Media exposure, self and fashion clothing involvement of Chinese young people: analyses of effect models

Yanshu Sun
Hong Kong Baptist University

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.hkbu.edu.hk/etd_oa

Recommended Citation
https://repository.hkbu.edu.hk/etd_oa/15

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at HKBU Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of HKBU Institutional Repository. For more information, please contact repository@hkbu.edu.hk.
Media Exposure, Self and Fashion Clothing Involvement of Chinese Young People: Analyses of Effect Models

SUN YANSHU

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Principal Supervisor: Prof. GUO Zhongshi, Steve

School of Communication

Hong Kong Baptist University

June, 2013
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work which has been written after registration for the degree of PhD at Hong Kong Baptist University, and has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation submitted to this or other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

Signature:_______________________

Date: June 2013
ABSTRACT

This study develops a complicated analysis model to explore more understanding for fashion communication in Confucian culture background, especially for the latest Chinese fashion. The current study examines theoretical connections between media exposure, some psychological and social variables and fashion clothing involvement in Chinese society within a predictive framework. To better understand the relations between these psychological factors, social norms and fashion clothing involvement, this study also explores several effect models, such as moderation effect, mediation effect and mediated moderation effect.

Two studies were conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the first study, the author collected data through a random sampling survey. To cross-validate the survey findings, a second study adopting the method of group interviews was conducted.

Results indicate that fashion clothing involvement is a function of exposing to the media, achievement lifestyle, perception of success, peer influence, cognitive dissonance reduction, and comparing with others. The results also indicate the complicated relations, such as, lifestyle factor moderates the tie between media exposure and fashion clothing involvement; social comparison processes mediates the relationship between media exposure and fashion clothing involvement; self-discrepancy also influences the relationship as a moderator; notably, social comparison mediates the moderation effect from self-discrepancy. Individuals with high levels of self-discrepancy experience more negative emotion from comparing to thin-ideal image in fashion media than those with low levels. Another finding is that traditional media, particularly magazines, are as strong in explanatory power as new media (e.g. website) in the model of fashion communication.

Theoretical implications of this study provide an advance in understanding the mechanisms underlying internalization and the use of social norms, furthermore, develop the knowledge of self related theories.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the past five years I have received support and encouragement from a great number of individuals. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all those who provided me the possibility to complete this thesis. I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my supervisor Professor Steve GUO, who has the expertise and the substance of a genius: he continually and convincingly conveyed a spirit of innovation in regard to doing research. Without his guidance and persistent help this thesis would not have been possible.

I would like to thank my co-supervisor, Professor Huang Yu and Professor Yu Xu, my thesis committee member Dr. Alice Lee, whose work demonstrated to me that concern for communication issues and young people in current China. Your guidance has made this a thoughtful journey that I moved from some ideas to a completed study.

I would also like to thank Professor Xiao Xiao-sui for generously sharing his time, ideas and advice. I have learned much through our conversations. I would like to thank Professor Chen Ling for continually giving her encouragement. In addition, I would show my appreciation to Professor Fang Kai-tai, who has provided valuable statistical advice, suggestions and encouragements.

Furthermore I would also like to acknowledge with much appreciation the help from lovely Eve Chueng and my dear friends, Lydia Dai, Yuanxin and Xu Lai, etc. I feel so happy and cheerful with your friendship.

Last but not least, many thanks go to my family. Your love and support make me concentrate on my study and finally finish this thesis. You are my energy harbor.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION..................................................................................................................i

ABSTRACT.........................................................................................................................ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.................................................................................................iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS.................................................................................................iv

LIST OF TABLES..............................................................................................................vii

LIST OF FIGURES...........................................................................................................viii

Chapter I

Introduction .....................................................................................................................1

Chapter II

Conceptualization...........................................................................................................3

2.1 Fashion Clothing Involvement................................................................................3

2.1.1 Involvement.......................................................................................................3

2.1.2 Fashion Clothing Involvement........................................................................3

2.2 Psychological Antecedents of Fashion Clothing Involvement..............................5

2.2.1 Self-Discrepancy Theory..................................................................................6

2.2.2 Cognitive Dissonance Theory.........................................................................8

2.2.3 Theoretical Explanation....................................................................................9

2.3 Social Antecedents of Fashion Clothing Involvement........................................10

2.3.1 Materialism....................................................................................................10

2.3.2 Lifestyle.........................................................................................................12

2.3.3 Peer Influence................................................................................................13

2.3.4 Self and Social Comparison..........................................................................14

2.3.5 Media Exposure..............................................................................................15

2.4 Social Context of This Research..........................................................................19

2.4.1 Consumerism..................................................................................................19

2.4.2 Consumerism in China....................................................................................20

2.4.3 Fashion under Confucian

Consumerism in China..............................................................................................23

2.5 Research Questions...............................................................................................26

2.6 Theoretical Model.................................................................................................30

Chapter III
Methodology.....................................................................................................................35
3.1 Sample and Sampling Procedure..................................................................................35
3.2 Measurements...............................................................................................................35
  3.2.1 Fashion Clothing Involvement..................................................................................35
  3.2.2 Media Exposure.......................................................................................................36
  3.2.3 Materialism..............................................................................................................36
  3.2.4 Lifestyle....................................................................................................................37
  3.2.5 Peer Influence.........................................................................................................38
  3.2.6 Social Comparison...................................................................................................38
  3.2.7 Cognitive Dissonance Reduction.............................................................................39
  3.2.8 Self-Discrepancy.....................................................................................................40
  3.2.9 Self-Dissatisfaction.................................................................................................41
  3.2.10 Demographics.......................................................................................................41
3.3 Results..........................................................................................................................42
  3.3.1 Hypotheses Testing..................................................................................................42
  3.3.2 Results of Research Question 1..............................................................................47
  3.3.3 Results of Research Question 2..............................................................................48
  3.3.4 Results of Research Question 3
    (Mediation Effect).......................................................................................................50
  3.3.5 Results of Research Question 4
    (Moderation Effect)...................................................................................................52
  3.3.6 Results of Research Question 5
    (Moderation Effect)...................................................................................................52
  3.3.7 Results of Research Question 6
    (Mediated Moderation Effect)....................................................................................53

Chapter IV

Conclusion and Discussion (Study 1).................................................................................55
4.1 Conclusion.....................................................................................................................55
4.2 Theoretical Implications...............................................................................................56
  4.2.1 Theory Developing and Supporting........................................................................56
  4.2.2 Developing Theoretical Instructed Measurement....................................................57
4.2.3 Developing Theoretical Effect Models

Chapter V

Methodology (Study 2) ................................................................. 63
5.1 Research Question ................................................................. 63
5.2 Method .................................................................................... 63
  5.2.1 Sample .............................................................................. 63
  5.2.2 Group Interview ................................................................. 64
5.3 Results .................................................................................... 64
  5.3.1 Relation between Media Exposure and Fashion Clothing Involvement ...................................................... 64
  5.3.2 Relation between Social Comparison and Fashion Clothing Involvement .................................................... 72
  5.3.3 Relation between Cognitive Dissonance Reduction and Fashion Clothing Involvement ................................... 74
  5.3.4 Relation between Peer Influence and Fashion Clothing Involvement ............................................................ 74

Chapter VI

Conclusion and Discussion (Study 2) ........................................ 80

Chapter VII

General Conclusion ................................................................. 81
  7.1 The Cross-complementary Findings between Study 1 & 2 ........................................................................ 81
  7.2 Contributions of This Research .............................................. 82
  7.3 Significances of This Research .............................................. 83
  7.4 Limitations ........................................................................... 83

Reference ...................................................................................... 86

Appendix 1 Factor Analysis (Principal Component with Oblimin Rotation) on Fashion Clothing Involvement Indicators ....... 119

Appendix 2 Factor Analysis (Principal Component with Oblimin Rotation) on Social Comparison Indicators .................. 120

Appendix 3
  Survey Questionnaire ................................................................ 121

Appendix 4
  Translated Survey Questionnaire (Chinese Version) .................. 126
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Sample statistics .................................................................105
Table 2 Factor analysis (principal component with
             Oblimin rotation) on lifestyle indicators.................................106
Table 3 Factor analysis (principal component with
             Varimax rotation) on self-discrepancy indicators............................107
Table 4 Factor analysis (principal component with
             Varimax rotation) on self-dissatisfaction indicators......................108
Table 5 Predicting self-dissatisfaction .................................................109
Table 6 Predicting cognitive dissonance reduction ..............................110
Table 7 Predicting fashion clothing involvement ..................................112
Table 8 Predicting intramedia interaction effects
             on fashion clothing involvement ..................................................114
Table 9 OLS regression: Joint effect of Striver lifestyle and
             media exposure on fashion clothing involvement ..........................115
Table 10 OLS regression: Joint effect of Self-discrepancy and
             media exposure on fashion clothing involvement ..........................116
Table 11a Regression results for mediated moderation
             effect (X=magazine exposure) .....................................................117
Table 11b Regression results for mediated moderation
             effect (X=website exposure) ......................................................118
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Predictors of Fashion Clothing Involvement…………………………………30
Figure 2 Moderation Effect………………………………………………………………31
Figure 3 Mediation Effect………………………………………………………………32
Figure 4 Moderation Effect………………………………………………………………33
Figure 5 Mediated Moderation Effect…………………………………………………34
Figure 6 Partial Mediation Model……………………………………………………..51
Chapter I Introduction

As an umbrella construct, involvement has been studied by researchers in a variety ways. Despite the concept’s intimate ties with individual behavior, there exist almost as many conceptual and operational definitions as there are researchers who try to define the concept. The various definitions are more colorful when involvement is narrowed and theoretically connected with fashion clothing (O’Cass 2000, 2004). Studies have shown that fashion clothing involvement, however theorized, is a function of a vast repertoire of individuals’ social anchoring and psychological attributes.

For most people, contact with the realm of fashion and designer products is probably only through the mass media, traditionally including fashion magazines, television, and the press in general. The Internet is a relative late comer, apparently demonstrating an inherent bias in favor of young and well-educated people. In this study, the author attempts an explication of fashion clothing involvement, media exposure, some psychological and social variables, and their relationships.

The modern cultural standards for the self image generate discrepancies between the actual and ideal self in both Chinese and the western societies. The fashion image and corresponding meanings are disseminated by mass media (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). The fashion industry, being part of the process of social creation of what is ideal (Tate & Shafer, 1982), joins the mass media in a chorus of celebration of the “good looks,” thus inducing shame and even despair and depression for people (Anton et al., 2000; Cash & Green, 1986; Snyder, 1997), especially women, who perceive themselves as failing to live up to the promoted standard (Higgins, 1987; Jung et al., 2001).
goal of this study is to examine several effect models around the self-related psychological factors, and get better understanding of their relations with media exposure and fashion clothing involvement.

Although the phenomenon of mere exposure effect was observed more than a century ago (Fechner 1876), the idea that repeated exposure alone is capable of increasing favorable attitude toward a stimulus continues to inspire studies from diverse social settings. The author contextualizes this current research in China, focusing particularly on the younger segment of the population. A set of research questions are raised within an elaborate conceptual model: What antecedents influence fashion clothing involvement in Chinese society? What is the relationship between media exposure and fashion clothing involvement? What predictive structure can be identified between self-discrepancy, self-dissatisfaction, cognitive dissonance reduction, materialism, lifestyle, peer influence, social comparison, and fashion clothing involvement?

This article presents the results of two studies. In the first study, the author collected data through a random sampling survey. To cross-validate the survey findings, a second study adopting the method of group interviews was conducted.
Chapter II Conceptualization

2.1 Fashion Clothing Involvement

2.1.1 Involvement

According to the now classic definition by Rothschild (1979), “involvement” refers to the motivational fettles of arousal and interest of an individual caused by both external factors such as situation, product, and communication and internal factors such as ego, beliefs and values. Zaichkowsky (1985), however, sees involvement more as internally driven, as “a person’s perceived relevance of an object based on inherent needs, values, and interests” (p. 42). Researchers of consumer behavior seem to have developed a special liking for that concept in understanding product possessions and psychological attachment to possessions (Mittal & Lee, 1989; Ohanian, 1990). Despite ambiguities surrounding the concept, some scholars even identify involvement as the single most important predictor of purchase behavior (Evrard & Aurier, 1996; Martin, 1998). In Kim’s study (2008), involvement is conceptualized as the chief determinant for prioritized attention to particular products which in turn leads to product acquisition activities.

2.1.2 Fashion Clothing Involvement

Scholars commonly use the abstract term “fashion involvement” to indicate interest with the clothing product category (Kim, 2005). Perhaps due to its close association with patterns of consumption, fashion involvement has been seen as lying “at the heart of the person-object relationship” (O’Cass, 2004, p. 870) and being the relational variable most predictive of purchase behavior (Evrard & Aurier, 1996; Martin,
1998). However, by definition, the person-object ties are infinitely complex and profound, that even in fashion studies involvement could mean vastly different things in different research contexts.

This study attempts to get better understanding of the fashion and communication by examining the profile of fashion clothing involvement and its antecedents. Fashion is defined as a result of ever-changing cultural shifts in preferences, tastes and choices (O’Cass, 2004). Fashion changes so rapidly because it spreads through every stratum of society (Paget, 1883). In western patterns, fashion is characterized by updated trends, rapid changes, proliferation of styles (Davis, 1992; McCracken, 1988), and, more importantly, imitation and being imitated by others (Simmel, 2001). Consumers in lower socio-economic groups actively imitate and carry out information searches on those higher socio-economic groups (McCraken, 1988). In contrast, invidious comparison motive drives consumers in high socio-economic groups to differentiate themselves from individuals belonging to a lower class (Veblen, 1899).

In social science usage, “fashion” is an over-generalized term, used in the various fields: arts, architecture, philosophies, dress, language etc. (Barber & Lobel, 1952). In this study, the author narrows her concerns to fashion clothing and treat it as a code, to adopt the expression of Davis (1992). Conceptually, the meaning of fashion as coded behavior involves such values as competitiveness and pursuit of happiness. Richins (1994) finds empirical support for a causal loop whereby individuals scoring high on materialistic measures share the tendencies to express themselves through clothing. Bourdieu (1984) interprets clothing as a means to express social differentiation.
particularly class distinctions. Clothing acts as “a filter between the person and the surrounding social world”, and its values are interpreted as being “intimately tied to the self” and as forming “the core of one’s personal identity” (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004, p. 382). Clothing often represents an important symbolic consumption area for consumers (O’Cass, 2000). In relation to these ideas, fashion clothing shows how much status an individual has and demonstrates to others how important an individual is.

Given the purpose of this research, the author adopts a narrower definition of involvement as the extent to which the consumer views fashion clothing as an integral part of their life, “a meaningful and engaging activity” (O’Cass, 2004, p. 870). This definition places an implicit emphasis on people’s internalized values and beliefs capable of motivating and guiding cognitive elaboration, impression management and purchasing behaviors. People who are drawn to fashion tend to think of it frequently and are likely to dwell on fashion related self-references (O’Cass, 2000). This study’s rather heavy reliance on O’Cass in this area of inquiry reflected in part of the level of the author, but also and more importantly, the almost singular reference points to the dearth of relevant literature in the field. That said, the model in this study is actually built on a critique rather than a replication of the O’Cass line of reasoning in light of the concrete social context of everyday life in China. Specifically, the author will focus on three mediating and moderating variables as an extension of the existing model that are unique to the research site.

