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Need for Uniqueness and Fashion Leadership: An Analysis of Age and Gender Differences.

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore age and gender differences for the need for uniqueness and fashion leadership.100 respondents were included in the study with the sub categories of four groups of males, females, adults and adolescents. Participants were probed on their attitude about need for uniqueness and fashion leadership. To study the difference between the groups descriptive statistics is conducted: Mean, Standard deviation and 2x2 ANOVA. Results shows the significant difference between both the groups under study. In both age groups, females are showing high on both the dependent variables, need for uniqueness and fashion leadership. The presentation of empirical research is followed by discussion highlighting the influence of need for uniqueness and fashion leadership among different age groups and gender which can be used in better understanding of consumer behavior.

Keywords: Need for uniqueness, Fashion leadership, adolescents, adults.

Paper type*:* Research paper

Introduction

Fashion is becoming extensively acknowledgeable phenomenon around the world day by day. Everyday fashion related industries are launching new styled products to the consumers. People discuss, exchange information and give suggestions to each other about new trends and styles introduced in the market which acts as a foremost mechanism of broadcasting fashion (Goldsmith & Clark, 2008). By acquiring and having different consumer goods is the main approach to satisfy their need for uniqueness (Lynn & Snyder, 2002). Further, being different from others, provoke consumers to adopt novel goods, defy convention, and to chase rare and extraordinary products. People who wish to be unique, prefer product which are visually attractive to them as well as to others (Bloch, Brunel & Arnold, 2003). It is also formulated that the fashionable items and the items which create uniqueness in fashion market is provided by fast fashion brands and designer fashion brands (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006). People

of luxury designer fashion brands choose to buy those particular brands which are helpful for them in labelling unique or different in the presence of others (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Okonkwo (2007), argued that, in the fashion industry, although, luxury fashion brand, past-fashion brand and fast fashion co-brands shares high degree of uniqueness as a common feature, still they are trying to focus on rare and novel type of uniqueness as they found that differentiation, exclusivity and innovation are closely associated with luxury designer fashion brands. Over and above, Lynn and Harris (1997), also reveal that consumer innovativeness and conformity are in positive relation with desire for unique consumer products at the general perception of marketplace.

Conceptual framework and research hypotheses

Fashion leadership

Fashion is a general concept used for the most favored and approved in the present scenario. Fashion leaders are those who have the propensity of buying up to the minute fashion products earlier than others and comes in the leading role of the acceptance of the recent introduced style (Kang & Lark-Poaps, 2010). Fashion leaders are eager in fashionable products and shows very optimistic view about the change in fashion (Bertrandias & Goldsmith, 2006). Lot of research have been done on large extent to study the fashion consumers focusing on fashion leaders, innovators, supporters and rejecters (Behling, 1992; Gutman & Mills, 1982), to understand the consumer motivations and emotional enhancement (Evans, 1989), and also to register their demographic and lifestyle profiles (Shim & Kotsiopulos, 1993). Evans (1989) stated fashion as newness which is concerned as the novel way to give the evidence of self to others by consumers who adopt fashion or new trends (Midgley & Wills, 1979). Fashion is a representation of the pursuit of personality in unique way which is acceptable in a socially manner (Sproles, 1985).

In respect to fashion leaders and fashion followers, self-concept was explored by some researchers (Goldsimth, Moore, & Beaudoin 1999). In comparison to fashion followers, fashion leaders are more indulgent, contemporary, formal, colorful, and excited. On the basis of such researches and studies while making appropriate marketing and retailing strategies, fashion leaders should be focused. Goldsimth et al. (1999) connected social values and fashion leadership in exploring the social values used as a motivation for fashion purchases. They found that people who are fashion conscious are similar in traits like values of fun, enjoyment,

and excitement in their lives. In order to become more and more aware of new trends and market environment, fashion leaders patronize retail stores and malls more frequently and spend extra time (Goldsmith & Flynn, 1992).

Need for uniqueness

Consumers' need for uniqueness is an individual's eagerness to be distinct from others by purchasing products, brands or articles that intensifies their self and social image uniquely (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001; Goldsmith & Clark, 2008). Consumer need for uniqueness can influence decision of choosing a product as it signifies the uniqueness of an individual, also help to make advice to others who seek distinctiveness in their lives (Fisher & Price, 1992; Workman & Caldwell, 2007). A Study done by Snyder and Fromkin (1980), Workman and Kidd (2000), Goldsmith and Clark, (2008) found to be high strong relation between fashion opinion leaders and general need for uniqueness.

