

The Effects of Consumer Consciousness of Chinese MZ Generation on Purchase Intention of VR Fashion Products : The Mediating Role of Brand Image and Brand Attitude

중국 MZ세대의 소비 의식이 VR패션 제품의 구매의도에 미치는 영향 :
브랜드 이미지와 브랜드 태도의 매개효과

Zhang, Zhouming¹⁾ • Lee, Jee Hyun^{2),*}

Dept. of Human Environment & Design, Yonsei University¹⁾ • Dept. of Human Environment & Design,
Interdisciplinary Program of Human Life & Innovation Design, Yonsei University^{2),*}

장탁명¹⁾ • 이지현^{2),*}

연세대학교 생활디자인학과 석사과정¹⁾ • 연세대학교 생활디자인학과, 인간생애와 혁신적디자인 융합전공 교수²⁾

Abstract

이 연구는 중국 MZ세대의 VR 패션 제품에 대한 소비자 의식과 브랜드 이미지, 브랜드 태도, 구매 의도 간의 관계 분석을 목적으로 했다. 이를 위해, 베이징, 상하이에 거주하는 20-30세 중국 MZ세대 소비자 239명 대상 온라인 설문조사 후, SPSS 25.0, AMOS 25.0을 사용하여 기술통계, 확인적 요인분석, 신뢰도 분석 및 경로분석을 하였다. 연구 결과, 중국 MZ세대의 소비자 의식(환경의식, 가치의식, 지위의식)은 VR 패션 브랜드의 브랜드 이미지와 브랜드 태도에 유의한 영향을 미쳤으며, 브랜드 이미지와 브랜드 태도는 VR 패션 제품에 대한 구매 의도에 긍정적 영향을 미쳤다. 나아가 브랜드 이미지와 브랜드 태도는 중국 MZ세대의 소비자 의식과 VR 패션 제품에 대한 구매 의도 간 유의한 매개 변수로 작용함을 검증하였다. 즉, VR패션 브랜드 전략의 경우, 환경, 사회적 가치와 사회적 지위 상징성을 브랜드 이미지에 강조해야 함을 알 수 있었다.

주제어: 브랜드 태도, 브랜드 이미지, 중국 MZ세대, 소비자 의식, VR 패션 상품

I. Introduction

The MZ generation, encompassing Millennials and Generation Z, is a dynamic force in the fashion market, marked by adaptability to market shifts and trendsetting tendencies(Lee, 2021). In China, MZ consumers are particularly environmentally conscious and value-driven, emphasizing their unique status

through purchases (Lupien & Oldham, 2012; Smith & Nichols, 2015; Zerbib, 2020). This generation is also reshaping the digital landscape, leveraging flexibility, online fluency, and social media prowess (Park et al., 2021). Their demand for immersive experiences has led to the metaverse's rise(Gaffar, 2021). Fashion brands have capitalized on this by collaborating with metaverse platforms to launch

본 논문은 석사학위 청구논문의 일부임

* Corresponding author: Lee, Jee Hyun

Tel: +82-2-2123-3159, Fax: +82-2-2123-8661

E-mail: ez2@yonsei.ac.kr

digital fashion products(Jung et al., 2021), driving the growing importance of digital fashion. In China, 'A/W 2022 Shenzhen Fashion Week' featured designs created in 3D using AI and VR technology on a metaverse platform(Yang, 2017).

However, the previous studies on VR fashion mainly focused on the general consumer experience (Jung et al., 2021; Kim & Ha, 2019), the managerial implications for consumer marketing(Jang et al., 2019; Wedel et al., 2020) and the technological implications(Kim & Ha, 2019). The researches from the aspects of brand strategy and management of VR fashion brands were limitedly conducted.

Therefore, this study's primary goal is to investigate the connection between consumer consciousness and the purchase intention of VR fashion products. Additionally, it seeks to explore the factors influencing the purchase intention of these products among Chinese MZ generation consumers. Consequently, the findings of this research could offer valuable insights for virtual fashion brands in terms of devising effective marketing strategies that target the Chinese MZ generation.

II. Theoretical Background

1. VR fashion product

Digital fashion involves the incorporation of digital media and equipment, as well as the creation of fashion-related content stored in digital databases for distribution(Adams, 2004).

