchase dec. involvement → Effort/Mastery	0.01	0.20 ^{ns}		Reject
H8ac1 Individualism * Advertising involvement → Effort/Mastery	-0.01	0.24 ^{ns}		Reject
Model 2 - $R^2_{\text{Pride}} = 0.37$				
H8aa2 Individualism * Product involvement → Pride	-0.18	2.56 ^{ns}		Accept
H8ab2 Individualism * Purchase dec. involvement → Pride	0.08	1.38 ^{ns}		Reject
H8ac3 Individualism * Advertising involvement → Pride	0.05	0.92 ^{ns}		Reject
Model 3 - $R^2_{\text{Knowledge}} = 0.45$				
H8aa3 Individualism * Product involvement → Knowledge	0.03	0.48 ^{ns}		Reject
H8ab3 Individualism * Purchase dec. involvement → Knowledge	-0.03	0.47 ^{ns}		Reject
H8ac3 Individualism * Advertising involvement → Knowledge	0.07	1.51 ^{ns}		Reject
Model 4 - $R^2_{\text{Effort/Mastery}} = 0.31$				
H8ba1 Uncertainty Avoidance * Product involvement → Effort/Mastery	-0.06	0.88 ^{ns}		Reject
H8bb1 Uncertainty Avoidance * Purchase dec. involvement → Effort/Mastery	0.01	0.20 ^{ns}		Reject
H8bc1 Uncertainty Avoidance * Advertising involvement → Effort/Mastery	-0.01	0.25 ^{ns}		Reject

Table 4 continued on next page

Model 5 - $R^2_{\text{Pride}} = 0.37$			
H8ba2 Uncertainty Avoidance * Product involvement → Pride	-0.17	2.56**	Accept
H8bb2 Uncertainty Avoidance * Purchase dec. involvement → Pride	0.07	1.19 ^{ns}	Reject
H8bc2 Uncertainty Avoidance * Advertising involvement → Pride	0.05	0.95 ^{ns}	Reject
Model 6 - $R^2_{\text{Knowledge}} = 0.45$			
H8ba3 Uncertainty Avoidance * Product involvement → Knowledge	0.03	0.48 ^{ns}	Reject
H8bb3 Uncertainty Avoidance * Purchase dec. involvement → Knowledge	-0.03	0.46 ^{ns}	Reject
H8bc3 Uncertainty Avoidance * Advertising involvement → Knowledge	0.07	1.51 ^{ns}	Reject
Model 7 - $R^2_{\text{Effort/Mastery}} = 0.31$			
H8ca1 Long-term orientation * Product involvement → Effort/Mastery	0.06	0.87 ^{ns}	Reject
H8cb1 Long-term orientation * Purchase dec. involvement → Effort/Mastery	-0.01	0.20 ^{ns}	Reject
H8cc1 Long-term orientation * Advertising involvement → Effort/Mastery	0.01	0.4 ^{ns}	Reject
Model 8 - $R^2_{\text{Pride}} = 0.36$			
H8ca2 Long-term orientation * Product involvement → Pride	0.17	2.53**	Accept
H8cb2 Long-term orientation * Purchase dec. involvement → Pride	-0.07	1.20 ^{ns}	Reject
H8cc2 Long-term orientation * Advertising involvement → Pride	-0.05	0.94 ^{ns}	Reject

Table 4 continued on next page

Model 9 - $R^2_{\text{Knowledge}} = 0.45$

H8ca3 Long-term orientation * Product involvement → Knowledge	-0.03	0.48 ^{ns}	Reject
H8cb3 Long-term orientation * Purchase dec. involvement → Knowledge	0.03	0.47 ^{ns}	Reject
H8cc3 Long-term orientation * Advertising involvement → Knowledge	-0.07	1.49 ^{ns}	Reject

Model 10 - $R^2_{\text{Effort/Mastery}} = 0.31$

H8da1 Indulgence * Product involvement → Effort/Mastery	-0.06	0.90 ^{ns}	Reject
H8db1 Indulgence * Purchase dec. involvement → Effort/Mastery	0.01	0.20 ^{ns}	Reject
H8dc1 Indulgence * Advertising involvement → Effort/Mastery	-0.01	0.93 ^{ns}	Reject

Model 11 - $R^2_{\text{Pride}} = 0.37$

H8da2 Indulgence * Product involvement → Pride	-0.18	2.26 ^{**}	Accept
H8db2 Indulgence * Purchase dec. involvement → Pride	0.08	1.37 ^{ns}	Reject
H8dc2 Indulgence * Advertising involvement → Pride	0.05	0.93 ^{ns}	Reject