2.2 Psychological Antecedents of Fashion Clothing Involvement
2.2.1 Self-Discrepancy Theory

The self-discrepancy theory hypothesizes two cognitive dimensions: the domains and standpoints of the self. The former subsumes the actual self, ideal self, and ought self. Previous studies (Higgins, 1987, 1989; Rosenberg, 1979) have found that individuals develop self-relevant cognitions (*actual self*), ideas regarding how they would like to be (*ideal self*), and how others would like them to be (*ought self*) through the process of social comparison.

Existing definitions of the three selves quite clearly reflect their differentiation. The actual self refers to an individual’s presentation of the characters that this individual and others think he or she actually possesses. The ideal self involves the individual’s presentation of the attributes that the individual or others would like him or her, ideally, to possess. This process includes the individual’s hopes, aspirations and wishes for himself or herself. And the ought self refers to a person’s representation of the attributes that the person or others think he or she should or ought to possess. This indicates the sense of duty, obligations, or responsibility for herself or himself (Kim, 2008).

Among the three selves, the ideal self plays the most important role in shaping the way an individual feels about the actual self. When the actual self is discrepant from the ideal self, an ideal discrepancy or a lack of a desired positive outcome occurs (Higgins, et al., 1986). The ought self varies from individual to individual. By the same token, when the actual self is discrepant from the ought self, ought discrepancy happens (Higgins et al., 1986).

In short, self-discrepancies occur when inconsistency surfaces among the three
selves. Discrepancies between the actual and the ideal selves can cause discomfort and low self-esteem, while discrepancies between the ought and the actual selves may impact the ideal self only to the extent that one considers that it is important to conform to social norms (Higgins, et al, 1986; Higgins et al., 1994; Strauman, et al, 1991). In addition, the impact of the ought self on the ideal self depends upon the importance that an individual attributes to the social norm.

The self-discrepancy theory also suggests the distinction between two perspectives on the self: one’s own standpoint and that of the significant others. Six basic types of self-state representation are determined by combining each of the domains of the self with different standpoints of the self into a two by three matrix: actual/own, actual/other, ideal/own, ideal/other, ought/own, and ought/other. Disparities associated with different self lead to different self-discrepancies, each of which is related to particular negative emotional and motivational problems (Higgins, 1987).

If the actual characteristics of a person from his or her standpoint are not consistent with the ideal self, the individual will experience negative emotions, such as dissatisfaction and disappointment, and even shame, embarrassment and the like. Low self-esteem involves the actual self including the actual/own and actual/other, while the ideal self consists of the ideal/own and ideal/other. Previous studies have found that exposure to ideal images is connected with body image self-discrepancies in various contexts, such as TV ads (Lavine, et al., 1999) and advertisements (Bessenoff, 2006).

Applying the notion of self-image into fashion communication research, one can argue that the more discrepant the actual self is from the ideal self, the more an
individual would experience discomfort and dissatisfaction. According to Higgins et al. (1986), “the greater the magnitude and accessibility of a particular type of self-discrepancy possessed by an individual, the more the individual will experience the type of discomfort associated with that self-discrepancy” (p. 7).

2.2.2 Cognitive Dissonance Theory

The terms ‘dissonance’ and ‘consonance’ refer to “relations which exist between pairs of elements”; and these elements refer to “what has been called cognition, the things a person knows about himself, about his behavior, and about his surroundings” (Festinger, 1957, p. 9). There are three possible relations that may exist between any two cognitive elements, including irrelevant relations (one cognition implies nothing concerning some other cognition and two cognitions are irrelevant to one another), dissonance (two cognitive elements do not fit together for some reasons) and consonance (two cognitions are relevant and fit to one another). When an individual confronts new events or information, inconsistent with his or her existing cognition, such as logical inconsistency, cultural mores etc., and a state of dissonance occurs (Festinger, 1957). Consequently, the occurrence of dissonance may lead to psychological discomfort, and thus, individuals are pressured to try to reduce or eliminate dissonance to achieve consonance. The premise of the cognitive dissonance theory is that people do not tolerate inconsistency very well (Cooper, 2007).

Three ways (Festinger, 1957) can be used to reduce dissonance: changing a behavioral cognitive element (changing behaviors), changing an environmental cognitive element (changing environment itself), and adding new cognitive elements
(reconciling dissonance). It is also very important to avoid the increase or occurrence of dissonance. Thus, individuals seek information that supports the existing cognitions in a highly selective manner. When a person cannot avoid being exposed to conflicting information, he or she engages in some psychological processes to reduce or eliminate the state of dissonance (Festinger, 1957). One of these processes involves changing the relative importance of the cognitive elements involved (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1981). Based on previous studies, two processes are included: trivialization, which refers to devaluing the importance given to the dissonance (Simon et al., 1995) and bolstering, which refers to placing more importance on the cognitive elements consistent with existing cognitions (Cooper, 2007).

2.2.3 Theoretical Explanation

In this study, the theory of cognitive dissonance provides a theoretical explanation for the effect of self-discrepancy and self-dissatisfaction on an individuals’ fashion clothing involvement. When an individual has a strong, positive attitude toward his or her self-image and the cognition about his or her actual self is consistent with that of the ideal model, the consistency between the existing cognition of a person and the new product information presented on the ideal model results in cognitive consonance. As such, the new information (e.g., new clothes promoted by the ideal model) is more likely to be incorporated into the existing attitude structure in a biased manner, so that consonance within the individual’s cognitions about the fashion clothes is maintained. For example, the consumer perceives lower degree of concerns with price, size etc. even though the person cannot try on the clothes. On the other hand, when an individual’s
cognition about his or her self-image is inconsistent with that of the ideal model, a state of cognitive dissonance occurs. The state of dissonance may create psychological discomfort, such as lifestyle dissatisfaction. When an individual feels self-dissatisfaction due to the discrepancy between the actual/ideal selves, the person may be highly involved in fashion clothing and try to use apparel to emphasize the positive parts of his or her image and enhance overall appearance.

Based on the psychological changing process and the relations between psychological factors and fashion clothing involvement, this study has the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: The perceived self-discrepancies of individuals between the model of the ideal self constructed by the media and their actual self will be positively correlated to self-dissatisfaction.

Hypothesis 1b: Self-dissatisfaction will be correlated to reduction of cognitive dissonance.

Hypothesis 1c: The reduction of cognitive dissonance will be positively correlated to fashion clothing involvement.

2.3 Social Antecedents of Fashion Clothing Involvement

2.3.1 Materialism

When defined this way, fashion clothing involvement implies a non-trivial mental attachment and emotional commitment to materialism. The power of fashion and brand name products lies not only in its omnipresence (Gao, 2002) or its influence on an individual’s identity (Dittmar, 1992; Sweetman, 1999), but more importantly its ability
to blur the boundaries of ideologies (Barnard, 1996). To the extent that people judge the meaning of their life, achievement, and satisfaction in terms of their material possessions (Belk, 1985; Kashdan & Breen, 2007; Richins, 1994), conceptual and operational definitions of everyday manifestations of fashion consciousness and its mass and interpersonal communication patterns are in order. For example, the consumption of luxury brands may bring people pleasure or excitement (Kim et al., 2010). People may use luxury fashion goods to conform to their professional position or to demonstrate their social status (Arghavan & Zaichkowsky, 2000). Therefore, the materialism emerging among Chinese young people’s fashion clothing involvement is of special attraction.

To decompose materialism, the author adopts a tripartite view of the construct by dividing it into three empirically related and yet conceptually distinct dimensions: acquisition centrality, acquisition as the pursuit of happiness, and possession-defined success (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Acquisition centrality, by definition, refers to the extremely heavy salience material possessions bear in individuals’ mind and actions to the point of irrational reliance. Given its Declaration of Independence undertone, acquisition as the pursuit of happiness, on the other hand, connotes a right accorded to consumers. As such, this dimension of materialism contains a built-in mechanism of self-defense against real and potential criticisms. The third dimension, possession-defined success focuses on judgment of success “by the number and quality of possessions accumulated” (Richins & Dawson, 1992, p. 304). In general, as a value, materialism is when acquiring material possession functions as a foremost life goal with
the belief that possessions are the key to happiness and that success can be judged by people's material wealth (Richins, 1994).

2.3.2 Lifestyle

In the field of fashion and market research, it is now conventional wisdom, indeed a homily, that a typical consumer does not make purchases solely out of utilitarian purposes (Kahle, 1985). As a type of motivation for consumption and a source of desirable social rewards (McCracken, 1988), acquisition of fashion products in general and clothing in particular could serve the purpose of establishing and communicating social differentiation and identity (Chan & Leung, 2005).

Early lifestyle research, which involves product marketing as well as consumer communication, has engendered interesting hypotheses relating to people’s demographic anchoring, social class, patterns of information diffusion, and psychological characteristics (Plummer, 1974). Consumers’ lifestyle is a function of inherent individual characteristics that are shaped and formed through social interaction as consumers move through the family life-cycle (cited in Harcar & Kaynak, 2008).

Zablocki and Kanter (1976) noted nearly four decades ago that individuals share a tendency of self-segmentation through which they form social clusters based on the things they like to do, how they spend their leisure time, what their interests are, and how they choose to spend their income. In keeping with this claim, the Values, Attitudes, and Lifestyles (VALS) separate individuals into eight groups by their psychological attributes: Innovators, Thinkers, Achievers, Experiencers, Believers, Strivers, Makers, and Survivors. This segmentation model subsumes three primary
motivational dimensions (i.e., ideals, achievement, and self-expression). Specifically, ideals are a function of rational thinking, principled reasoning, and knowledge (e.g., Thinkers, Innovators, and Experiencers); achievement is related to conspicuous consumption (e.g., Believers, Makers, and Survivors); whereas self-expression is marked by an internal drive toward activities that yield high returns (e.g., Achievers and Strivers). Achievement-oriented lifestyles therefore constitute an integral part of fashion clothing involvement.

2.3.3 Peer Influence

A major branch of peer influence research has focused on body image and appearance. Studies on the interplay between peer perception and impression management have examined the weight of peer criticism on one’s attention to appearance (Eder, Evans, & Parker, 1995); linkage between unflattering comments about appearance and negative perceptions (Levine, Smolak, & Hayden, 1994; Thompson, Coover, & Stormer, 1999; Oliver & Thelen, 1996); image related frustrations of adolescent girls (Jones et al., 2004; Paxton et al., 1999); and issues of eating disorders (Taylor et al., 1998). One significant mechanism for peer influence to generate its impact on fashion clothing involvement, not surprisingly, is interpersonal communication. Researchers have found that daily conversations affect fashion perceptions in terms of the content of the conversations (Stice, Maxfield, & Wells, 2003), frequency of discussions (Carlson & Crawford, 2006), and power balance of people who engage in such talks about fashion clothing (Summers, 1970). When one’s appearance counts, conversations with friends can be especially influential (Jones,
Vigfusdottir, & Lee, 2004). In one research, the investigators actually rated peer perception as the strongest predictor of the level of body dissatisfaction among girls (Dohnt & Tiggermann, 2005). Guided by previous research, the author assigns a pivotal role to peer influence in this conceptual framework.

2.3.4 Self and Social Comparison

The idea of “self” typically emerges in a person’s formative years and develops over time in the life cycle, through comparison with others, or more precisely the “other” (Mead, 1967). Festinger’s (1954) dissonance reduction theory offers a similar explanation about how and why social comparison takes place. Individuals’ need for self-evaluation, according to Festinger, drives them to “use a stable source of self-reference against which to assess their attitudes and compare their opinions and abilities with similar others” (Cited in Chan, 2008; p. 316). Individuals use other people as references to validate their own attitudes and actions when objective sources are not available (Jones & Gerard, 1967).

This kind of social comparison was defined by Kruglanski and Mayseless (1990) as “comparative judgments of social stimuli on particular content dimensions” (p. 196). Downward comparison involves looking down on people who look worse than one self, whereas upward comparison refers to the opposite (Olson & Evans, 1999). These two dimensions of social comparison lead differentially to emotions, positive moods and high self-esteem by downward comparisons (Wills, 1981, 1991; Morse & Gergen, 1970), negative moods and low self-esteem by upward comparisons (Bower, 1991; Morse & Gergen, 1970).
A plethora of studies have well documented people’s reliance on media for social comparison purposes, particularly in relation to physical appearance and beauty norms (Botta, 1999; Hendriks & Burgoon, 2003; Martin & Kennedy, 1993; Richins, 1991). Such a tendency is particularly pronounced in the Confucian culture where hierarchy is legitimate, and conformity to group norms is desirable (Chan, 2008). Individuals are encouraged to locate their position and know their place in the social hierarchy. Hu (1944) discusses the value of social face (mianzi) in people’s shared symbolic definition of success and status in the Chinese context of everyday life. It tends to compel individuals to impress others and even to compare themselves with others in the social hierarchy. In the process, fashion assumes the inevitable benchmark, not the least of which is its role as a symbol of success and good taste (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998).

2.3.5 Media Exposure

In the majority of media use studies, use means “exposure”, most often measured by total time respondents make use of a specific medium (Hollander, 2006). Other scholars have proposed more pertinent concepts such as attention (Chaffee & Schleuder, 1986; Drew & Weaver, 1990), reliance (McLeod, Glynn, & McDonald, 1983), and dependence (McLeod & McDonald, 1985; Miller & Reese, 1982). Attempts by scholars at fine tuning effects models have yielded fruitful results, especially when it comes to understanding audience activities.

Judging by the criterion of selective exposure, audiences could be said to be more active than some researchers have believed. Audiences tend to select messages in
accordance with their preexisting attitudes to protect the integrity of their belief structures (cited in Hollander, 2006). On the other hand, audiences would also preferentially choose certain media and give others up in order to obtain the information they are interested in.

Mass media which are increasingly imbued with images of vogue and affluence are thought to promote, at a minimum, a demonstration effect on materialistic perceptions (Shrum, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2005). The meanings and images of fashion are ubiquitously disseminated by various forms and outlets of the mass media (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). Even the earliest fashion illustrations played an important part in shaping ideas, constructing norms, and setting standards of beauty, etiquette, and desirability (Barnard, 1996). Clothing brands transmit sets of values which imply an elaborate ideology and lifestyles. Advertisements or editorial contents in fashion magazines, webs, and TV programs disseminate images of clothing more broadly than the products they depict. Ideal images attribute symbolic values to fashion clothing become as significant as the clothes themselves (Crane & Bovone, 2006). Usually, the values expressed by ideal images tend to be subversive and nontraditional (Crane, 2000). The communication process in fashion media depends on complicated techniques to redefine the symbolic values attached to clothing with the thin and young ideal models (Goffman, 1976). Media consumption, therefore, entails more than information gain or enjoyment of entertainment. It is implicitly and explicitly synched into virtually every aspect of everyday life with different patterns of media use “embedded in patterns of social interaction” (Rosengren & Windahl, 1989, p. 203). Compared with parents and
schools, mass media are a late comer in the life cycle, although that by no means makes their influence any less profound as an agent of socialization.

Researchers find that media construct ideal images in fashion magazines, TV programs, websites, and other media output are so pervasive that exposure to them is inevitable (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003). As opposed to various forms of media or even other general-interest magazines, fashion magazines stand alone as a unique channel of fashion information not only because of their exclusive coverage, colorful designs, multiple artworks and appealing advertising. But more importantly, readers and fashion magazine content creators have negotiated a relationship such that cultural production is linked with fashion reception (Winship, 1987). Fashion magazine staffers and readers are mutually constituted in a process, through which abstract ideas in the form of aesthetic discourse are transformed into concrete materials and visible clothing (Gough-Yates, 2003). By picking up a fashion magazine, the reader enters a pseudo-community where like-minded people congregate to learn, to evaluate, and to interpret (McCracken, 1993). Here, the boundaries between people of different social strata are dimmed and tastes mainstreamed (Blumer, 1969).