Individuals who wish to be different from others are more creative and avoid being similar in dressing styles (Tian et.al., 2001). In order to maintain the need for uniqueness, consumes increase their purchases of apparel items and those items which they can use for short period of time (Ritch & Schroder, 2012). Bloch (1995), suggested that in the need for uniqueness personality traits also influence the selection of the product by its effect on cognitive and affective reactions to the outermost design. Further, he argued that idiosyncratic designs likely to be more incongruent with the taste preferences of the individual with low need for uniqueness which leads to negative cognitive, affective reactions and gives rejection to the product. Tokatli (2008) conducted a study on Spain's most famous fast-fashion retailer ZARA, and reveal that the need for uniqueness and novelty of fast-fashion, drives the change of the culture from haute-couture and ready-to-wear to fast-fashion. Tian et.al. (2001), suggested that consumer need for uniqueness (CNFU) encourages individual to go after heterogeneity by consuming in order to develop a distinctive self and social image. Thus, the products being used and displayed by the consumers can give the impression of uniqueness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980).

The main motive behind choosing these determinants is very obvious, because fashion has become an important aspect of everyday life and people go after for uniqueness in their lifestyle. Even people who follow new trends and unique styles are admired by others.

Therefore, to get perceivable results and findings, the chosen factors are very important to be examined.

The present study is managed into five sections; the first section covers the introduction part. In the second section the conceptual framework is been covered along with the rationale of the study and research hypotheses. The third section broadcast details of methodology of the investigation. Further, the forth section discuss the analysis of the data with the results and findings. However, the final section covered with the discussion, conclusion and future recommendations of the study.

Objectives of the study:

1. To compare the means of two groups.
2. To compare the means, gain score of need for uniqueness and fashion leadership of the total sample based on gender.
3. To compare the means, gain score of need for uniqueness and fashion leadership of the total sample based on age.

Research Hypotheses:

Although fashion leaders and desire for uniqueness have been studied from variety of perspective, no in-depth evidence was found that investigate the relationship between these two variables along with the age and gender differences. This study fills the void. The authors investigate the role of need for uniqueness and fashion leadership among two different groups i.e. adolescents and adults. Research hypotheses are as follows:

H1.Adolescents will be higher on Need for Uniqueness as compared to adults.

H2. Females will be high on Need for Uniqueness as compared to males.

H3.Adolescents will be high on Fashion leadership as compared to adults.

H4.Females will be higher on fashion leadership as compared to males.

Methodology

Sample: This research on need for uniqueness and fashion leadership focuses on adults and adolescents of both genders. The sample size was 100 and was gathered from tricity (Chandigarh, Mohali, Punchkula) . The sample size was divided into four groups with equal numbers of males, females, adolescents and adults.

Questionnaires:

1. *Need for Uniqueness:* This latent construct was measured from Consumers' Need for Uniqueness scale developed by Tian et. al. (2001). The scale consisted of 31 items and these items measure need for uniqueness on three dimensions. The three dimensions are (i) creative choice counterconformity, items ranges from 1 to 11, (ii) unipolar choice counterconformity, items ranges from 12 to 22, (iii) avoidance of similarity, items ranges from 23 to 31. Responses are provided on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The internal consistency reliability for the scale is 0.95. Overall score can be calculated by summing up the total item score that chan be range from 31 to 155.
2. *Fashion leadership:* Six item scale was used to measure this construct of the study developed by Goldsmith, Freiden, and Kilsheimer (1993). The reliability for the test was .74. Responses have been taken on five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Item scores are summed to form an overall score that can range from 5 to 30.

Statistical technique*:* To find out the difference between groups, 2x2 ANOVA was applied and Mean, standard deviation was also calculated. The data is analysed by using SPSS 23.0.0.

Results

The research was conducted to study the need for uniqueness and fashion leadership between adolescents and adults (age) are split into separate groups and then within each group participants are further divided on the basis of males and females (gender). The higher the score will show the higher level of factor present in the participants. A 2(age) x 2(gender) between-subject ANOVA was conducted to study the level of need for uniqueness and fashion leadership.