Model 12 - $R^2_{\text{Knowledge}} = 0.45$

H8da3 Indulgence * Product involvement → Knowledge	0.03	0.48 ^{ns}	Reject
H8db3 Indulgence * Purchase dec. involvement → Knowledge	-0.03	0.47 ^{ns}	Reject
H8dc3 Indulgence * Advertising involvement → Knowledge	0.07	4.50 ^{ns}	Reject

Note(s): ◆ marginal significance level. PC = path coefficient; ns =not significant; * = significant at 0.05 level; ** = significant at 0.01 level; *** = significant at 0.001 level

Theoretical contributions

This research makes several important contributions to knowledge. Firstly, we note the often inconsistent and conflicting evidence relating to the effect of national culture on fashion consumption, and accordingly apply Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions to identify if variances exist (Hofstede, 2007). In contrast to current knowledge, this study indicates the main difference between the two cultures relates to the construct of “pride” – suggesting in the context of East-Asian and Western “off-price” fashion shoppers, few other national cultural differences exist. Such a finding supports the work of researchers who are now reporting young adult Chinese consumers have shifted from collectivism to more individual, fashion conscious, status-orientated consumers, and that relatively few cultural differences in fashion purchasing behaviour exist today (O'Cass and Siahtiri, 2013, 2014; Wu *et al.*, 2015). Secondly, this work confirms that Hofstede's cultural dimensions remain an appropriate lens through which to examine these fashion consumption behaviours in an international setting (Nieves-Rodriguez *et al.*, 2017; Lee *et al.*, 2007). Finally, our examination of the “off-price” shopper experience across two highly diverse cultures, Chinese and Australian, demonstrated off-price shopper behaviour in both markets, thereby increasing the reliability and explanatory power of the findings (Mortimer *et al.*, 2018).

Managerial implications

The positive and strong effects of *purchase decision* and *advertising involvement* for both Chinese and Australian “off-price” shoppers indicate this to be the primary driving force behind the experience. It is the *process* of purchase decision-making and the *process* referring to advertising mediums (online or instore) that leads to the shopper's positive experience (Taylor and Costello, 2017). As “off-price” shoppers are motivated by the “*thrill of the hunt*” (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2016), retailers might manipulate product assortments, store layouts, interior signage and social media posts to create interesting and more challenging experiences that increase the consumers' involvement, shopping effort, and accordingly, the level of overall satisfaction. The results provide direction for global fashion retailers to implement similar formats, even as a brand extension, for example, Nordstrom and Nordstrom Rack, to capitalise on “off-price” consumer behaviour, across both East-Asian and Western states. In contrast to earlier research (Lee *et al.*, 2007), we argue there is no longer a need to develop “group-oriented” advertising content for collectivist cultures, as the current study and others find relatively few cultural differences in fashion purchasing behaviour exist (O'Cass and Siahtiri, 2013, 2014; Wu *et al.*, 2015). The consistent results and strong effects of advertising involvement demonstrate its important role in forming the “off-price” experience for both Australian and Chinese consumers (Vieira, 2009). Based on these findings, fashion retailers should creatively develop their advertisements to stimulate “off-price” shoppers' interest by presenting images of their products in a context that infers varying assortments, variety-seeking behaviour, and uncertain availability.

Australian consumers are generally more likely to possess a positive attitude and be more open to express their pride and achievements, whereas Chinese consumers tend to control the gratification of their desires and may not place much emphasis on the affective outcome of their shopping experience (Lee *et al.*, 2007; Weisz *et al.*, 1984). Therefore, retailers need to creatively nuance their advertising strategies for different consumer markets. The practical implication of these results calls for fashion retailers' continued efforts in providing unique experiences and merchandising practices to differentiate themselves from competitors. With the continued expansion of “off-price” fashion retailers globally, it is important for fashion retailers to target

“off-price” shoppers, as they are not only a consumer group with expanding spending power but are also considered opinion leaders within their field (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012; Lim *et al.*, 2013).

Limitations and future research

As with any study, this research contains limitations that suggest potential avenues for further inquiry. First, the cross-sectional data provide only presents a snapshot of consumers from two countries, Australia and China. Future research may include conducting a large-scale survey measuring the “off-price” shopper experience over an extended period of time, and surveying consumers from other regions and countries. Second, this research was conducted within the context of fashion clothing. However, “off-price” shoppers may also be active in other product/service categories, such as travel, homewares, consumer electronics or sporting goods. Future research could investigate whether the antecedents included in this study would affect “off-price” shopping behaviour in these categories. Third, this research did not explore the “off-price” shopping experience online. As brick-and-mortar fashion clothing stores have different shopping environments than online stores, future research could investigate these consumer behaviors in an online retail context. Fourth, this research noted that “off-price” shopping appears driven by consumers' need to conduct significant research before making a purchase, suggesting a sense of risk-aversion. Examining risk tolerance/aversion may be a fruitful area of future enquiry. Finally, this study focussed on three types of consumer involvement (product, purchase decision and advertising involvement); future research could also examine other psychological constructs as the antecedents that relate to the “off-price” shopping experience. Untimely, as “off-price” retailing continues to grow as a significant and distinct retail format, understanding the behaviour of consumers attracted to this type of shopping is important for both marketing scholars and retail managers. Our research confirms Hofstede's cultural dimensions remain a useful lens to examine “off-price” shopper behaviour. In addition, this study finds “off-price” shoppers are a distinct consumer cohort across two diverse cultures, yet apart from “pride”, few national cultural differences exist, which has important implications for global retail brands operating “off-price” bricks and mortar as well as online stores.