In contrast to magazines, digital media provide a historically unprecedented platform, where culturally plural (e.g., merging East and West) and structurally diverse (e.g., fusing multi-media presentation) content becomes instantly accessible at the click of a button. Exposure habits thus formed bear strong marks of the format or the presentation (e.g., moving or still) of information that could vary in its ability to cognitively appeal or emotionally engage, echoing McLuhan’s (1964) adage about the
medium being the message. The advent and the rapid permeation of digital media beg the question of whether new and traditional media are competitive or complementary in terms of audience attention and effects in the world of fashion. Wilson (1997) argues that the advantages and distinctive content profiles make each type of medium indispensable rather than disposable, at least at the current stage. Although the case being made here carries a functionalist undertone, considerable consensus exists on the view that fashion media, digital or otherwise, perpetuate a general norm by “showing how beauty, sexuality, career success, culinary skill, and social status can be bought in the consumer marketplace” (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003, p. 188).

According to Hollander (2006), the core of fashion clothing involvement has to do with how people deal with new information. As part of Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory, repeated portrayal of fashionable models by mass media may elicit unrealistic fashion expectations and desires of emulation among audience members.

Based on previous researches, the following hypotheses are addressed:

Hypothesis 2: Materialistic values will positively correlated to fashion clothing involvement.

Hypothesis 3: Lifestyle motivated by achievement will positively correlated to fashion clothing involvement.

Hypothesis 4: Peer influence will positively correlated to fashion clothing involvement.

Hypothesis 5: Social comparison will positively correlated to fashion clothing involvement.
Hypothesis 6: Media exposure will positively correlated to fashion clothing involvement.

2.4 Social Context of This Research

Social context is the correlated situation in which something exists or occurs. An individual reacts to a certain situation with previously formed attitudes and beliefs (Tourangeau & Rasinski, 1988). Contexts formed by direct or indirect experiences could be interpreted by various perspectives (Tao & Jin, 2005). Information of context is important in cognitive psychology and interpretation. Chinese society is completely different from the West due to its special history and cultures. It is important to interpret properly after recognizing the special context.

2.4.1 Consumerism

In the traditional society, the only objective of production is to meet the basic survival needs of people. However, in a consumer society, the meaning of production and life is far beyond the idea of basic necessity. Consumer society refers to “the post-industrial society in which consumption has become the main motive or object of social life and production” (Tao & Jin, 2005, p. 115). The primary meaning of “consume” is to destroy, to use up, to waste and to exhaust (Williams, 1976, p. 78). “Consumption as waste, excess and spending represents a paradoxical presence within the productionist emphasis of capitalist and state socialist societies which must somehow be controlled and channeled” (Featherstone, 1991, p. 21). In the postmodern society, nothing is important if it is without consumer value (Fourie, 2007). Postmodernism in popular culture is regarded as being preoccupied with the idea of
novelty and is fascinated with current, contemporary innovations, and whatever happens to be vogue (Oord, 2001). Conspicuous consumption and all other tools of consumerism propagation obsess the popular culture (Horton, 2003). In a postmodern world, nothing is constant except for the relentless pace of change, and this type of postmodernism could be summed up as a growing distrust and disrespect of authority and rationality, and a widespread sense of consumer entitlement (Sacks, 1996).

2.4.2 Consumerism in China

Perhaps nothing is more representative of today’s Chinese popular culture than brand names, designer products, vogue and fashion. Since the 1980s, China has experienced great economic developments after reformation. China’s annual economic growth rate has routinely topped upwards of 8 percent to 10 percent during the past fifteen years (Lei, 2007). Fashion terms such as consumerism, consumer society and middle class can be encountered quite often in Chinese popular cultures. These materialistic and symbolic resources, very much an ideology in themselves, have been shown to have the power to override political ideological polemics and debates in China (e.g., those between capitalist democracies and communist authoritarian societies, etc.), particularly under the country’s current drive toward market economy within a rigid political system (Paek & Pan 2009). Consumerism pleasantly binds people with mainstream ideas, both old and new, through specific and concrete commodities (Marcuse, 1964; Tao & Jin, 2005; Zhao, 1997).

Mass consumption in China is regarded as Confucian Consumerism. It integrates Chinese traditional values, for example, *Li*, which concern family and social relations
(Zhao, 1997). For instance, the most highly desired products are closely associated with family: electric appliances. In the late 1970s, the black-and-white television set was approved to the established list of desirable consumer durables. In 1980s, the list changed to include colored television sets, refrigerators, washing machines, and hi-fi systems. At that time, the national goal of “Four General Modernizations” was conveniently mirrored in the family goal of obtaining the said four major consumer items (Zhao, 1997). As one of the traditional principles of Confucianism, Li means both courtesy and gift (Zhao, 1997). Chinese people maintain close relationships with their relatives, friends, and many social relations by exchanging gifts from time to time. At present, the advent of the consumer in China leads to the different values in which brands and luxury products become symbols of financial success and face (mian zi) within people’s social network (Hui et al., 2003; Wang & Lin, 2009; Wei & Pan, 1999; Zhou & Hui, 2003). That is, consumption in China is “not just meant to meet basic needs but also to fulfill a social need for identification, status and social recognition” (Thompson, 2010, p. 73).

Consumerism in China is unequally developed. Due to many historical and social elements, it is impossible to use one unified definition to cover all facets of the Chinese society, such that no one can hastily assert that China has already entered the consumer society (Tao & Jin, 2005). For example, due to political, economic and cultural imbalances, there are big differences between rural and urban areas in China. A study by the Chinese Academy of Social Science (2004) concludes that Chinese urban-rural income gap, factoring in education and health, is very serious.
China from the aspects of the developed areas and cities, it is close to the post-industrial society. However, viewing rural areas, it remains a pre-modern society to a certain degree.

Political influence cannot be ignored in developing consumerism in China. In the later years of the 1990s, Chinese production entered a stage of severe surplus with the fast-developing speed of technology. Stimulating consumption thus became one of the important policies and the primary drive of economy development. “Consumerism is one of the tools of policy makers. Index of consumption confidence also becomes “a very important criterion to evaluate the economy development in China” (Tao & Jin, 2005, p. 118). Political slogans are also connected with Confucianism. For instance, the banner ‘‘Putting People First’’ echoes Confucian values, in particular those of Mencius (a devout follower of Confucius), who applied the Confucian notion of Ren to Ren Zheng (benevolent government) and proposed the kings of states to think and act in the interests of the people (Lu & Simons, 2006).

Consumerism in China is more like a new product mixed with traditions and new ideas. China has experienced tremendous changes after entering the modern period. Most of the social changes are caused by violent revolution. However, there has been no fundamental change of cultures. Cultures always represent the historical ethnic-nation constructions in the form of modernity with forceful ideological characters (Tao & Jin, 2005). In the consumer society, the changes are much more radical than ever before, and personal and private experiences become the fertilized soil of culture. The traditional values have undergone big concessions; nevertheless, they still exist and
have strong influences. As Solé-Farràs (2008) argues that “both New Confucianism and Chinese Socialism are now involved in ongoing processes of redesign and adaptation of their respective traditional values” (p. 21).

2.4.3 Fashion under Confucian Consumerism in China

One of the characteristics of Chinese fashion is that it is influenced by political orientation. “The nature of the symbolic values attached to fashionable clothing depends on the cultural and political history of the country and the characteristics and variety of the ethnic groups of which it is composed” (Crane & Bovone, 2006, p. 324). These types of symbolic values attributed to clothing vary at different times in the same country. In Mao’s time, Chinese people dressed in grey, black, white, army green and navy blue, colors which were the schemes of Chinese puritan communism. Later, the post-Mao government redefined socialism, which focused on developing the forces of production. They encouraged improving people’s living standards, especially material consumption. In the 1990s, rampant mass consumerism brought about increased interest in Western fashion. At the same time, numerous “niches” appeared in Western consumer societies and replaced relatively homogenous class cultures, in which individuals have various tastes in spite of having similar socioeconomic background (Wasserman, 2002; Wellner, 2003). The variety of choices in lifestyles liberates the individuals from tradition and enables them to create a meaningful self-identity (Giddens, 1991). Such as, “the separation of fashion from morality and political ideology finally legitimized the expression of individuality---in opposition to both communist collectivism and traditional conformist values” (Wu, 2009, p. 181).
Increasing the consumer ability of individuals has become an important policy. In the popularity of consumerism, new patterns of consumption have emerged. People have started to pay much more attention to style and taste, to express their differences. Chinese people consciously make effort to stress their identity through dressing sense, which is important to maintain their social status. According to the 2010 China Consumer Survey report, Chinese consumers have not only distinctive tastes and priorities but also unique ways of selecting and purchasing products (Atsmon et al., 2010). Fashion reflects an individuality that sets Chinese consumers apart from others (Branding in China, 2007).

As mentioned above, the consumerism and consumption development in China are unequal. That is, consumption associated with identity and taste is concentrated to a relatively small minority of high-income groups. Those high-income groups are the vanguard consumers of fashion, especially imported luxury goods. Prior studies find Chinese consumers have strong preference for western brands (e.g. Sin et al., 2000; Zhang, 1996). Particularly, young, more-affluent and better-educated people are much more likely to try new products. Many of the major international fashion brands can be found in Chinese cities. However, being unique is not a value for Chinese, and they use products to express their belonging to the group (Schmitt, 1997). The Chinese consumers buying of luxury goods fit broadly into two categories: the super-rich and the rising middle-class (Branding in China, 2007). Owning luxury goods symbolizes a successful life and high-class taste. Being either middle class or white collar has been a key issue for many fashion consumers and fashion marketing researchers (e.g., Huang,
Precisely because of this paradoxical existence, the intricate relationships between fashion and fashion consumption in the modern Chinese society are therefore conceivably different from what one may have observed in the West (Davis, 1992; McCracken, 1988; Simmel, 2001). With growing globalization and the progressive opening, China has been the focus of considerable market and business center for the past decade. Multinational corporations have entered this market bringing their products to increasingly brand conscious Chinese consumers, particularly, to young adult consumers (O’Cass, 2008). The young Chinese generation has been found to have a higher propensity on fashion and brand (Kalish, 2005; Kwan et al., 2003). Globalization also makes the traditional ways of life change, emotional and ideological power for young people is more compelling. The new worldview may directly contradict young people’s cultural traditions. The global values of individualism and consumerism have impact on the decline in the power of collectivism for Chinese young people (Stevenson & Zusho, 2002). In their 2010 China Consumer Survey, McKinsey & Company reported that Chinese consumers are creating a distinct identity, “They have not only distinctive tastes and priorities but also unique ways of choosing and buying products” (McKinsey, 2010, p. 12). On the other hand, Chinese young people are also affected by how others view themselves in the social context (Han et al., 2009). One of the plausible explanations for the so-called unique Chinese fashion individuality (Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1989) is that in Confucian culture, hierarchy is legitimate and conformity to group norms is literally required (Chan, 2008). People manage their self-images to
meet the criteria of the society; particularly, they attempt to look better and avoid looking bad (Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1989).

2.5 Research Questions

In the field of communication, two mainstreams studies attempt to answer the following questions: how do media construct changes to the world? How do audiences experience these changes? Based on the social context of China, this study attempts to determine the answers to these questions from one profile: the self and media exposure in fashion communication. This study also attempts to explore the key antecedents that drive Chinese young generations to pursue the path of fashion. These two attempts are achieved by exploring the relationships between the following constructs (media exposure, social comparison, self-discrepancy, self-dissatisfaction, cognitive dissonance reduction, materialism, lifestyle, peer influence and fashion clothing involvement) with the above hypotheses and the following research questions.

RQ 1: What processes do individuals undergo to reduce or eliminate dissonance between the actual and ideal selves?

RQ 2: What is the intramedia effect when individuals are exposed to fashion media and involve in fashion clothing?

Reasons for exploring the intra-media effect come from prior studies. Chaffee and Tims (1982) find that most newspaper users also get information from television and radio, and most magazine users also involve in all other forms of media use. Chaffee (1982) compares mass media and interpersonal communication and notes that different forms of communication can be convergent or complementary from the
perspective of the user. Especially, convergence will occur when different channels provide the same or overlapping messages. Shen and Eveland (2010) examine the “intra-media interaction” hypothesis and explore how different types of new media use may interact with one another. They divide intra-media interaction effects into three levels: addictive effect, diminishing returns and amplification. Based on their logics, “it is reasonable to suspect that exposure to different news outlets might have interactive effects with one another in determining one’s political knowledge. The resulting political knowledge developed from multiple sources might be unable to be reduced to the sum of what was gathered from each sense or news source separately” (Shen & Eveland, 2010, p. 366). In this study, the author tries to explore the intra-media effect in fashion information and fashion media use.

RQ 3: What is the relationship between media exposure and social comparison when fashion clothing involvement is high? Does social comparison mediate the relationship between media exposure and fashion clothing involvement?

Prior study suggests that social comparison process mediates the effect of exposure to thin-ideal advertising on symptoms of depression, weight-related thoughts, and weight-regulatory thoughts (Bessenoff, 2006). When they use higher benchmark, people are motived to change the self to be more like the compare standard. Upward comparison enhances the self through eliciting oneself improvement behaviors (Higgins, 1987). When individuals compare themselves to the thin ideal models, social comparison mediates the relationship between media exposure and negative affect and increase weight concerns (Tiggemann & McGill, 2004). In this study, the author
examines social comparison as a possible mediator in relation between media exposure and fashion clothing involvement.

RQ 4: What is the relationship between media exposure and lifestyle when fashion clothing involvement is high? Does the lifestyle motivated by achievement moderate the relationship between media exposure and fashion clothing involvement?

Reasons for expecting moderation effects are derived primarily from previous research on the interaction between the Striver aspect and media consumption patterns that have been shown to hold the potential to jointly affect fashion involvement (Khare et al., 2011). The results indicated that such social norms as the desirability of being the Striver and media exposure by fashion consumers seem to be able to override other sources of influence, thus creating a significant differential in the outcome of the fashion clothing involvement impact.

RQ 5: What is the relationship between media exposure and self-discrepancy when fashion clothing involvement is high? Does the self-discrepancy moderate the relationship between media exposure and fashion clothing involvement?

RQ 6: What is the relationship between self-discrepancy, social comparison, and media exposure and fashion clothing involvement? Does social comparison mediate the effect of self-discrepancy from exposure to fashion media?