Fashion tech companies like "Dress-X" sell the VR fashion designs offering the high-definition images of consumers wearing the virtual fashion design within 1-2 days via email. VR fashion technology enables personalized designs tailored to users' preferences(Lehdonvirta, 2009; Nagy & Koles, 2014) and offers limitless design options for expressing individual personality(Sestino et al., 2022).

Digital fashion, characterized by dematerialized resources and digital production, is seen as a sustainable fashion alternative that disrupts traditional supply chains and fosters co-creation with consumers (Casciani et al., 2022). In today's fashion industry, embracing sustainable fashion products is essential, and VR fashion products, with features like virtual fitting and personalized design, offer an eco-friendly option(Mesjar et al., 2023). Given the growing emphasis on the sustainability of VR fashion products (Ikram, 2022), it is paramount to investigate how the consumption consciousness of the MZ generation influences their choice of VR fashion products.

〈Table 1〉 Characteristics of Chinese MZ generation

| Categories | Characteristics | Source |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Environmental consciousness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a more developed environmental self-identity and stronger sustainable consumption behavior | Zerbib, 2020 |
| Value consciousness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracted by products or brands that communicate positive values | Smith, 2010; Zerbib, 2020 |
| Status value | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sheltered, confident and achievement-oriented to showcase them, especially tech-loving Highly receptive to new brands and new objects, and prefer fashionable and highly symbolic products | Ding, 2021; Ji, 2018; Lai et al., 2022; Lupien & Oldham, 2012; Smith & Nichols, 2015 |
| Pragmatism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong consciousness of product quality, pay more attention to the value of time and save purchasing time Pursuit of ultimate convenience | Lai et al., 2022; Shen, 2012 |
| Subversion of traditional values | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new view of gender Subversion of traditional norms | Mao, 2000 |
| New nationalism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing sense of national pride | Qiao, 2022 |

2. Chinese MZ generation

In China, the MZ generation is marked by their upbringing in a networked environment during rapid economic development. They have been influenced by Western culture and represent a substantial portion of the Chinese market with considerable consumption potential, often backed by family financial support (Zhao, 2023). Table 1 shows the characteristics of the Chinese MZ generation supported by precedent research.

3. Consumer Consciousness related to VR fashion

1) Concept of consumer consciousness

Consumer consciousness is a concept within the field of consumer behavior and refers to the level of consciousness and concern that consumers have about the environmental, social, and ethical impacts of their consumption habits (Halvadia et al., 2022). This study was conducted, placing emphasis on three dimensions of consumption consciousness within the MZ generation, which are intricately linked to VR products possessing immaterial and advanced technical attributes (Sakaguchi et al., 2023). These dimensions encompass environmental consciousness, value consciousness, and status value.

① Environmental consciousness

Environmental consciousness, as defined by Schlegelmilch et al. (1996), relates to the awareness and concern individuals and communities hold about the impacts of human activities on the environment. Research by Sakdiyakorn et al. (2021) has demonstrated that the MZ generation displays a notably high level of environmental consciousness. This generation, exposed to various environmental issues such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss through media, education, and social platforms, considers these issues as urgent and pressing, necessitating immediate action.

② Value consciousness

Value consciousness, as defined by Itani et al. (2019), influences consumer thinking and attitudes. Richardson et al. (1996) add that it involves the price-to-satisfaction ratio. This trait makes consumers more price and quality aware, driving them to seek information and make informed choices, as noted by Pillai & Kumar (2012). In this study, value consciousness is a vital attribute for MZ generation consumers, impacting their brand image and attitudes toward VR fashion products.

③ Status Consciousness

Status consciousness refers to the degree to which individuals are aware of and concerned with their own social status or the status of others. In fashion consumption, consumers' status-related needs become a growing concern (Marx-Pienaar & Erasmus, 2014), especially for the MZ Generation. Consumers in the MZ Generation would like to purchase publicly visible products (Lertwannawit & Mandhachitara, 2012), such as high-end luxury products. They use these products to impress others, including their superiors in the workplace (Husic & Cicic, 2009).

2) Consumer Consciousness and Brand Equity

The MZ generation is characterized by their strong commitment to conscious consumption practices, particularly regarding environmental awareness and status-consciousness. Environmentally conscious MZ consumers tend to support brands aligned with sustainability values (Lee, 2008), while status-conscious individuals are motivated by social recognition and prestige (Awan et al., 2020).

