

Perceived Risks and Enjoyment: Identifying Barriers and Motivations to Clothing Renting

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Background and Purpose: Over-consumption has been identified as one of the major challenges facing sustainability in the fashion industry (Armstrong, Niinimaki, Kujala, Karell, & Lang, 2015). This is especially true with the rising popularity of *fast fashion* buying behaviors. Consumers are now able to purchase more fashion products that are being used for a shorter period of time at a relatively lower cost. Although the fast fashion strategy makes it easier for consumers to purchase apparel products with a higher rate of frequency, it also brings pressure to follow the fast-changing trends. As a result of trying to keep pace with the ever-changing fast fashion trends, many consumers continuously purchase the latest fashion products which may exceed their needs or even their financial capacity.

The idea of clothing renting gives people the benefit of keeping up with new trends at reduced costs and ownership burdens, as well as lowering negative environmental impacts by increasing use intensity and reducing waste (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Renting encourages the consumer to enjoy the usage and function of products without the finality and cost of ownership. Prominent examples of fashion renting businesses include: *Albright*, a fashion library located in New York, offering an archive of classic pieces of high-end fashion products; *Rent the Runway*, an online service that provides designer dresses and accessory rentals; *Gwynnie Bee*, provides plus size clothing rentals from designer brands.

However, the clothing rental business is still in its infancy and a lack of development and popularity (Demailly & Novel, 2014) exists in the fashion industry. A variety of concerns about clothing rental have been pointed out (Armstrong et al., 2015), such as financial issues and social concerns. In addition, in pursuit of sustainable apparel consumption, Kang and Kim (2013) affirmed the effect of four potential risks, including financial risk, performance risk, psychological risk, and social risk. On the other hand, the enjoyment of hunting process might encourage consumers to rent. Although some assumptions have been made, empirical evidence on barriers and motivations to clothing renting is lacking. The purpose of this study is to identify how perceived risks impact the attitude and perceived enjoyment and further behavioral intention toward clothing renting.

Methods: A convenience sampling strategy was utilized with an online survey. A consumer panel of the target population was purchased from an online research company. To ensure a balanced sample of each age group and gender, a quota was set on each of the age groups and genders. Data cleaning generated 452 usable samples out of 607 returned responses, with an overall completion rate of 74.76%. Scales were developed to measure perceived risks, attitude and perceived enjoyment. A hypothetical scenario statement was developed for clothing rental, and participants were requested to rate the level of willingness to rent clothing by responding to the question, "I intend to rent or consider renting clothing during the next 12 months" All items were measured utilizing a 5-point Likert scale 1= "strongly disagree" to 5= "strongly agree." Demographic data were also collected, including gender (male=43.6%; female=56.4%) age (18-35=33.6%; 36-50=34.7%; 51-69=31.6%); income (<US \$39,999=27.4%; US \$40,000-US

\$79,999=30.1%; >US\$80,000= 42.5%; and education (Some college or lower=40.3%; College graduate=38.7%; Graduate school=18.6%).

Perceived risks contained four dimensions (Kang & Kim, 2013): *financial risk* ($\alpha=.842$), *performance risk* ($\alpha=.772$), *psychological risk* ($\alpha=.829$) and *social risk* ($\alpha=.899$). Each dimension was measured by a multiple-item scale. A five-item scale was developed to measure *attitude toward clothing renting* ($\alpha=.950$). *Perceived enjoyment* ($\alpha=.965$) was also measured by a five-item scale. *Clothing renting scenario*: A clothing retailer provides a rental service for consumers to rent certain number of garments for a short time period; consumers can rent a variety of designer dresses and accessories, as well as many options of latest fashion products.

Results: Structural equation modeling was applied to examine the direct and indirect relationships between perceived risks and clothing renting intentions. The results revealed an acceptable model fit ($\chi^2_{(df=385)}=933.709$, $p=0.000$; RMSEA=0.056; CFI=0.948; TLI=0.941; SRMR=0.051) (Kline, 2010; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The individual paths of the model were examined. The negative effects of perceived financial risk on attitude ($\beta=-.131$, $p<.011$) and perceived enjoyment ($\beta=-.222$, $p<.000$) were both supported. Similarly, the performance risk was also found negatively affect attitude ($\beta=-.354$, $p<.000$) and perceived enjoyment ($\beta=-.275$, $p<.000$). However, the effect of psychological risk on attitude ($\beta=.044$, $p=.468$) and perceived enjoyment ($\beta=.087$, $p=0.173$) were not significant. The effect of social risk was negative and significant on attitude ($\beta=-.178$, $p<.001$) but not significant on perceived enjoyment ($\beta=-.059$, $p=.318$). The positive effects of attitude ($\beta=.133$, $p<.017$) and perceived enjoyment ($\beta=.487$, $p<.000$) on clothing renting intention were both supported. In addition, perceived enjoyment was found to positively influence attitude ($\beta=.723$, $p<.000$). Next, the effects of perceived risks on clothing renting intention were also examined. The negative effects of financial risk ($\beta=-.323$, $p<.000$) and performance risk ($\beta=-.166$, $p<.013$) on clothing renting intentions were both supported, but those of the other two risk factors were not significant. Further, the mediating roles of attitude and perceived enjoyment were also inspected. The statistic results indicated that only perceived enjoyment mediate the effects of financial risk ($\beta=-.605$, $p<.001$), performance risk ($\beta=-.618$, $p<.000$), psychological risk ($\beta=-.881$, $p<.000$) on clothing renting intentions.

Discussion: Overall, this study contributes to existing literature by discovering the effects of perceived risks on attitude and perceived enjoyment of clothing renting and further clothing renting intentions. Evidence from the study indicates that consumer intentions to rent clothing is encouraged by their attitudes and perceived enjoyment; but impeded by the perceived financial, performance, and psychological risks. Further, the results highlight the mediating role perceived enjoyment has on the negative relationship between perceived risks and clothing renting intentions. Based on the results, clothing rental businesses should put emphasis on addressing financial, performance, and psychological risks in the development of their marketing strategies.

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