Based on Higgins' theory (1989), high levels of self-discrepancy are linked to various types of emotional distress, such as disappointment and dissatisfaction (e.g., Strauman & Higgins, 1988), low esteem (e.g., Moretti & Higgins, 1990), and even types of social phobias (e.g., Strauman, 1989). Previous studies have linked self-discrepancy
and emotional vulnerabilities (e.g. Strauman et al., 1991; Szymanski & Cash, 1995). Other studies show a causal relation between long-time exposure to thin ideal image and self-discrepancy, leading to eating-related behavior or misbehavior such as disorder. This current study proposes three specific effects: First, a moderation effect whereby self-discrepancy and the likelihood of exposing to ideal image produce a joint effect on fashion involvement. Second, a mediation effect which is the social comparison process is located between fashion media exposure and fashion involvement. Third, the possible mediated moderation effect: high level of self-discrepancy may increase the likelihood of comparison from fashion media.
2.6 Theoretical Model

Figure 1 Predictors of Fashion Clothing Involvement

Note:  

- indicates the social predictors
- indicates the psychological predictors
Figure 2  Moderation Effect

Media Exposure

\[ \text{Striver (Lifestyle)} \times \text{Media Exposure} \]

\[ \text{Fashion Clothing Involvement} \]

\[ a \]

\[ b \]

\[ c \]
Figure 3 Mediation Effect
Figure 4 Moderation Effect

Media Exposure

Self-discrepancy

Fashion Involvement

Clothing

Media Exposure

Self-discrepancy
Figure 5 Mediated Moderation Effect

This figure proposed mediated moderation model, suggesting social comparison as a mediator of the moderation of the relationship between media exposure and fashion clothing involvement by self-discrepancy.
Chapter III Methodology (Study 1)

3.1 Sample and Sampling Procedure

Data for this study were collected from a telephone survey in July, 2011. This study focuses on Chinese young people’s fashion clothing involvement and a total of 500 young residents in Guangzhou, a large southern metropolis were selected through random digital dialing. A doctoral candidate translated the questionnaire into Chinese version. Within the sample, slightly over half (53.8 percent) were males and 46.2 percent females. A total of 59 percent of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 24, whereas the 25-30 age group was slightly smaller and constituted 41 percent of the respondents. All the respondents were between the age 18 and 30. Respondents with junior college or college education accounted for 63.6 percent of the total. The unmarried occupied much bigger percent than married, which were 75 and 25 percent respectively. The following table shows the statistical details.

Table 1 about here

3.2 Measurements

3.2.1 Fashion Clothing Involvement

Fashion clothing involvement was measured using four 5-point Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree) based on the product involvement measure constructed by O’Cass (2000). The four questions are: “Fashion clothing is a significant part of my life,” “I am very much involved in fashion clothing,” “I would say that fashion clothing is central to my identity as a person,” and “I pay a lot of
attention to fashion clothing.” Reliability across the four items was adequate (Cronbach’s α = .72). A factor analysis (principal component Oblimin rotation, eigenvalue > 1) generated one single factor which the author labeled the fashion clothing involvement scale (see Appendix 1). In subsequent analysis, this factor rather than the individual items it subsumed is used. The scale accounted for 70% of the variance in the factor.

3.2.2 Media Exposure

Media exposure was measured by asking respondents for their frequency in using two forms of media: fashion magazines and fashion websites. A 3-point Likert-scale item (1 = never; 2 = sometimes; and 3 = often) was used. This was followed by other media consumption questions such as “How many fashion magazines do you often read?” “How much time do you spend on website browsing every time?” “How many fashion websites do you often browse?”

3.2.3 Materialism

Measurement of materialism corresponded with the two dimensions cited in the conceptualization part: acquisition centrality and possession-defined success (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Findings that individuals share the tendency to judge their success by keeping up with the Joneses is as applicable to China as the cultures where the expression was coined. Questionnaire items for materialism ran the whole gamut of conspicuous consumption with eight items to polarize respondents for purpose of maximizing variance: “I usually buy only the things I need”; “I don’t pay much attention to the material objects people own”; “I try to keep my life simple as far as possessions are
concerned”; “I admire people who own expensive possessions (such as houses, cars and clothes)”; “I like a lot of luxury in my life”, “It is important for me to have really nice things”; “It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can’t afford to buy all the things I’d like;” and “I’d be happier if I could afford to buy more things.” Again, five-point Likert-type scales with poles from strongly disagree to strongly agree were used. Reliability for both acquisition centrality (α = .71) and possession-defined success (α = .70) was acceptable.

3.2.4 Lifestyle

For lifestyle measurement, 10 items were selected from the Values, Attitudes, and Lifestyles (VALS, SRI Consulting Business Intelligence, 2003) using a five-point Likert scale (1= mostly disagree; 5 = mostly agree). Cultural-specific items (e.g., Biblical references or the mention of federal government, etc.) were excluded. Several other items that are somewhat detached from the social reality in China or are outside the range of daily conversations (e.g., racial, sex, and bi-partisan issues, etc.) were also excluded. Still others that failed to meet the loading criterion of at least .60 (McCroskey & Young, 1979) were likewise dropped. An exploratory factor analysis on the 10 items resulted in four neatly separated factors in conformity with the conceptualized distinctions between and among strivers, experiencers, thinkers, and survivors. Together, the four factors account for 63.4 percent of the total variance (Table 2).

The first factor, “Strivers” (eigenvalue = 2.87; 28.71% of variance; M = 2.57), has under its wings four items, clustering individuals who are fashion conscious, fun seeking, and care a lot about what others think of them. The second factor,
“Experiencers” (eigenvalue = 1.32; variance = 13.23%; \( M = 2.49 \)), subsumes two items, grouping young people who are articulate, enthusiastic, highly resourceful, and innovative. The third factor, “Survivors” (eigenvalue = 1.24; variance = 12.41%; \( M = 2.38 \)) are among the least initiated. They are neither resourceful nor innovative. “Thinkers,” the fourth factor (eigenvalue = 0.91; variance = 9.05%; \( M = 2.78 \)) are pragmatists who look for durability, utility, and value in the products they buy. Taken together, the four lifestyle types were conceptually consistent with the theoretical expectations described by SRI Consulting Business Intelligence (2003).

3.2.5 Peer Influence

Items for the index of peer influence were selected from the inventory constructed by Oliver and Thelen (1996) whose socio-cultural models ascribed a powerful role to peers on body image (see also Thompson et al., 1999). All questions were related to the individuals’ perception of the importance their friends place on appearance norms, especially for clothing related issues. Three questions, all measured with “often” (2); “sometimes” (1); and “never” (0), formed the index: 1) My friends and I talk about how our clothes look; 2) My friends and I talk about how important it is to always look attractive; 3) My friends and I talk about the size and shape of our bodies. Internal reliability was adequate for the three items (\( \alpha = .74 \)).

3.2.6 Social Comparison

Social comparison was measured developing four items from Krcmar, Giles
and Helme (2008) and using 5-point Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). Questionnaire items were: “I compare my body and looks to actors’ and celebrities’ bodies and looks that I see in magazines or website,” “I compare my dress and adornments to actors’ and celebrities’ dress and adornments that I see in magazines or website,” “At parties or other social events, I compare my body and physical appearance to the bodies and physical appearance of others,” and “At parties or other social events, I compare my dress and adornments to dress and adornments of others.” Reliability across the four items was adequate (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .76$). A factor analysis (principal component Oblimin rotation, eigenvalue $> 1$) generated one single factor which was labeled the social comparison scale (see Appendix 2). The scale accounted for 58% of the variance in the factor.

3.2.7 Cognitive Dissonance Reduction

Measurement of cognitive dissonance reduction corresponded with the three dimensions cited in the conceptualization part: changing behaviors, changing environment itself, and reconciling dissonance (Cooper, 2007). Based on the cognitive dissonance theory, the three dimensions are named as behavioral cognitive element, environmental cognitive element and new cognitive element respectively for further statistical analysis. Three questionnaire items for cognitive dissonance reduction polarize respondents for purpose of maximizing variance: 1) If I am not satisfied with my body, I will not mind it and still to be myself, 2) If I am not satisfied with my body, I will take some actions, for example, to buy new clothes, to go to gym etc. 3) If I am not satisfied with my body, I will change my attention to other things. Again, five-point
Likert-type scales with poles from strongly disagree to strongly agree were used.

3.2.8 Self-Discrepancy

Self-discrepancy was measured using seven 5-point Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree) based on self-concept discrepancy theory (Higgins et al., 1985). The seven questions are: 1) Generally, I am satisfied with my appearance. 2) I think I am a dressing decent person. 3) I think that my appearance is plain. 4) I wish that my appearance can be more attractive. 5) I think that I am not slim enough. 6) I think that I am not tall enough. 7) It would be better if I am more fashionable.

For self-discrepancy, responses to the 7-item questionnaire were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis using squared multiple correlations as prior communality estimates. The principal factor method was used to extract the factors, and this was followed by a varimax rotation. A scree test suggested three meaningful factors, so only these factors were retained for rotation. In interpreting the rotated factor pattern, an item was said to load on a given factor, if the factor loading was .40 or greater for that factor, and was less than .40 for the other. Using these criteria, two items were found to load on the first factor, which was subsequently labeled the self-improve factor (Cronbach’s \( \alpha = .60 \)). Two items loaded on the second factor, which was labeled the self-confidence factor (Cronbach’s \( \alpha = .55 \)). Three items also loaded on the third factor, which was labeled the self-abasement factor (Cronbach’s \( \alpha = .40 \)). The three factors account for 60.3 percent of the total variance (Table 3).
3.2.9 Self-Dissatisfaction

For self dissatisfaction, five items were selected from the Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ; Cooper et al., 1987). Again, five-point Likert-type scales with poles from strongly disagree to strongly agree were used. The five items are: 1) I have feeling bored make me brood about my shape. 2) I look small when I stay with those slim people. 3) I worry about my leg pose is not good when sitting down. 4) I worry to getting fat when eating dessert, cake or high caloric food. 5) I want to go to gym because I think my body shape is not good enough.

An exploratory factor analysis on the 4 items resulted in two neatly separated factors. One item failed to meet the loading criterion of at least .60 (McCroskey & Young, 1979) was likewise dropped. Two items were found to load on the first factor, which was labeled the Worry factor (Cronbach’s α = .64). Two items also loaded on the second factor, which was labeled the Concern factor (Cronbach’s α = .40). The two factors account for 67.9 percent of the total variance (Table 4).

3.2.10 Demographics

Although they primarily serve the purpose of controls, social demographic variables include gender (1 = male; 2 = female), age (measured in two-year increment), education (ordinal measures from primary school, junior high school, senior high school
to junior college, college and graduate school), household annual income (total income from all members of the family), marital status (1 = unmarried; 2 = married), and occupation.

3.3 Results

3.3.1 Hypotheses Testing

Both controlling for demographics, two multiple regress analyses were performed to test the predictive power of self-discrepancy on the two factors of self-dissatisfaction respectively. Results showed remarkably similar modes in the predictive structure across the three independent variables (Table 5). Two of them related significantly to worry factor. Self-abasement was the strongest beta indicate ($\beta = .22; p < .001$). Self-improve was the other strong indicator ($\beta = .17; p < .001$). Gender was also significantly and positively correlated to the first factor worry ($\beta = .16; p < .001$). A lot of studies focus on young girls and body shape (e.g. Cash & Henry, 1995; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2003), it is easy to understand young females pay more attention to their body shape and worry about their image.

Similarly, two of the three factors of self-discrepancy significantly related to the second factor concern. This time, self-improve was the strongest indicator ($\beta = .34; p < .001$). The strong desire to get an ideal image pushes individuals to keep a watchful eye on their body shape and take corresponding actions. Self-abasement was the second strong indicator ($\beta = .18; p < .001$). In this round analysis, no demographics significantly related to concern factor.

The factor self-confidence was not significant predictor for self-dissatisfaction.
This factor states that individuals are generally not unsatisfied with their current appearance. In other words, they think that their image is tolerable. As such, the inclination against worry or concern is quite easy to understand with the self-appreciation. Thus, Hypothesis 1a was fully supported.

Several multiple regression analyses were run to test the predicting power of self-dissatisfaction on the three factors of cognitive dissonance reduction. Controlling for demographics, the results revealed that the concern factor of self-dissatisfaction emerged as a significant but negative predictor of new cognitive element ($\beta = -0.15; p < .01$). The other factor worry was not significantly related to this element. Income significantly but negatively predicted adding new cognitive element ($\beta = -0.12; p < .05$).

For the second factor of cognitive dissonance reduction, both worry and concern factor were significant and positive predictor of behavioral cognitive element ($\beta = .17; p < .001; \beta = .39; p < .001$ respectively). The concern factor emerged as the strongest predictor. Gender was another significant predictor ($\beta = .11; p < .05$). These results indicate that women who much concern their body image more tend to change behaviors to improve their self-image. This model explains almost 17.8 percent of the variance in behavior changing function (Table 6).

When turn to the environmental cognitive element, only worry factor emerged as a significant and positive predictor ($\beta = .11; p < .05$). The concern factor was not significantly related to this element. Unsurprisingly, it’s inclination against changing
runs in the opposite direction to the concern factor.

Overall, two factors of self-dissatisfaction were significantly correlated to changing behavioral cognitive element, while the concern factor negatively but significantly correlated to adding new cognitive element and the worry factor significantly and positively correlated to changing environmental cognitive element. Hypothesis 1b was also supported.

A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to estimate a regression model that best predicts levels of fashion clothing involvement among psychological norm based on one factor: cognitive dissonance reduction and social norms based on five factors: media exposure, materialism, lifestyle, social comparison and peer influence. Controlling for the demographics, psychological factor was entered first and the social norms were entered next in the analysis.

Prior to conduction of the analysis, several descriptive statistics and graphs were generated to examine the test assumptions, including normality of distributions, linear relationship between fashion clothing involvement and all predicting factors (i.e. materialism, lifestyle, peer influence, social comparison, media exposure and cognitive dissonance reduction), normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity. Measures of skewness and kurtosis, histograms, and Q-Q plots show that the shapes of the distributions of fashion clothing involvement, cognitive dissonance reduction, media exposure, lifestyle, materialism, social comparison and peer influence approach that a
normal curve. Pearson’s correlation coefficients and scatterplots show a linear relationship between fashion clothing involvement and all predicting factors. In addition, inspections of both the histogram and the normal probability plots of the residuals indicate that the errors were normally distributed. Inspection of the scatterplot of predicted scores against the residuals confirms that the assumption of homoscedasticity was met. Evaluation of the correlation matrix and both VIF and tolerance values show no multicollinearity exists among the several factors.

Across demographics, women are significantly more likely than men, not surprisingly, to pay close attention to fashion clothing ($\beta = .17; p < .001$), consistent with previous findings (e.g. Auty & Elliott, 1998; Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997; Goldsmith et al., 1996; Tigert et al., 1980). Marital status is significantly but negatively related to fashion clothing ($\beta = -.10; p < .05$). Intuitive as this particular finding is, the complete absence of significant prediction from the rest of the three demographic attributes is somewhat perplexing. One expects, for example, that income would contribute positively to fashion clothing involvement and education would work in the opposite direction.

As far as dimensions of Cognitive Dissonance Reduction were concerned, only one of the three summary types (elements) significantly related to fashion clothing involvement. Behavioral cognitive element was the strong beta indicator ($\beta = .23; p < .001$), accounting for 9.1 percent of the variance in fashion clothing involvement. Individuals take actions (e.g. wearing fashion clothes) to improve their appearance and mitigate the negative emotion. Neither environmental cognitive element nor new
cognitive element was significantly related to fashion clothing involvement (Table 7). The two factors get rid of cognitive dissonance mainly through transferring attention to other issues and excuses; therefore, their inclination against involving in fashion is well understood. Hypothesis 1c was also supported.

In the block of social norms, lifestyle emerged as the strongest predictor of fashion clothing involvement, accounting for 18.90 percent of the variance in fashion clothing involvement. Three of the four summary lifestyle types (factors) relate significantly to fashion clothing involvement. Being a Striver is nearly fully equivalent to mental or behavioral commitment to fashion as the strongest beta indicates ($\beta = .41; p < .001$). Strivers are at the same time highly self-conscious, other conscious and fashion conscious. It is therefore natural for members of this group to succumb to pressures of impression management. Experiencer is another strong fashion indicator ($\beta = .12; p < .01$). Survivors are the only people who are mildly but significantly opposed to fashion involvement ($\beta = -.09; p < .05$). With their consumption pattern mainly oriented to cheap price and pragmatic purposes, the inclination against consumerism by Survivors is not hard to understand.