Need for uniqueness

A two-way ANOVA was conducted on the influence of two independent variables i.e. age and gender on need for uniqueness. Two types of ages were included (adolescents and adults) and two levels of gender (males and females) were taken. The main effect for age yielded an F ratio of $F(1,96)=5.421, p<.005$, indicating a significant difference between adolescents (M=83.74, SD=12.55) and adults (M=89.22, SD=11.88) hence, H2 is been proved. There was a significant main effect of the gender on need for uniqueness, $F(1,96)=7.394, p<.005$, such that women (M=89.68, SD=13.68) had a significantly higher need for uniqueness than men (M=83.28,

SD=11.13), which proves the H3. The interaction effect for age and gender was also comes out to be insignificant, F(1,96)=2.392, p>.005.

Thus, the results show that:

(i) Adolescents are high on Need for Uniqueness as compared to adults;

(ii) Females of both groups are high on Need for Uniqueness as compared to males;

(iii) Interaction effect comes out to be insignificant. Results are shown in table 1 and table 2 for Need for Uniqueness.

TABLE 1: ***Showing descriptive statistics for Need for Uniqueness.***

	ADOLESCENTS		ADULLTS		TOTAL	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Female	85.12	14.015	94.24	10.300	89.680	13.015
Male	82.36	11.022	84.20	11.398	83.280	11.135
Total	83.74	12.556	89.22	11.887	86.480	12.472

TABLE 2: ***Showing 2x2 ANOVA summary table for Need for Uniqueness.***

SOURCE	DF	F	*SIGNIFICANCE*
Age	1	5.421	.022
Gender	1	7.394	.008
Age x Gender	1	2.392	.125
Error	96	-	-

Fashion leadership

To study the effect of two independent variables, age and gender on fashion leadership, 2x2 ANOVA was conducted. Two levels of both the independent variables were taken under study, age (adolescents and adults) and gender (males and females). The main effects for age and gender comes out to be statistically significant at .05 level. For the main effect of age yielded an F ratio of F(1,96)=6.784, p<.005, indicating the significant difference between adolescents (M=18.58, SD=4.223) and adults (M=20.62, SD=3.751), therefore H1 is proved. There was also main effect of gender on fashion leadership, F(1,96)=4.601,p<.005, such that women (M=20.44, SD=3.818) were higher on fashion leadership than men (M=18.76, SD=4.245). The interaction effect was also conducted between age and gender but the results comes out to be

insignificant at .05 level. The F ratio of F(1,96) =1.380,p>.005, which indicated that there is no such difference exists between both groups.

Therefore, results indicate that:

(i) Adolescents are high on Fashion leadership as compared to adults;

(ii) Females are more Fashion leaders as compared to males in both the groups;

(iii) Interaction effect for age and gender is insignificant in the study. Table 3 and 4 shows the results for Fashion leadership.

TABLE 3: ***Showing descriptive statistics for Fashion leadership.***

	ADOLESCENTS		ADULTS		TOTAL	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Female	18.96	4.005	21.92	3.026	20.44	3.818
Male	18.20	4.481	19.32	4.007	18.76	4.245
total	18.58	4.223	20.62	3.751	19.60	4.104

TABLE 4: ***Showing 2x2 ANOVA summary table for Fashion leadership.***

SOURCE	DF	F	*SIGNIFICANCE*
Age	1	6.784	.001
Gender	1	4.601	.034
Age x Gender	1	1.380	.243
Error	96	-	-

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine the difference among age and gender on need for uniqueness and fashion leadership. People are consuming unique and fashionable products on daily basis. The companies are highly passionate to compete with each other to fulfil the demands of the generations. Currently, individuals of all ages are very dynamic as they only consume those products which are suitable for their personalities, choices and tastes. The results supported most of the hypotheses and predictions from pertinent theoretical formulations and some of the earlier researches in this field. Some of the findings are interesting and bear important implications in change in attitude toward fashion and uniqueness

among adolescents and adults. Adolescents in age group and females in gender group showed an efficacious role in support to fashion leadership and need for uniqueness. According to Shende (2017) suggested that more than 55% of urban young population in India is keen to adopt latest fashion in their lifestyle. The findings of the study disclosed thought-provoking results, which are advantageous to persuade the demands of both the marketers and buyers. Study results illustrates that adolescents are high on both the dependent variables, need for uniqueness and fashion leadership as compared to adults. The self-determined type of an attribution model of counterconformity supported the objective that the adolescents seek differentness in their dressing style (Ling 2008). Further some researches also showed that the choice of brand also reflects the personality of the individual (Guthrie, Kim & Jung, 2008).