In the context of the emerging VR fashion landscape, understanding the consumption consciousness of the MZ generation, who are primary consumers of VR products, is crucial for crafting effective VR fashion strategies. The alignment between the brand image and consumer consciousness significantly influences consumer attitudes towards the brand.

Hypothesis 1: Consumer consciousness of the MZ generation significantly influence the brand image of VR fashion products.

Hypothesis 2: Consumer consciousness of the MZ generation significantly influence the brand attitude of VR fashion products.

4. Purchase Intention

1) The concept of purchase intention

Purchase intention is a key concept in consumer behavior, reflecting the likelihood that attitudes and beliefs will result in specific future actions(Engel et al., 1995). This model, built upon Engel et al.'s work, emphasizes the influence of beliefs and attitudes on consumer actions. In marketing, the relationship between brand equity and purchase intention is especially vital in the service industry (Bian & Forsythe, 2012). Therefore, understanding consumer purchase intention is crucial for brands to gauge the potential success of their products or services.

2) Consumer Consciousness and Purchase Intention

Consumer purchase intention in the VR fashion industry is influenced by several factors. Firstly, environmental consciousness plays a significant role, as consumers increasingly prioritize environmentally responsible choices. They view VR fashion products as potentially eco-friendly, favoring sustainable alternatives that reduce ecological harm. This is in line with findings by Park et al.(2013).

Secondly, consumers' values, including social responsibility, self-expression, and price-consciousness, impact their preferences and purchasing decisions. VR fashion products that align with these values can create a stronger emotional connection, as discussed by Escalas and Bettman(2005).

Additionally, VR fashion products can serve as

a means for individuals to showcase their social status and gain recognition. In summary, understanding consumer purchase intention is vital for comprehending preferences and behaviors in the VR fashion industry, as highlighted by McFerran et al.(2014).

Hypothesis 3: Consumer consciousness of the MZ generation significantly influence purchase intention toward fashion products for MZ generation.

5. Brand Equity

1) The concept of brand equity

Brand equity, a fundamental concept, represents a brand's overall image and is pivotal for maintaining a competitive advantage in an industry(Aaker, 1991). Hao(2004) defines consumer-based brand equity as the perceived value of a brand, encompassing tangible and intangible elements that enhance a product when the brand is attached to it.

Academic research has contributed to identifying brand equity components. Aaker(1991) perceives brand equity as multidimensional. Previous studies have identified key components, including brand image, brand attitude, brand cognition, brand trust, brand quality, brand personality, brand satisfaction, and brand satisfaction(Khan et al., 2014). Recent research on Social Network Services emphasizes the significance of brand image and attitude as essential brand equity components(Choi & Han, 2012).

① Brand Image

Brand image, encompassing users, feelings, personality, purpose, and convenience, embodies a consumer's perception of a brand(Keller et al., 2008). Aaker(1991) defines brand image as the accumulation of experiences from the past to the present, forming brand-related associations that shape the overall impression of the product and brand(Bivainienė &

Sliburytė, 2008).

Brand image is a crucial element in brand differentiation and a cornerstone of brand equity, as its intangible value sets a brand apart from competitors (Kim & Chao, 2019). Lee (2017) and Bilgin (2018) quantify brand image based on factors like each brand's unique personality, differentiation, clear image, and distinctiveness from other brands. The study's survey approach is inspired by Lee (2017) and Bilgin (2018).

② Brand Attitude

Brand attitude, as defined by Nayeem et al. (2019), reflects an enduring predisposition to express positive or negative comments, feelings, and behaviors towards a specific brand or product. Mitchell and Olson (1981) characterize brand attitudes as consumers' individual internal evaluations of brands and products.

According to the previous study, brand attitude is defined as a continuous tendency to evaluate, feel, and act positively or negatively on a specific brand or product. The calculation of brand attitude will refer to the surveys conducted by Lee and Sung (2018).

2) The mediating role of brand equity

Brand equity, which reflects a brand's marketplace value and strength, has a direct impact on consumer behavior, particularly purchase intentions (Dodds

et al., 1991). Research by Nilmini confirms the importance of brand equity dimensions in shaping customer purchase intentions. Jia et al. (2022) find that virtual brands, like VR fashion brands, can influence purchase intentions through brand image. Consequently, brand equity has a positive effect on purchase intention.