The second strongest factor was media exposure, accounting for an additional 14.30 percent of the variance in fashion clothing involvement. Results show strikingly similar patterns in the predictive structure across the two independent variables (Table 7). Exposure to fashion website registered a slightly, albeit not significantly, higher impact on fashion clothing involvement than magazine reading ($\beta_{\text{magazine}} = .21, p < .001$; $\beta_{\text{website}} = .25, p < .001$). Given the high correlation between the two independent
variables ($r = .52, p < .001$), it appears as if the need for fashion information takes precedence over the channel through which that information is disseminated.

The third strongest predictor in this block was social comparison ($\beta = .32; p < .001$), accounting for 10.50 percent of the variance in fashion clothing involvement. People take upward with high standard and get close to the standard through wearing fashion clothes.

As far as dimensions of Materialism are concerned, it was found that possession-defined success carries special weight in the Chinese culture in connection with fashion clothing involvement ($\beta = .22; p < .001$). In stark contrast, acquisition centrality in the Chinese society apparently is less self-centered than other centered. That is to say, possessions of trendy goods are perceived only as having showcase values (involvement driven by possession-defined success) not lacking such values (acquisition centrality).

Finally, peer influence was identified as a significant and positive predictor of fashion involvement ($\beta = .25; p < .001$). Clearly, pressure from people within one’s immediate life space and social contacts for fashion clothing involvement cannot be underestimated. In general, H2, H3, H4, H5 and H6 were fully supported.

3.3.2 Results of Research Question 1

Research question 1 explores how Chinese young people reduce cognitive dissonance between the actual and ideal selves. For the statement of adding new
cognitive element (reconciling dissonance), “If I am not satisfied with my body, I will not mind it and still to be myself”, 42.6 percent respondents disagreed with it. Meanwhile, 31.6 percent respondents expressed their agreement, and the rest kept neutral attitude. Turning to the statement of changing behavioral cognitive element (changing behaviors), “If I am not satisfied with my body, I will take some actions, for example, to buy new clothes, to go to gym etc.”, almost half respondents (48.6%) agreed with it. Only 26 percent respondents said that they disagreed with it. The neutral attitude adopted 25.4 percent. When mentioning the statement of changing environmental cognitive element changing environment, “If I am not satisfied with my body, I will change my attention to other things”, there was no big difference between the disagreement (38.6%) and agreement (37%). Nearly one quarter (24.4%) respondents adopt the neutral attitude.

According to the results, nearly half respondents showed their attention on their body shape, and they mostly adopted changing behaviors to reduce negative emotions. For each statement, there was no obvious difference for neutral attitude (about 25% respectively). All respondents are belonging to the age group between 18 and 30. It is easy to understand that they care about their body shape and want to improve their image with fashionable clothes.

3.3.3 Results of Research Question 2

With the prior frame reference (Shen & Eveland, 2010), this study tries to explore the possible intra-media effect of fashion media use on fashion clothing involvement. The purpose of addressing this research question is twofold: first, the
author seeks to make clear whether the influence of each fashion channel use is additive. If yes, the assumption of additive effects could take the following model:

(a) overall information effect = website effect + magazine effect

On the other hand, there are other possibilities except additive effects. If individuals get the similar fashion information from website or magazine, the added value of exposure to the two media might be less than the combined effects of exposure to each respectively. Then, the diminishing returns may follow this model:

(b) overall information effect < website effect + magazine effect

Based on the previous research frame (Shen & Eveland, 2010), there is another possibility. That is, some information which is ambiguous or hard to understand for each media, but in combination can be better understandable. Therefore, there is an amplification effect when exposing to different media. The model is in the following:

(c) overall information effect > website effect + magazine effect

In the exploring process, an interaction term was created by multiplying the magazine exposure with website exposure. The interaction term between fashion magazine use and websites use in this study was found to be significant ($b = .167$, $\beta = .36$, $p < .001$, see Table 8). The incremental $R^2$ of interaction term (12.50%) is less than incremental $R^2$ of media exposure (14.30%). This result suggested that the use of certain combinations of fashion media produce less fashion involvement than if their effects were completely and truly added. The model (b) is supported in this study.

Table 8 about here
3.3.4 Results of Research Question 3 (Mediation Effect)

Prior studies of social research suggest that exposure to thin-ideal would elicit comparing process, resulting different negative effects (e.g. Field et al., 1999; Tiggemann & McGill, 2004). Social comparison is expected to mediate the relationship between media exposure and fashion clothing involvement in this research question. Responses to the social comparison questions were used as the mediator in the several regression analyses, controlling for demographics.

As needed to test mediation effect (Baron & Kenny, 1986), media exposure was found to be a significant predictor of social comparison ($\beta= .23, p < .001$ for magazine; and $\beta= .27, p < .001$ for website). Social comparison was a significant predictor of fashion involvement ($\beta= .32, p < .001$). After social comparison entered into the model, the effect of magazine exposure was reduced (from $\beta = .31, p < .001$, to $\beta= .24, p < .001$); while the effect of website exposure was also reduced (from $\beta = .33, p < .001$, to $\beta= .25, p < .001$). The reduction effects, however, were still significant. Social comparison was found to partially mediate the relationship between exposure to media and fashion clothing involvement. In other words, media exposure acts on fashion clothing involvement partly through social comparison. The partial mediation model is in the following:
Figure 6 Partial Mediation Model

![Partial Mediation Model Diagram]

- **Media Exposure (X)**
  - $b_{MX}$

- **Social Comparison (M)**
  - $b_{YM,X}$

- **Fashion Clothing Involvement**
  - $b_{YM,M}$

- **E**
3.3.5 Results of Research Question 4 (Moderation Effect)

Research Question 4 is mainly concerned with the possibility of a joint effect between media exposure and the Striver aspect of lifestyle on fashion clothing involvement. The author empirically tested a model of moderation effect with previous research as the reference frame. In the process, an interaction term was created by multiplying the Striver component of the lifestyle factor with magazine and website exposure respectively. Regression analysis betas controlling for demographics for the two interaction terms were identical ($\beta = .41, p < .001$ for Striver and magazine; and $\beta = .39, p < .001$ for Striver and website).

These findings imply at least two plausible explanations: 1) Consistent with findings in Table 7, exposure to the two forms of media does not seem to show discriminant validity in terms of exhibiting distinct paths of influence. Although they are conceptually unique, fashion magazines and websites appear to be interchangeable empirically; and 2) this is so because, as the data pattern suggests, the two are subsumed under some broader concept such as fashion information or fashion image.

Table 9 about here

3.3.6 Results of Research Question 5 (Moderation Effect)

Research Question 5 particularly concerns the possibility of a joint effect between media exposure and the self-discrepancy on fashion clothing involvement. In the analysis, an interaction term was created by multiplying the three factors of self-discrepancy with magazine and website exposure respectively. Controlling for
demographics for the six interaction terms, both self-improve and self-confidence factors with media exposure were identical ($\beta = .25, p < .001$ for self-improve factor and magazine; $\beta = .28, p < .001$ for self-confidence factor and magazine; $\beta = .24, p < .001$ for the self-improve factor and website; and $\beta = .27, p < .001$ for the self-confidence factor and website). The interaction terms significantly indicated the moderation effect except for the self-abasement factor (see Table 10).

Table 10 about here

3.3.7 Results of Research Question 6 (Mediated Moderation Effect)

Research Question 6 is concerned with the mediating process that is responsible for that moderation. Several regression analyses were conducted to examine whether social comparison mediated the moderation of self-discrepancy in the relationship between media exposure and fashion clothing involvement. That is, the effect of media exposure on fashion clothing involvement would depend on the level of individuals’ self-discrepancy. And individuals are further predicted that this moderation effect would be mediated by comparing with others. Social comparison mediation is stronger for individuals with high levels of self-discrepancy as compared to individuals with low levels of self-discrepancy. The author adopts the original and classic approaches as outlined by previous studies (e.g. Baron & Kenny, 1986; Judd & Kenny, 1981; Muller et al., 2005). There are three models that underlie for mediated moderation in the following: in which, $X_i$ is independent variable, $Y_i$ is outcome variable, $Me$ is mediator and $Mo$ is moderator.

\[
Y = \beta_{10} + \beta_{11}X + \beta_{12}Mo + \beta_{13}XMo + e_1 \quad \text{(Step 1)}
\]

\[
Me = \beta_{20} + \beta_{21}X + \beta_{22}Mo + \beta_{23}XMo + e_2 \quad \text{(Step 2)}
\]
Y = β₃₀ + β₃₁X + β₃₂Mo + β₃₃XM₀ + β₃₄Me + β₃₅MeMo + e₃  (Step 3)

The Step 1 regression is a simple 2 X 2 ANOVA on the fashion clothing involvement. Controlling for demographics, then media exposure, self-discrepancy, and the media exposure × self-discrepancy interaction were entered. The interaction term was significant and indicated moderation effect. In Step 2, social comparison was regressed on media exposure, self-discrepancy and media exposure × self-discrepancy interaction. In Step 3, fashion clothing involvement was regressed on media exposure, self-discrepancy, the media exposure × self-discrepancy interaction, social comparison and the social comparison × self-discrepancy interaction.

In Step 1, media exposure × self-discrepancy interaction significantly affect fashion clothing involvement (β = .25, p < .001 for the self-improve factor and magazine; β = .28, p < .001 for the self-confidence factor and magazine; β = .24, p < .001 for the self-improve factor and website; and β = .27, p < .001 for self-confidence factor and website, see Table 11a & 11b), indicating a moderation. In Step 2 and 3, as a result, the moderation of the residual treatment effect, the interaction terms of media exposure and self-discrepancy (β₂₃ and β₃₃) were not significantly (see Table 11a & 11b). Based on the prior studies (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1986), this is mediated moderation effect. Then the interpretation was that social comparison has mediated the media exposure × self-discrepancy effect on fashion clothing involvement.

___________________
Table 11a & 11b about here
___________________
Chapter IV Conclusion and Discussion (Study 1)

4.1 Conclusion

Given what the author found, young people’s fashion clothing involvement seems to be densely connected to surveillance of environment via fashion media exposure, lifestyle, materialism, peers’ influence, social comparison and cognitive dissonance reduction. On the whole, the results indicate that 1) the channel of information is less relevant to fashion clothing involvement than the content of information, suggesting that people who are in need of fashion information are not picky about where they get it. 2) the findings are also testimony to some degrees of content uniformity in the world of fashion media attention to fashion clothing, whether cognitive, affective, or behavioral, is likely to be a function of that part of lifestyle that is achievement motivated (i.e., the Striver mentality), only more so when the latter is combined with media exposure. Again, the observed pattern has little, if at all, to do with forms of media and sources of information. The strong conditional effect diminishes the main effect stemming from both media use and the internal achievement drive. Unfortunately, existing literature on significant interaction between media use and various social and psychological factors is too skimpy to be of guidance value in empirical analysis; 3) other factors such as possessions-defined success and peer influence also contribute to fashion involvement, albeit to a lesser extent compared with the contingency effect; 4) The factor of cognitive dissonance reduction (i.e. changing behavioral cognitive element) strongly predicts fashion involvement. Young Chinese (e.g. almost half of the respondents) have a positive attitude in improving their body
image through behavior changing, such as wearing fashionable clothes, doing exercises etc.

4.2 Theoretical Implications

4.2.1 Theory Developing and Supporting

Although this study did not adopt the uses and gratifications (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973) explanation in the theoretical explication of fashion media use, however, the notion that audience members actively engage in rational choice of media outlets and content cannot be brushed aside. Of the total of 500 respondents in this sample, slightly over half (258) were regular readers of fashion magazines, and about the same number (279) reported reliance on fashion websites for information needed. The observed distribution is consistent with that of previous studies. For example, Chaffee and Tims (1982) found that most magazine readers are also fond of other forms of media (e.g., Shirky, 2008).

The process of gratification seeking and receiving is an indication that people are aware of their needs for either information or entertainment and they base their selection of fulfillment on these needs. The content of fashion media and its appeal to a particular segment of the population may be constricted and special, but the mind-message interaction could very well conform to the model specified in the uses and gratifications research tradition. While the uses and gratifications theory emphasizes social attributes of individuals in guiding media content selection, the mere exposure hypothesis directs attention to micro-mechanisms that connect repeated exposure and favorable attitude. In terms of fashion, there is no lack of empirical
evidence as well as everyday examples in support of that relationship. However, very specific mental activities are yet to be identified to give the relationship its solid construct validity.

4.2.2 Developing Theoretical Instructed Measurement

The author develops several theoretical instructed measurements in this current study. Firstly, fashion clothing involvement is a single factor summing four questionnaire items measuring both cognitive and emotional commitment to materialistic and symbolic meanings of fashion. The four indicators, when combined, point to an obsessive self-consciousness about fashion, much to the pleasure of fashion industry. Although this study has no data linking the intensity of impression management and purchase intention, the author believes the former is a necessary condition for the latter.

Secondly, the four dimensions of lifestyle, being factors with clean loadings and having strong internal reliability, demonstrate heartening patterns of distinction in line with expectation. Strivers outperformed all the other lifestyle factors in its prediction of fashion clothing involvement (H3). The author has reasons to suspect that this finding is at least a partial revelation of the increasingly shared symbolic definition of success in the media and rhetoric attempts at equating it with designer style, vogue, and brand names. Various linguistic representations via traditional and new media construct taste and norm as well as what is good taste and what is normal. They too exert impact on needs, desire, and fear after all. Experiencer predicted positively to fashion involvement, showing a supporting to the theory. Such an attachment is
reflective of rational reasoning. Given the positive correlation between trendy and the Strivers factor, one could see the conceptual linkage between image attention, the main source of it, and active attitude toward fashion emulations. As expected, Thinker failed to demonstrate any tangible influence on fashion clothing involvement due to its main character of mental sophistication.

Thirdly, this study develops the three dimensions of self-discrepancy based on previous study (Higgins et al., 1985). As expected (H1a), the self-abasement and the self-improve factor strongly predict self-dissatisfaction. The tendency of attachment demonstrates rational reasons. The self-abasement factor focuses on the weak points of body image, while the self-improve factor expresses the self-enhancement expectations. Both the two factors show the incompatible attitude on present self and ideal self-image.

Next, the two dimensions of self-dissatisfaction are concluded with clean loadings from prior research (Cooper et al., 1987). The worry factor is conceptually linked with the sense of inferiority; meanwhile the concern factor is related with self-improvement. In line with expectation (H1b), both the worry and concern factor positively affect behavior changing, for example, weight reduction, exercises etc. As predicted, self-dissatisfaction is significantly related to cognitive dissonance reduction. Specifically, individuals with high levels of body image self-dissatisfaction are more likely to think about weight-reduction and fashion improvement behaviors. This result supports the behavioral self-regulation model (Scheier & Carver, 1988).

These measurements are developed conceptually and may further advance the understanding of the constructs, such as fashion clothing involvement, lifestyle (for
Chinese young people), self-discrepancy, and self-dissatisfaction. The future studies may take a consideration to examine these measurements in other different fields.