On the other hand, female participants predictably indicated higher level of fashion leadership as compared to males in both the age groups. Supported by past research, women desired uniqueness, assortments and social interactions while shopping (Noble, Griffth & Adjei, 2006). Goldsmith, Heitmeyer and freiden (1991) in their study found that most of their subjects who were fashion leaders were young and had higher clothing expenditure than non-fashion leaders. The results of the present study show that adolescents are high on both the variables i.e. Need for Uniqueness and Fashion leadership as compared to adults. Further, Goldsmith and Flynn (1992) found that the female fashion market has been segmented along consumer's innovativeness. Bush, Martin & Bush (2004) suggested that teenagers struggle more to make their own distinctive image among their peer group. It is also estimated by Achenreiner and John (2003) estimated that adolescents relate to brands on perceptual level. Further, Happer, Dewar & Diack (2003) noted that teenagers have strong need for group recognition. Although lot of research has been conducted in the past on these two variables but only for relationship purpose with value for money, luxury, brand etc. but there is dearth of research on comparison between different age groups and genders. According to the Feederal Bureau of Statistics, adolescents represents 40.07% of total population of Pakistan in 1998 for buying branded products. Midgley and Dowling (1993) suggested a contingency model of innovativeness in which they argue that person's proneness interact with the personality traits and social connections in the behaviour of new product adoption. In some studies self-concept was also explored in respect to fashion leaders, and it was found that fashion leaders are more excitable, indulgent, contemporary, formal, colourful, (Goldsmith et.al. 1996). Further, it is also suggested by Fromkin and Synder (1980) that approval by others is also more powerful

determinant of consumer behaviour. People who are prominent on fashion leadership are more likely to use shopping channels that others who are not (Cho & Workman, 2011). Accordingly, in this research we are trying to explore the determinants like age and gender that are important to understand the role of adoption to new fashionable and unique product consumptions by the adolescents and adults. Psychologically, people mostly are accepting new fashions, sometimes by rejecting the trending products (Thompson & Haytko, 1997).

The interaction effect comes out to be insignificant in both the independent variable and both groups (age & gender). Trends and lifestyles are changing day by day, and everyone's trying to win the race in every domain of life. They are struggling for different identification of their self in society. People figure out other's personality by the luxurious products they use in their daily life which con be clothes, gadgets, automobiles, food they eat, places they usually visit etc. Materialistic things are directing the psychological and physical state of consumers. For the satisfaction of these needs of consumers, new brands are launching new and unique products in the market daily. Media and social networking sites are helping consumers to explore and get more and more information about the products. With internet, fashion can escalate in the world in fraction of seconds. Now people can customise everything for uniqueness, they can customise utensils, handlooms, cloths, even mixing recipes of food. Mobile applications and internet made everything convenient. If you don't have the time to go to the market, everything u can order from your mobile application with one click and it will be at your door step in couple of days so if it doesn't matter whether you are a teenager or an adult you can be a fashion leader as well as satisfy your need for uniqueness.

Conclusion and Significance

The present study successfully met its objectives of replicating a previous study and adding new information about the psychological and motivational drivers of fashion leaders and need for uniqueness among different age and gender groups. The findings of the study disclosed thought-provoking results which are advantageous to persuade the demands of both, the marketers and the buyers. For the purpose of new fashion and unique product production, marketers can focus on females and adolescents. It is important to note that the results of to study cannot be generalized to all the population as the convenient sampling method was used. The data was also collected from urban population so rural population was ignored. For the future research, rural population can also be used, different age group can also be taken into account. People's tastes and preferences differs from individual to individual, culture to

culture, so for the generalization purpose this similar study can also be done on different people of different culture. Retailers and fashion entrepreneurs can take advantage from the information for the generalizations and differences of consumers from these groups and an examination of behaviour and psychographics can provide understanding in relation to fashion and uniqueness. In addition, people's living standard and life styles are circumspectly changing like their income levels, family sizes, education levels, peer effects etc, therefore, psychographic and demographic variables will be of high worth to be investigated in the future studies on the need for uniqueness and fashion leadership among consumers.

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