Considering Hypotheses 1 and 2, it can be concluded that brand equity acts as a mediator in the relationship between consumer consciousness and purchase intention, leading to the formulation of the following hypothesis.

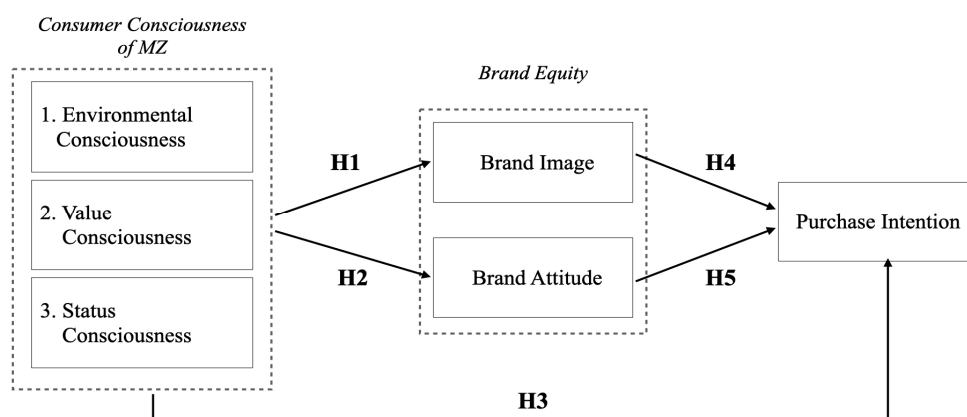
Hypothesis 4: The brand image plays a mediating role between consumer consciousness and purchase intention towards VR fashion products for MZ generation.

Hypothesis 5: The brand attitude plays a mediating role between consumer consciousness and purchase intention towards VR fashion products for MZ generation.

III. Research Methodology

1. Research model and hypothesis

The conceptual framework of this study aimed to investigate how the consumer consciousness of



[Figure 1] Research Model

the Chinese MZ generation affect their brand image and brand attitude towards VR fashion products, and ultimately impact their purchase intention. Based on the previous research, this study focused on three main values of the Chinese MZ generation: environmental consciousness, value consciousness, and status consciousness. Brand equity, which includes brand image and brand attitude, was also considered as a mediator between the consumer consciousness and purchase intention, as suggested by previous studies. Fig 1 shows the research model of this study.

2. Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

The questionnaire was divided into three sections, namely consumer consciousness of MZ Generation, Brand Equity, and Purchase Intention.

The consumer consciousness section had 12 items, which were categorized into three values: environmental consciousness, value consciousness, and status consciousness. The measurement of consumer consciousness was adapted from Lee et al.(2010) and Yadav & Pathak(2016). The Brand Equity section had ten items, grouped into two values: Brand Image and Brand Attitude. The measurement of consumer consciousness was adapted from Lee(2017) and Bilgin(2018). Lastly, the Purchase Intention section had five items. The measurement of consumer consciousness was adapted from Lee

et al.(2010) and Yadav & Pathak(2016). All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale.

The participants were Chinese MZ generation between the ages of 20 and 30, mainly residing in Beijing and Shanghai provinces in China. The respondents of the survey consisted of consumers who had experienced or interacted with VR fashion products. The survey was conducted online using Baidu Forms Online from September 9 to September 12, 2022. Stratified sampling method was employed to select 150 respondents from each city, resulting in a total of 239 useful surveys with 120 male and 119 female participants.

The collected data was analyzed using SPSS 25.0 and AMOS 25.0. The study used exploratory factor analysis, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, multiple linear regression analysis, SEM and Bootstrapping analysis.

To clarify the range of VR fashion products, five images of VR fashion products were contained in the questionnaire. They were five brands leading virtual fashion that are most popular among the MZ generation in recent years Fig 2.

IV. Results

1. Demographic results

The demographic characteristics of respondents are shown in Table 2. All the respondents were



[Figure 2] 10 brands that are leading virtual fashion 2023
(<https://thefashionstarter.com/brands-that-are-leading-virtual-fashion/>)

aged 20-39 years old. The average age is 28.46 (SD=3.350) years old. And 110 of the respondents are students(46.0%), 88 of them are university graduates(36.8%). Regarding the monthly average income, 56% of respondents have under 10,000 monthly average income, and just 13% of respondents have more than 30,000 income.