4.2.3 Developing Theoretical Effect Models

The finding demonstrates that different forms of fashion media use may interact with one another to produce non-additive effect in terms of their relation with fashion clothing involvement (R2). The results theorize specifically that content redundancy will produce a diminishing return from exposure to various fashion sources. The author considers the findings a reflection of content redundancy on print and online fashion information. The significant interaction between the two media takes a diminishing return. That is, when fashion magazine and website information are similar in contents and are used together, the effect is “the whole is less than the sum of its parts” (Shen & Eveland, 2010, p. 378). There are also some other possibilities. For example, individuals may get information mainly rely on website and regard the others as supplementary. In such an occasion, users may give less attention to the fashion magazine and the interaction effect would be weaker. Using multiple media as a combination may have different effects, for example: causal relationship, (Holbert, 2005). This study suggests that the intramedia effect can be extended in different communication settings, beyond fashion information.

As predicted, social comparison processes partially mediate the effect of exposure to ideal image of media and fashion clothing involvement (R3). People experience the lowering of mood from comparison to the thin-ideal image and try to improve their image with fashionable clothes. Notably, the reactions of people after
viewing thin-ideal images depend on the degree of self-discrepancy. Gender is a significant factor for self-discrepancy and self-dissatisfaction. This is corresponded with the previous studies (e.g. Bessenoff, 2006). Women are much more involved in body related issues than men. Women with high levels of self-discrepancy experience the predicted lowering mood of self-dissatisfaction. Women with low level of self-discrepancy do not deeply experience negative emotions. Other studies also demonstrate such a self-enhancement effects (e.g. Wilcox & Laird, 2000; Mussweiler & Strack, 2000). The main effects of self-discrepancy suggest that people with high self-discrepancy have lower self-confidence and greater body-related concerns in general than people with low self-discrepancy. This finding is also consistent with prior studies (Higgins, 1989; Strauman, 1989).

When people are failed to become their ideal self, they are motivated to change their behaviors to reduce the cognitive dissonance. In the domain of fashion, this should lead to actions that will allow one to become fashionable, for example, getting more fancy clothes.

As predicted, self-discrepancy affects people’s self-dissatisfaction. This finding corresponds with prior studies (e.g. Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Heinberg et al., 1995). People with high level of self-discrepancy (i.e. self-improve and self-abasement types) experience higher level of dissatisfaction. Women with low level of self-discrepancy (i.e. self-confidence type) do not show these differences between self-discrepancy types. That is, individuals with high level of self-discrepancy are at greater risk for self-dissatisfaction and negative mood in comparing to the thin ideal. Unsurprisingly,
the self-confidence factor does not lead to self-dissatisfaction. To link this factor with self-appreciation, one can see it as a reasonable result. As predicted, self-dissatisfaction influences cognitive dissonance reduction. Both factors of self-dissatisfaction (worry and concern) significantly and overall predict behavior changing. People experiencing negative mood are more like to get fashionable clothes or go to gym. This is echoed by the results of RQ1. Almost half of respondents tend to take some actions, such as shopping or doing exercises, if they are dissatisfied with their appearance. As such, changing behavioral cognitive element (changing behavior) is significantly related to fashion clothing involvement as predicted. These main effects of self-discrepancy suggest that individuals with high level of self-discrepancy undergo more dissatisfaction and greater image-enhanced concerns in general than those with lower level of self-discrepancy. The finding is also consistent with previous researches (e.g. Moretti & Higgins, 1990).

Given the effects of social comparison and self-discrepancy, this study further examines the mediated moderation effect. As mentioned above, this research provides support for an individual difference variable, self-discrepancy, which moderates the exposure to thin-ideal images and fashion clothing involvement and this effect is mediated by social comparison at the same time. Individuals highly involved in self-discrepancy are more like to engage in comparing processes from media exposure, as well as more tend to experience self-directed behaviors. Scheier and Carver (1988) argue that the self may induce social comparison and self-enhancement processes. The findings of this study also support their argument. When worrying and caring their body
image, individuals are motivated to change their behaviors and take more actions to reduce the discrepancy, for example, shopping new clothes or doing exercises.

The previous study examines the relations between social comparison, self-discrepancy, media exposure and negative moods and suggests a moderated mediation effect (Bessenoff, 2006). This current study suggests a mediated moderation effect between social comparison, self-discrepancy, media exposure and fashion clothing involvement.
Chapter V Methodology (Study 2)

5.1 Research Question

What is the relationship between exposure to fashion media, social comparison, cognitive dissonance reduction, peer influence, and fashion clothing involvement?

5.2 Method

Almost all the previous empirical studies of cognitive dissonance relied on experiments (e.g. Cooper, 2007; Festinger, 1957). It is altogether possible that cognitive changes may also be elicited in depth interviews or focus group studies. In Study 2, the author combined depth interviews with focus group analysis and conducted several rounds of group interviews to explore opinions, attitudes and understandings shared by people from the same background.

5.2.1 Sample

A total of 20 participants were recruited by means of purposive sampling in Zhuhai, a major metropolis in southern China and Hong Kong. The culture in Hong Kong is a little bit different from mainland China. However, all the respondents recruited in Hong Kong are based on the background of mainland China. The participants in the first group are five ladies, who have already formed their own dressing style and known fashion very well. They are primarily middle-class women, ages 36 to 40. Four of them work in local media in Zhuhai as news anchor, director, editor or reporter. The last one has her own business. This group is named “artistry group”.

This study recruited six young women in the second group. These young
women, ages 24 to 32, were developing their fashion consciousness and on their way of formulating personal style and taste. One is primary school teacher, two are research staff at a local university and the remaining three are office ladies. All of them are well-educated and have at least a bachelor’s degree. This group is named “employee group”.

The third group comprised of five female college students no more than 25 years old. This group is named “student group”. The last group contained four men, ages 25 to 33. They all come from various businesses. This group is named “male group”.

5.2.2 Group Interview

Group interview sessions (between 60 and 90 minutes in length) were video-recorded and facilitated by a doctoral candidate. The same set of questions was asked in the group interview session, which included general questions, for example: “How much money do you spend on dress?”, “What do you think of yourself? “Are you satisfied with yourself?” etc. Questions about media use: for instance, “What media do you often use to get fashion information? Please name them.”, “What kind of fashion information do you look for from the media?” etc. Questions about peer influence, for instance, “What do you think of the opinions of your friends, colleagues or other peers?”, “Do they influence the way you dress how you look?” etc.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Relation between Media Exposure and Fashion Clothing Involvement

One objective of this study is to find out the sources of fashion information and
their influence on individuals. Table 13 shows the details of media use. All of the respondents agreed that the media, such as television, fashion magazines and the Internet, played an important role in their ways of dressing. Window shopping was another important means to get information. Arnett (1995) believes that the information in fashion magazines is primarily used by readers in the identity development and gender socialization process. In this study, Respondents had different opinions of fashion magazines, for example:

“We subscribe to one fashion magazine in our office, but nobody ever reads it. The magazine is not good and not useful at all. The inherent taste of fashion is more important (Radio director, from artistry group)”.

“I like to read fashion magazines. I used to buy Elle in my college life. Later I find that there is one small version of Fashion. It is convenient so I read it on the home way (Xu, from employee group)”.

Interestingly, all respondents of the artistry group said that they did not buy fashion magazines. They preferred to get information from the Internet and television. One respondent (radio presenter) said that she browsed a popular web store site every day, and almost all her apparels were bought from it. In contrast, respondents of the employee and student groups reported that they read fashion magazines regularly. One respondent (Wang) preferred to watch Fashion Show online to look for the latest season information. One respondent (Zilin) liked to read the electronic magazines. Another respondent (Wu) would like to watch fashion programs online, for example Project Runway. Respondents from male group got fashion information through different ways,
such as magazines, TV, internet and window shopping.

Table 13 Transcript: group discussion of media use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Where do you get fashion information? What are they?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artistry group</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meng (radio director)</td>
<td>TV fashion channel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liang (radio presenter)</td>
<td>Taobao website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qian (business director)</td>
<td>Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang (TV editor)</td>
<td>Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang (Journalist)</td>
<td>Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employee group</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu</td>
<td>TV fashion program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xu</td>
<td>Fashion magazines: <em>Elle; Fashion</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang</td>
<td>Magazines: <em>Vogue; Rayli; Cosmetics</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dai</td>
<td><a href="http://www.163.com">www.163.com</a>; window shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuan</td>
<td>Fashion show online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>Window shopping; Fashion magazines: <em>Rayli</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student group</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiang</td>
<td><a href="http://www.163.com">www.163.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lu</td>
<td>Magazines; Fashion show online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiao</td>
<td>Magazines; Peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zilin</td>
<td>Internet; Magazines: <em>Bazaar; Rayli; Vivi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ran</td>
<td>Internet: <em>Hers</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male group</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liangyong</td>
<td>Window shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhu</td>
<td>TV: <em>CCTV3</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When asked what kind of fashion information they look for from the media and whether they follow the suggested ideas, most respondents from the artistry group paid little attention to the current fashion trends. They focused more on their own style, sight and sense. In other words, the artistry group members were “learned” on talking about fashion clothes. They rely on the mass media to get the fashion information; however, they try to dressing opposite to the fashion trend. The key word for them was “my taste”. For example:

“I loved dressing in Bohemia style before. In recent years, I haven’t cared too much about the trends. I only follow the frame of my mind and sense. All of my clothes are bought according to my taste, not the fashion trends. (Meng, from artistry group)”

“Meng always likes to dress exactly opposite to the so called trend. For example, if all people wear skirts, she will wear pants; if others wear jeans, she will wear skirt. In short, she never follows the fashion trends and likes to be different. (Liang, Meng’s Colleague, from artistry group)”

In contrast to the artistry group, employee, student and male groups were more likely to follow the trend disseminated by the media. They looked for the latest fashion and learned how to select and match clothes. For fashion issue, they were “learning” groups. Even so, they were selective. The key word for them was “trend follower”. For example:
“I pay attention to how the models select and match their clothes. Their suggestions are too many to remember; however, if I can recall them when I go shopping, I may try.” (Xu, from employee group)

“All TV programs teach how to wear and look like thin, and I follow their suggestions.” (Zhang, from employee group)

“Normally I look for the current fashion trend from magazines. I can get some new ideas such as this legging may match that boots. It is good and I like to try it.” (Xiang, from student group)

“I look for the fashion factors. For example, the wallet with fur is popular this season and I have bought one.” (Zilin, from student group)

The male group members have the similar opinion:

“I follow the trend. It is better if the popular color is my favorite.” (Zhu, from male group)

“I learn how to match clothes from the media. But in my own case, I prefer to follow the fixed brands.” (Zeng, from the male group)

As such, the fashion media, particularly, magazines are more important to the latter (“learning” groups) than the former (“learned” group).
Table 14 Transcript: group discussion of the media information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>What kind of fashion information do you look for from the media? Do you follow the ideas suggested by the media?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artistry group</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meng</td>
<td>I loved dressing in Bohemia style before. In recent years, I haven’t cared too much about the trends. I only follow the frame of my mind and sense. All of my clothes are bought according to my taste, not the fashion trends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liang (radio presenter, talked her opinion about Meng)</td>
<td>Meng always likes dressing exactly opposite to the so called trend. For example, if all people wear skirts, she wears pants; if others wear jeans, she will wear skirt. In short, she never follows the fashion trends and likes to be different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liang (radio presenter)</td>
<td>Some suggestions such as how to match clothes are really fresh. If I think it is good, I will try; otherwise, I don’t care those suggestions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qian (business director)</td>
<td>I focus on the materials of clothes, such as silk, cotton, and details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang (TV editor)</td>
<td>I only pay attention to clothing quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang (Journalist)</td>
<td>I like wearing in casual and don’t follow the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
suggestions.

**Employee group**

Wu I see the pictures firstly, and I read the following words if only the picture is really attractive. I never try some items, such as legging, no matter how sexy models look like in wearing them.

Dai I read the title firstly, and I will read contents if the title is attractive. I can’t follow their suggestions, for my body is different from the models.

Xu I pay attention to how the models select and match their clothes. Their suggestions are too many to remember; however, if I can recall them when I go shopping, I may try.

Zhang Some TV programs teach how to wear and look like thin, and I follow their suggestions.

Wang I mostly notice the color, style and main fashion factors.

Hui I look for the fashion trend from the magazines and window shopping. I want to change my dressing style. However, I can’t change it completely.

**Student group**

Xiang Normally I look for the current fashion trend
from magazines. I can get some new ideas such as this legging may match that boots. It is good and I like to try it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lu</td>
<td>I prefer to look for the popular style from the magazines. However, I never follow them. I always buy the classical ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiao</td>
<td>I often follow some brands for the fashion trend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zilin</td>
<td>I look for the fashion factors. For example, the wallet with fur is popular this season and I have bought one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ran</td>
<td>I only want to see those beautiful models from the media. If their clothes are suitable me, I follow them a little bit. I began to wear high-heel shoes after I saw those models.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Male group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liangyong</td>
<td>Due to my job, I like to observe the fashion trends. But I don’t follow them myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhu</td>
<td>I follow the trend. It is better if the popular color is my favorite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lai</td>
<td>I see the fashion trend. I may follow a little bit. It depends sometimes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeng</td>
<td>I learn how to match clothes from the media.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
But in my own case, I prefer to follow the fixed brands.

5.3.2 Relation between Social Comparison and Fashion Clothing Involvement

The findings of this study informed respondents’ vivid psychological process in comparing with others. The respondents of the artistry group looked elegant with good taste. They set up their confidence of self-image through comparing with others. Prior studies suggest that individuals have good emotions (Wills, 1991) and high self-esteem in downward comparison (Morse & Gergen, 1970). When asked if they compare with others in terms of dress and appearance:

Meng: “when I attend an activity, I dress up and judge myself from others’ eyes, and I can feel that there is some space for improvement.”

Liang: “I always dress up and I feel very good when staying with those ugly women.”

Qian: “If someone in the same age group as mine looks older than me, I feel good about myself. However, if I look at the movie stars, I feel that I am getting old quickly in comparison. I will dress better in next gathering.”

For artistry group members, social comparisons especially in the social activities, lead to their self-enhancement and self-satisfaction.

On the other hand, for other group members, upward comparison leads to negative emotions (Bower, 1991) and low self-esteem (Morse & Gergen, 1970). For example:
Wu: “I’m definitely more beautiful than some of my friends. When clubbing, they always wear sexy clothes and look more attractive than me. So I will wear short dress next time.”

Dai: “I require my friends not to wear high-heel shoes because I am short. One of my friends is very tall. I will wear high-heels if I go out with her.”

Zhang: “My friend is very beautiful. I feel pressure going out with her. I pay much attention to my dress when I go out with her.”

Xiao: “I compare with my classmates and friends. I try to make up and dress well when going out with them.”

Another interesting finding was that respondents from student group wanted to be unique or special among classmates. Xiang and Lu (from student group) preferred to be considered special by classmates.

In this study, the artistry group mentioned the downward comparisons, while the rest groups talked about the upward comparisons. They experienced totally different emotions after the inverse directional comparison. However, the influences on fashion clothing involvement were almost same. That is, the more the respondents made comparisons, the more attention they paid to their appearance and dressing, and the more they wanted to improve. Gender is not significant issue in the relation between social comparisons and fashion clothing involvement. For example, Zeng (from male group) wanted to improve himself and Zhu (from male group) wished to dress himself like a model.
5.3.3 Relation between Cognitive Dissonance Reduction and Fashion Clothing Involvement

Most respondents admitted to have engaged in dissonance reduction strategies when exposed to the ideal models. They mentioned specific ways for changing behavioral cognitive element: Meng (from artistry group) tried to control her weight; Liang (from artistry group) reduced weight through jogging and going to the gym; Qian (from artistry group) also reduced weight and paid more attention to the dress; Zhang (from employee group) would like to dress up when going out. Hui (from employee group) wanted to take a yoga class. Xiang (from student group) did exercises and went upstairs. Xiao (from student group) only ate vegetables for dinner and bought lots of new clothes. Zeng (from male group) tried to get better and Zhu (from male group) tried to wear better. All of them preferred to change behaviors.