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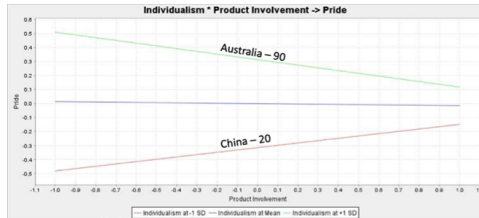
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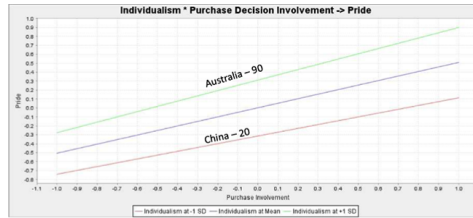
Appendix

Figure A1. Moderation effects



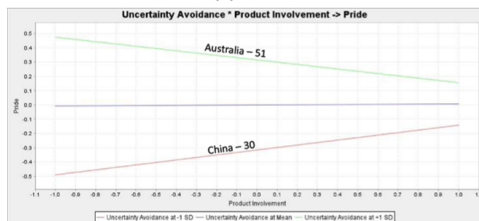
Individualism moderates the relationship between product involvement and pride

(a)



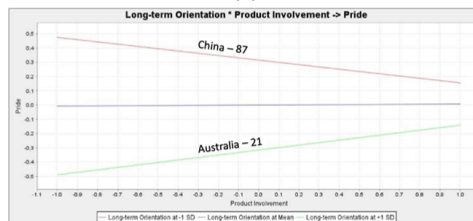
Individualism moderates the relationship between purchase decision involvement and pride (marginal significance)

(b)



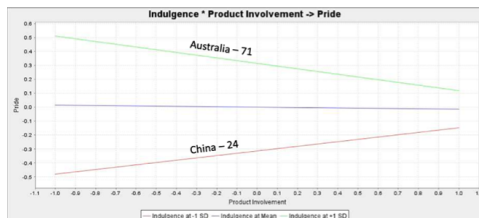
Uncertainty avoidance moderates the relationship between product involvement and pride

(c)



Long-term orientation moderates the relationship between product involvement and pride

(d)



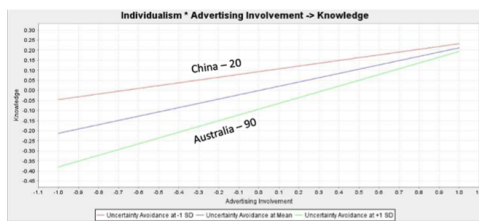
Indulgence moderates the relationship between product involvement and pride

(e)



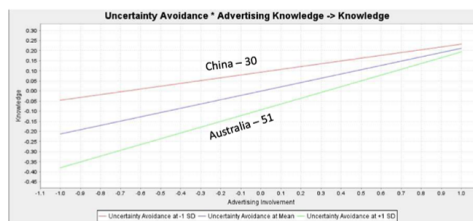
Indulgence moderates the relationship between purchase decision involvement and pride (marginal significance)

(f)



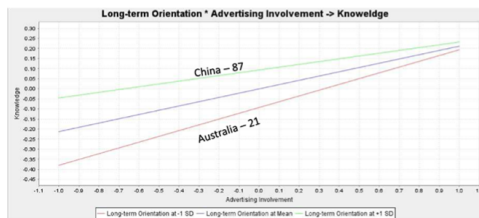
Individualism moderates the relationship between advertising involvement and knowledge

(g)



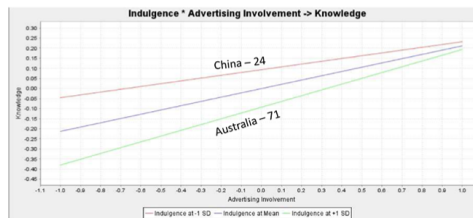
Uncertainty avoidance moderates the relationship between advertising involvement and knowledge

(h)



Long-term orientation moderates the relationship between advertising involvement and knowledge

(i)



Indulgence moderates the relationship between advertising involvement and knowledge

(j)