The results also indicate the specific reasons for reconciling dissonance. Dai (from employee group) thought that her body image was totally different from those models. Xiao and Zilin (from student group) thought model is unrealistically thin. Lai (from male group) never thought to dress like a model. Liangyong (from male group) thought he would look as good as a model if wearing the same clothes. Some respondents chose to divert attention. Xu (from employee group) and Ran (from student group) reduced dissonance through focusing attention on something other than fashion.

5.3.4 Relation between Peer Influence and Fashion Clothing Involvement

Peers such as colleagues or friends also play an important role in one’s fashion consciousness (see Table 15). The findings showed the specific influences from peer in
various circumstances. Respondents from the artistry group come from different vocational field, TV station, Radio station, and enterprise. In their opinion, the working environment might influence the way people dress themselves. According to Wang (from TV station), journalists from radio stations were good at dressing, whereas editors from TV stations did not care much about their appearance.

“In our TV station, nobody notices your dress even if you have worn the same coat for more than one month (Wang)”.

The situation in Radio station is totally different:

“One of our colleagues came from a newspaper agency and did not care about dressing before; however, she has completely changed since entering our radio station. Once, I have worn the same coat for three days and one of my colleagues couldn’t help asking me to change it. (Meng, from Radio station)”

“I feel that colleagues are very important. For example, my previous colleagues were all actresses, and I learned to pay attention to every detail of my appearance. (Liang, from Radio station)”

The same situation is in enterprise:

“I like to go shopping with my friends because we have similar taste. (Qian, from enterprise)”

Another respondent gave an opposite example:

“I finally know the reason why I never change my dressing style, because all of my colleagues are male. (Zhang, from another Radio station)”

Most respondents from the employee and student groups agreed that classmates
or friends might influence their appearance and image-related activities. For instance:

“If the opinions of my friends are reasonable, I’d accept their suggestions. I do not wear makeup if my friends don’t use cosmetics (Wu, from employee group).”

“When I go shopping with my friends, we buy the same item sometimes (Xu, from employee group).

“I am totally influenced by my friends. They often tell me how to dress and catch the current fashion. I listen to their suggestions when shopping (Xiao, from student group).”

“When I come to Hong Kong, I begin to wear appropriate clothes in different occasions. These local students influence me (Zilin, from student group).”

Interestingly, most respondents from the male group would like to accept peers’ suggestions to some extent. For example:

“Friends may influence me to some extent. I adopt their suggestions only if I think they are right (Liangyong, from male group).”

“If my friend has a good taste, I may accept his suggestion (Zeng, from male group).”

These findings of this study indicated that peer had slightly higher impact on female than male.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>What are the influences of your friends, colleagues or others on the way you dress?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artistry group</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meng (radio director)</td>
<td>One of our colleagues came from a newspaper and didn’t care about dress; however, she has completely changed since entering our radio station. Once, I have worn the same coat for three days and one of my colleagues couldn’t help asking me to change it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liang (radio presenter)</td>
<td>I feel that colleagues are very important. For example, my previous colleagues were all actresses, and I learned to pay attention to every detail of my appearance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qian (business director)</td>
<td>I like to go shopping with my friends because we have similar taste.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang (TV editor)</td>
<td>In our TV station, nobody notices your dress even if you have worn the same coat for more than one month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang (Journalist)</td>
<td>I finally know the reason why I never change my dressing style, because all of my colleagues are male.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employee group</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu</td>
<td>If the opinions of my friends are reasonable, I’d accept their suggestions. I do not wear makeup if my friends don’t use cosmetics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Quote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dai</td>
<td>If my friends’ ideas are in accord with my taste, I may dress likewise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xu</td>
<td>When I go shopping with my friends, we buy the same item sometimes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang</td>
<td>I think that my friend is fashionable, so I accept her suggestion when shopping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang</td>
<td>Peers can’t influence me too much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>I only wear jeans and pants. Not influenced by others too much.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xiang</td>
<td>My fashion sense is influenced by my friend. I begin to change the way I dress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lu</td>
<td>I only listen to some of my friends’ suggestions, for example, dress color.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiao</td>
<td>I am totally influenced by my friends. They often tell me how to dress and catch the current fashion. I listen to their suggestions when shopping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zilin</td>
<td>When I come to Hong Kong, I begin to wear appropriate clothes in different occasions. These local students influence me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ran</td>
<td>My Japanese friends put on makeups for more than one hour every day. They look beautiful. What I learn...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
from them is to look perfectly relaxed.

**Male group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>观点</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liangyong</td>
<td>Friends may influence me to some extent. I adopt their suggestions only if I think they are right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhu</td>
<td>I go shopping with my friends. We often talk about clothes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lai</td>
<td>Usually I give suggestions to my friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeng</td>
<td>If my friend has a good taste, I may accept his suggestion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter VI Conclusion and Discussion (Study 2)

The media including Internet, TV, and fashion magazines have significant influence on respondents’ perceptions about dress and appearance. According to the dissonance theory, audiences are active rather than passive, which means that media users prefer to deliberately choose certain messages over others and retain certain messages. According to Klapper, audiences would like to select message in accordance with their preexisting attitudes to protect the integrity of their belief structures (cited in Hollander, 2006). In this study, TV and Internet are helpful to both active and passive fashion information seekers, whereas fashion magazines are particularly popular among the former. The artistry group members do not read fashion magazines regularly, nor follow fashion trends unless they think it is reasonable. To compare with the artistry group members, respondents from employee and student groups are more likely to talk about international brands, and care more about the price.

Most respondents from the three female groups admit that notions of the ideal model may cause them to be dissatisfied with their body. On the other hand, most male group members do not get very depressed being exposed to the models. In accordance with the cognitive dissonance theory, they diet or do exercise (changing behavior), switch to another issue (changing the environment itself), or focus on self-conditions (reconciling dissonance).
Chapter VII General Conclusion

7.1 The Cross-complementary Findings between Study 1 & 2

Findings of the Study 2 supplement those generated from Study 1 in several aspects. First, media measurement focused on exposure frequency in Study 1. The results only show how often respondents read fashion magazines or surf the Internet. In Study 2, media source and their influences were added, revealing participants’ attitude and inclination toward different media. Importantly, in Study 2, respondents were divided into “learnt” and “learning” fashion groups, showing their attitudes towards fashion trend and fashion information.

Second, Study 1 confirms the effect of social comparison on fashion clothing involvement, which is consistent with previous studies (e.g. Festinger, 1954). Study 2 cross-validates the social comparison effect through a different method (i.e., interviewing). Particularly, in Study 2, the author was able to identify respondents’ psychological processes when comparing with others, including upward and downward comparisons. The inverse-directional comparisons have the same effect on fashion clothing involvement.

Third, results of Study 1 and 2 both confirm the role of peer pressure on fashion. The results of Study 2 indicate better understanding how and to what extent peer, such as colleagues, classmates, friends etc. can influence individual’s fashion clothing involvement. This study also finds that peer influence can separate individuals into active or passive involvement.

Next, as a tradition, scholars are more likely to adopt experiments to study cognitive dissonance (e.g. Cooper, 2007). This study diverted from that tradition: the
author conducted a survey in Study 1 and group interviews in Study 2.

In addition, as mentioned earlier in the conceptualization section, development in consumerism and patterns of consumption in China are unequal. Consumption associated with identity and taste is confined within a relatively small minority of high-income groups. Those high-income groups are the vanguard consumers of fashion in general, imported luxury goods in particular. Prior studies have found Chinese consumers to have strong preference for Western brands (e.g. Sin et al., 2000; Zhang, 1996). Young, affluent and well-educated people are much more likely to try new products. Results of Study 1 indicate that gender is an important factor predicting fashion clothing involvement. The finding of Study 2 conforms to the previous studies, that is, being unique is not a value for Chinese who use products to express their belonging to rather than detachment from the group (Schmitt, 1997).

7.2 Contributions of This Research

The combined findings should contribute to the development of cognitive dissonance theory. Qualitative data describe how respondents feel when exposed to ideal image and reveal the concrete methods with which they reduce cognitive dissonance. Quantitative data from the random sampling survey lead to inferences about behavior change as a result of fashion clothing involvement.

The current study extends the literature by considering the role of the self in the fashion clothing involvement from exposure to the different media depicting the thin ideal. The psychological and behavioral complexity associated with unattainable norms, such as relating to appearance and body shape, make obvious that it is very important to
get know the mechanisms through which those norms can influence the self. This finding may provide an advance in understanding the mechanisms underlying internalization and the use of social norms, such as comparison and the behavioral issues, for example, changing behavior in fashion clothing involvement. Furthermore, this study examines self-discrepancy as a moderator in the mediated moderation effect model. This finding may enrich the knowledge of self-discrepancy theory.

This study examines the intricate relationship between fashion information consumption. When exposing to different mass media, the knowledge of fashion information is not completely accumulated. The attempt would be contribution to the media effect research and communication field.

7.3 Significances of This Research

In sum, as the demand for fashion communications increases, understanding of media use (exposure), fashion clothing involvement, social and psychological factors and their relations becomes more important. This study develops a complicated analysis model to explore more understanding for fashion communication in Confucian culture background, especially for the young people’s latest fashion issues.

The theoretical instructed measurements developed in this study may lead to new research direction in this field. The author tries to develop the new field application of the theories, for example, self-discrepancy theory, etc. The future study could benefit from improved measurement of the self-discrepancy and self-dissatisfaction variables with more items for questionnaire and apply them in various fields.
7.4 Limitations

This study has a number of limitations. Firstly, the measurement of the media focuses on exposure only. It cannot explain so many self-directed consequences. The further study may have more considerations, such as contents, more media forms etc. and the interaction test will be more powerful.

Second, fashion involvement in this study only conceptualized in one level. The future researches may get more findings by dividing fashion involvement into, for example, high and low levels. The future study may further consider getting more understanding on how the mediated moderation effect influences the degree of fashion involvement.

Third, some of the measurements are based on single items which are of unknown reliability, for example, cognitive dissonance reduction. This is one of the reasons why cognitive dissonance reduction is more difficult to explore using survey other than traditional experimentation (Cooper, 2007). Future examinations of the cognitive dissonance hypothesis may consider improving measurements of the cognitive dissonance reduction with varying levels of the three types and increasing the power of the test.

Fourth, one should notice some measurements’ Cronbach’s alpha is not high enough. Instead of using question items directly, this study takes an attempt to draw factors for further analysis. This attempt examines the reliability of question issues developed by prior studies in the fashion communication field (e.g. Cooper et al., 1987; Higgins et al., 1985). The future study could create more question items for
questionnaire and improve the whole reliability.

Fifth, in Study 2, the average age of Artistry Group is older than the average age of other groups. The total numbers of interview respondents are 20 only. The future study may consider recruiting more respondents and using more advanced qualitative research method. It will more advance the understanding of individuals’ fashion value and fashion clothing related activities.
Reference


Consumer Research, 12 (December), 265-280.


among preadolescent and adolescent girls. *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine, 153*, 1184–1189.


Lavine, H., Sweeney, D., & Wagner, S. H. (1999). Depicting women as sex objects in


McCroskey, J. C., & Young, T. J. (1979). The use and abuse of factor analysis in


Muller, D., Judd C. M., & Yzerbyt V. Y. (2005). When moderation is mediated and
mediation is moderated. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89(6), 852–863.


2003 at


fashion discourses and the appropriation of countervailing cultural meanings. 

*Journal of Consumer Research, 24*(1), 15-42.


*Advances in Consumer Research, 17*, 17-21.


Table 1

Sample statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>59.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>41.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>22.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior College and College</td>
<td>63.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate and above</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>11.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 40,000 (include 40,000)</td>
<td>19.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40,001-80,000 (include 80,000)</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80,001-100,000 (include 100,000)</td>
<td>7.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,001-140,000 (include 140,000)</td>
<td>36.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140,001-200,000 (include 200,000)</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 200,000</td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>75.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: N = 500*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Striver</th>
<th>Exp.</th>
<th>Survivor</th>
<th>Thinker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like to dress in the latest fashions</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I follow the latest trends and fashions</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dress more fashionable than most people</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to be considered fashionable</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am always looking for a thrill</td>
<td></td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like a lot of excitement in my life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am really interested in only a few things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I must admit that my interests are somewhat narrow and limited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am often interested in theories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to understand more about how the universe works</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance accounted for (%)</td>
<td>28.71</td>
<td>13.23</td>
<td>12.41</td>
<td>9.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Loadings on the four factors are sufficiently clean that no cross-loaders at or larger than .25 are observed. Actual cross loading figures are therefore omitted for ease of reading (N = 500).
Table 3

*Factor analysis (principal component with Varimax rotation) on self-discrepancy indicators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Self-improve</th>
<th>Self-confidence</th>
<th>Self-abasement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It would be better if I am more fashionable.</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish that my appearance can be more attractive</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I am a dressing decent person</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally, I am satisfied with my appearance</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that I am not tall enough</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that I am not slim enough</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that my appearance is plain</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance accounted for (%)</td>
<td><strong>24.46</strong></td>
<td><strong>21.22</strong></td>
<td><strong>14.63</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Loadings on the three factors are sufficiently clean that no cross-loaders at or larger than .25 are observed. Actual cross loading figures are therefore omitted for ease of reading (N = 500).
Table 4

*Factor analysis (principal component with Varimax rotation) on self-dissatisfaction indicators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Worry</th>
<th>Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I look small when I stay with those slim people</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry about my leg pose is not good when sitting down</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to go to gym because I think my body shape is not good enough</td>
<td></td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have feeling bored make me brood about my shape</td>
<td></td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variance accounted for (%)  
42.36  25.57

Note: Loadings on the three factors are sufficiently clean that no cross-loaders at or larger than .25 are observed. Actual cross loading figures are therefore omitted for ease of reading (N = 500).
Table 5  Predicting self-dissatisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicting worry factor</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.16***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$ (%)</td>
<td>5.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-discrepancy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-improve factor</td>
<td>.17***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence factor</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-abasement factor</td>
<td>.22***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental $R^2$ (%)</td>
<td>7.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicting concern Factor</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$ (%)</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-discrepancy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-improve factor</td>
<td>.34***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence factor</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-abasement factor</td>
<td>.18***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental $R^2$ (%)</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Entries are standardized OLS regression beta coefficients ($N = 500$). All figures controlled for demographics. # $p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$
Table 6

*Predicting cognitive dissonance reduction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicting adding new cognitive element</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.12*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 ) (%)</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-dissatisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry factor</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern factor</td>
<td>-.15**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental ( R^2 ) (%)</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicting changing behavioral cognitive element</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 ) (%)</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-dissatisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry factor</td>
<td>.17***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern factor</td>
<td>.39***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental ( R^2 ) (%)</td>
<td>17.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### cognitive element

#### Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$R^2$ (%)  

1.70

#### Self-dissatisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worry factor</td>
<td>.11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern factor</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Incremental $R^2$ (%)**  

3.30

*Notes: Entries are standardized OLS regression beta coefficients ($N = 500$). All figures controlled for demographics. $\# p < .10; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001$*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>( r )</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demographics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.15***</td>
<td>.17***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>( R^2 ) (%)</strong></td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychological Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Cognitive Element</td>
<td>.25***</td>
<td>.23***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Cognitive Element</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Cognitive Element</td>
<td>-.09*</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>( R^2 ) (%)</strong></td>
<td>9.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strivers</td>
<td>.44***</td>
<td>.41***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencers</td>
<td>.17***</td>
<td>.12**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survivors</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinkers</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incremental ( R^2 ) (%)</strong></td>
<td>18.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Materialism</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition centrality</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession-defined success</td>
<td>.20***</td>
<td>.22***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incremental ( R^2 ) (%)</strong></td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Comparison</td>
<td>.32***</td>
<td>.32***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incremental ( R^2 ) (%)</strong></td>
<td>10.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer influence</td>
<td>.28***</td>
<td>.25***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media exposure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine</td>
<td>.32***</td>
<td>.21***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>.34***</td>
<td>.25***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Incremental R² (%)**

5.70

14.30

Notes: Entries are standardized OLS regression beta coefficients (N = 500). All figures controlled for demographics. # p < .10; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001
Table 8
*Predicting intramedia interaction effects on fashion clothing involvement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$ (%)</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Exposure</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incremental $R^2$ (%)</td>
<td>14.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction term</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Website * Magazine</td>
<td>.36***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental $R^2$ (%)</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Entries are standardized OLS regression beta coefficients ($N = 500$). All figures controlled for demographics.

# $p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$
Table 9

**OLS regression: Joint effect of Striver lifestyle and media exposure on fashion clothing involvement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Incremental $R^2$ (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$ (%)</td>
<td>3.60**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Striver lifestyle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental $R^2$ (%)</td>
<td>17.30***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media exposure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental $R^2$ (%)</td>
<td>14.30***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction term</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Striver * Magazine</td>
<td>.41***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental $R^2$ (%)</td>
<td>16.30***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Striver * Website</td>
<td>.39***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental $R^2$ (%)</td>
<td>15.00***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes:* Entries are standardized OLS regression beta coefficients ($N = 500$). All figures controlled for demographics.

* $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$
Table 10

*OLS regression: Joint effect of Self-discrepancy and media exposure on fashion clothing involvement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$ (%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-discrepancy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-improve factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-abasement factor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Incremental $R^2$ (%) | **16.10*** |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media exposure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incremental $R^2$ (%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-improve* Magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-abasement*Magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence*Magazine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Incremental $R^2$ (%) | **14.1*** |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-improve*Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-abasement*Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence*Website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Incremental $R^2$ (%) | **13.4*** |

*Notes:* Entries are standardized OLS regression beta coefficients ($N = 500$). All figures controlled for demographics.

# $p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$
Table 11a

Regression results for mediated moderation effect (X=magazine exposure)

| Predictor | Step 1 | | Step 2 | | Step 3 | |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|           | b      | t      | b      | t      | b      | t      |
| X: magazine exposure | .44    | 5.983*** | .31    | 4.167*** | .39    | 5.237*** |
| Mo: self-discrepancy | | | | | | |
| Self-improve | .36    | 2.540* | .26    | 1.814 | .32    | 2.175* |
| Self-confidence | .18    | 1.148 | -.15   | -.909 | .23    | 1.439 |
| Self-abasement | .12    | .855 | -.10   | -.641 | .13    | .852 |
| X*Mo: magazine exposure*self-discrepancy | | | | | | |
| Magazine*Self-improve | -.05   | -.822 | .05    | 730   | -.06   | -.907 |
| Magazine*Self-confidence | .03    | .443 | .09    | 1.276 | -.00   | -.018 |
| Magazine*Self-abasement | -.01   | -.126 | .15    | 1.936 | -.01   | -.211 |
| Me: social comparison | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| MeMo: social comparison*self-discrepancy | | | | | | |
| Compare*Self-improve | | | - | | | |
| Compare*Self-confidence | | | | | | |
| Compare*Self-abasement | | | | | | |

Notes: All figures controlled for demographics. (N = 500).

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X: website exposure</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>6.480***</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mo: self-discrepancy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-improve</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>2.971**</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>1.928</td>
<td>-.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-abasement</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>2.077*</td>
<td>-.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X<em>Mo: website exposure</em>self-discrepancy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website*Self-improve</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-1.230</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website*Self-confidence</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website*Self-abasement</td>
<td>-.077</td>
<td>-1.341</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me: social comparison</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeMo: social comparison*self-discrepancy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare*Self-improve</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.461</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare*Self-confidence</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.788</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare*Self-abasement</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.443</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: All figures controlled for demographics. (N = 500).  
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001
## Appendix 1

**Factor Analysis (Principal Component with Oblimin Rotation) on Fashion Clothing**

### Involvement Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement Indicators</th>
<th>Fashion Clothing Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fashion clothing is a significant part of my life</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am very much involved in fashion clothing</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would say that fashion clothing is central to my identity as a person</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pay a lot of attention to fashion clothing</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance accounted for (%)</td>
<td>70.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Loadings on the factor are sufficiently clean that no cross-loaders at or larger than .25 are observed. \( N = 500 \).
Appendix 2

Factor Analysis (Principal Component with Oblimin Rotation) on Social Comparison

Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Comparison</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I compare my body and look to actors’ and celebrities’ bodies and looks that I see in magazines or website.</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I compare my dress and adornments to actors’ and celebrities’ dress and adornments that I see in magazines or website.</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At parties or other social events, I compare my body and physical appearance to the bodies and physical appearance of others.</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At parties or other social events, I compare my dress and adornments to dress and adornments of others.</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance accounted for (%)</td>
<td>58.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Loadings on the factor are sufficiently clean that no cross-loaders at or larger than .25 are observed. (N = 500).
Appendix 3

Survey Questionnaire

1. Fashion clothing involvement was measured using four 5-point Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree)

   1.1 Fashion clothing is a significant part of my life.
   1.2 I am very much involved in fashion clothing.
   1.3 I would say that fashion clothing is central to my identity as a person.
   1.4 I pay a lot of attention to fashion clothing.

2. Media exposure was measured using a 3-point Likert-scale item

   (1 = never; 2 = sometimes; and 3 = often)

   2.1 Magazine
   2.2 Website
   2.3 Television
   2.4 Newspaper
   2.5 Radio

3. How many fashion magazines do you often read?

4. How long do you browse the website every time (minutes)?

5. How many fashion websites do you often browse?

6. How many hours do you watch TV every day?

7. Social comparison was measured using four 5-point Likert-scale items

   (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree).

   7.1 I compare my body and look to actors’ and celebrities’ bodies and looks that I see in
magazines or website.

7.2 I compare my dress and adornments to actors’ and celebrities’ dress and adornments that I see in magazines or website.

7.3 At parties or other social events, I compare my dress and adornments to dress and adornments of others.

7.4 At parties or other social events, I compare my body and physical appearance to the bodies and physical appearance of others.

8. **Self-discrepancy was measured using seven 5-point Likert-scale items**

   *(1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree)*

8.1 Generally, I am satisfied with my appearance.

8.2 I think I am a dressing decent person.

8.3 I think that my appearance is plain.

8.4 I wish that my appearance can be more attractive.

8.5 I think that I am not slim enough.

8.6 I think that I am not tall enough.

8.7 It would be better if I am more fashionable.

9. **Cognitive dissonance reduction was measured using three 5-point Likert-scale items**

   *(1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree)*

9.1 If I am not satisfied with my body, I will not mind it and still to be myself.

9.2 If I am not satisfied with my body, I will take some actions, for example, to buy new clothes, to go to gym etc.

9.3 If I am not satisfied with my body, I will change my attention to other things.
10. **Lifestyle measurement was measured using ten five-point Likert scale items**

(1 = mostly disagree; 5 = mostly agree)

10.1 I am often interested in theories.

10.2 I follow the latest trends and fashions.

10.3 I like a lot of excitement in my life.

10.4 I dress more fashionable than most people.

10.5 I like to dress in the latest fashions.

10.6 I must admit that my interests are somewhat narrow and limited.

10.7 I want to be considered fashionable.

10.8 I am always looking for a thrill.

10.9 I would like to understand more about how the universe works.

10.10 I am really interested in only a few things.

11. **Materialism was measured using eight five-point Likert scale items**

(1 = mostly disagree; 5 = mostly agree)

11.1 I usually buy only the things I need.

11.2 I don’t pay much attention to the material objects people own.

11.3 I try to keep my life simple as far as possessions are concerned.

11.4 I admire people who own expensive possessions (such as houses, cars and clothes).

11.5 I like a lot of luxury in my life.

11.6 It is important for me to have really nice things.

11.7 It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can’t afford to buy all the things I’d like.

11.8 I’d be happier if I could afford to buy more things.
12. Peer influence was measured using three 3-point Likert-scale items

(0=never; 1=sometimes; 2=often)

12.1 My friends and I talk about how our clothes look.

12.2 My friends and I talk about how important it is to always look attractive.

12.3 My friends and I talk about the size and shape of our bodies.

13. Demographics

13.1 Gender:

  1 = male; 2 = female

13.2 Age

  1 = 18-24; 2 = 25-30

13.3 Education

  1= primary school

  2 = junior high school

  3 = senior high school

  4 = junior college

  5 = college

  6 = graduate school

  7 = others

13.4 Household annual income

  1= less than RMB 40,000

  2= RMB 40,000-60,000

  3= RMB 60,000-80,000 (include 60,000)
4 = RMB 80,000-100,000 (include 80,000)

5 = RMB 100,000-120,000 (include 100,000)

6 = RMB 120,000-140,000 (include 120,000)

7 = RMB 140,000-160,000 (include 140,000)

8 = RMB 160,000-180,000 (include 160,000)

9 = RMB 180,000-200,000 (include 180,000)

10 = more than 200,000 (include 200,000)

13.5 Marital status

1 = unmarried; 2 = married

13.6 Occupation
Appendix 4

Translated Survey Questionnaire (Chinese Version)

調查問卷

（目標人群：18-30歲的男女）

1. 首先，我們希望瞭解一下您對於時裝的一些看法。下面我將讀出一些句子，請您針對這些句子告訴我們您的想法。

“1”表示“非常不同意”；“2”表示“不同意”；“3”表示“中立”；“4”表示“同意”；“5”表示“非常同意”，請在1-5中選擇一个數字。

1.1時裝是我生活中重要的一部分

1.2我平時非常關注時裝

1.3時裝跟我的生活息息相關

1.4時裝可以表現我的身份

2. 我們想瞭解一下您接觸時裝資訊的情況，採用三度量表，“1”表示“從不接觸”；“2”表示“偶爾接觸”；“3”表示“經常接觸”。請根據您的具體情況，在1至3中做出選擇。

2.1 雜誌

2.2 網站

2.3 電視

2.4 報紙

2.5 廣播

3. 您固定讀的時尚雜誌有幾本？_______

4. 您每次上網流覽時裝資訊的平均時間是多少分鐘：_______（分鐘）
5. 您固定流覽的時裝網站有幾個？________

6. 您平均每天看電視的時間是幾小時？_________(小時)

7. 我們想了解您對下列說法的態度，以五度量表測量：“1”表示“非常不同意”；“2”表示“不同意”；“3”表示“中立”；“4”表示“同意”；“5”表示“非常同意”。請在1-5中選擇一個數字。

7.1 我會和媒體中看到的人比身材和長相

7.2 我會和媒體中看到的人比穿著、使用或佩戴的東西

7.3 在派對或其他社交活動中，我會和別人比身材和長相

7.4 在社交場合中，我會跟其他人比衣著、使用或佩戴的東西

8. 我們想了解您對下列說法的態度，同上面一樣：“1”表示“非常不同意”；“2”表示“不同意”；“3”表示“中立”；“4”表示“同意”；“5”表示“非常同意”。請在1-5中選擇一個數字。

8.1 總體上看，我認為自己的外表還是不錯的

8.2 我認為我是個穿著得體的人

8.3 我認為我的外表很普通

8.4 我希望我的外表能更吸引人

8.5 我覺得我不夠瘦

8.6 我覺得我不夠高

8.7 我要是能更時尚就好了

9. 我們想了解您對下列說法的態度，同上面一樣：“1”表示“非常不同意”；“2”表示“不同意”；“3”表示“中立”；“4”表示“同意”；“5”表示“非常同意”。請在1-5中選擇一個數字。
9.1 如果我對自己的身材不滿意，我會：不放在心上，依我行我素

9.2 如果我對自己的身材不滿意，我會：有所行動，比如：去買漂亮的衣服、去健身等

9.3 如果我對自己的身材不滿意，我會：轉換注意力，不再想有關身材的事，想別的或去做別的事

10. 以下是一些關於生活方式的說法，請問您是否同意？以五度量表測量： “1” 表示 “非常不同意”； “2” 表示 “不同意”； “3” 表示 “中立”； “4” 表示 “同意”； “5” 表示 “非常同意”。請在1-5中選擇一個數字。

10.1 我對理論之類的抽象東西感興趣

10.2 我追求時尚

10.3 我渴望刺激的生活

10.4 我比大多數人都穿著更時尚

10.5 我喜歡穿最流行的服裝

10.6 我承認我的興趣有些狹窄和局限

10.7 我希望在別人眼中我是時尚的

10.8 我總是在尋找強烈的興奮或快感

10.9 我願意多去瞭解萬物的規律

10.10 我只對少數的事情感興趣

11. 以下是一些關於物質觀的說法，請問您是否同意？以五度量表測量： “1” 表示 “非常不同意”； “2” 表示 “不同意”； “3” 表示 “中立”； “4” 表示 “同意”； “5” 表示 “非常同意”。請在1-5中選擇一個數字。

11.1 我一般只買我需要的東西
11.2 我沒有特別在意別人有什麼

11.3 不管有錢沒錢，我喜歡過簡單的生活

11.4 我羨慕有車、有房、有昂貴時裝的人

11.5 我喜歡奢華的生活

11.6 對我來說擁有財物很重要

11.7 我有時挺煩的，因為想買的東西買不起

11.8 如果我能有那些現在還沒有能力購買的東西，我的生活會更好

12. 您跟朋友聊下列話題嗎？ “0” 表示“不討論”；“1” 表示“有時討論”；
“2” 表示 “經常討論”。

12.1 我跟朋友談論衣著

12.2 我跟朋友討論怎樣提高吸引力

12.3 我跟朋友討論身材

13. 個人資訊：

13.1 您的性別是： 1. 男性； 2. 女性

13.2 您的年齡是： 1. 18-24歲； 2. 25-30歲

13.3 您的教育程度是:

1. 小學

2. 初中

3. 高中

4. 大專

5. 大學本科

6. 研究生以上
7 其他

13.4 您或您家最近一年的家庭總收入是：_______萬元

1) 4萬以下
2) 4-6萬
3) 6-8萬(含6萬)
4) 8-10萬(含8萬)
5) 10-12萬(含10萬)
6) 12-14萬(含12萬)
7) 14-16萬(含14萬)
8) 16-18萬(含16萬)
9) 18-20萬(含18萬)
10) 20萬以上(含20萬)

13.5 您的婚姻狀況是：1. 未婚 2. 已婚

13.6 您目前的職業是：
CURRICULUM VITAE

Academic qualifications of the thesis author, Ms. SUN Yanshu, Mona:

- Received the degree of Master of International Communications from the University of Leeds, November 2003.

June 2013