2. Results of Validity and Reliability

1) Reliability analysis

The reliability analysis results of all variables are

shown in Table 3. We used SPSS 25.0 for internal consistency analysis. The consumer consciousness scale contains 12 items, divided into 3 factors. The Cronbach's α of each factor was .908, .911, and .874 respectively indicating that each factor has high reliability. The Brand Equity scale contains 10 items, divided into two factors. The Cronbach's α of each factor was .911 and .905 respectively, which indicates that each factor has high reliability. The purchase intention scale contains 5 items. The Cronbach's α of each factor was .874, indicating that each factor has high reliability.

〈Table 2〉 Demographic results of participants

| Characteristics | Category | N(239) | % |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Age(Mean) = 28.46 | 20~25 | 73 | 30.5% |
| | 26~30 | 104 | 43.5% |
| | 31~39 | 62 | 25.9% |
| Gender | M | 120 | 50.2% |
| | F | 119 | 49.8% |
| Education | Less than high school graduate | 6 | 2.5% |
| | University Student | 34 | 14.2% |
| | University graduated | 88 | 36.8% |
| | Graduated student | 78 | 32.6% |
| | More than a graduate school | 25 | 10.5% |
| | Etc. | 8 | 3.3% |
| Occupation | Student | 110 | 46.0% |
| | Office employee | 65 | 27.2% |
| | Profession | 26 | 10.9% |
| | Public Office | 16 | 6.7% |
| | Self-employment | 14 | 5.9% |
| | Etc. | 8 | 3.3% |
| Average Monthly Income(CNY) | Under 5000 | 65 | 27.2% |
| | 5000 to 10,000 | 69 | 28.9% |
| | 10,000 to 20,000 | 45 | 18.8% |
| | 20,000 to 30,000 | 29 | 12.1% |
| | More than 30,000 | 31 | 13.0% |

〈Table 3〉 Results of Reliability Analysis

| Variable | Factors | Items | Cronbach's α |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| Consumer Consciousness | Environmental consciousness | 4 | 0.908 |
| | Value Consciousness | 4 | 0.895 |
| | Status Consciousness | 4 | 0.859 |
| Brand Equity | Brand Attitude | 5 | 0.911 |
| | Brand Image | 5 | 0.905 |
| Purchase Intention | 5 | 5 | 0.874 |

2) Validity analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate the measurement model's validity. Factor loadings and average variance extracted(AVE) values were examined by structural equation modeling(SEM) with AMOS 25.0. The results in Table 4 show all study constructs' average variance extracted(AVE) values are higher than 0.5, and all composite reliability(CR) values are higher than 0.7, indicating the measurement scale's convergent validity.

Table 5 further shows that the square root of

the AVE is higher than the correlation between any two latent components, supporting the discriminant validity. The values within the diagonal line in Table 5 are AVE values.

3) Common Method Bias

To account for the consequences of common method bias, we used a variety of techniques (Podsakoff et al., 2003). First, in the procedural aspect, the order of items was scrambled, and the participants' anonymity was guaranteed. Second, in

〈Table 4〉 Results of Validity Analysis

| Sub-categories | Items | Factor loadings | AVE | CR |
|-----------------------------|--|-----------------|------|------|
| Environmental Consciousness | In order to prevent environmental degradation caused by fashion, I think digital fashion products such as VR fashion should be actively promoted around the world. | .807 | .607 | .919 |
| | I think that environmental degradation caused by manufacturing fashion is one of the most important issues facing society today. | .792 | | |
| | If each of us fails to recognize the need to protect the environment, future generations will suffer the consequences. | .753 | | |
| | I am willing to pay more for VR fashion products that take the lead in environmental protection. | .764 | | |
| Value Consciousness | I tend to invest a lot of time into buying valuable and quality VR fashion products. | .838 | .620 | .911 |
| | I compare prices when shopping for VR fashion products. | .825 | | |
| | When I buy VR fashion products, I always make sure to get the best value for money. | .775 | | |
| | When I buy VR fashion products, I measure the value of the product. | .706 | | |
| Status Consciousness | I tend to buy VR fashion products that highlight higher social status. | .819 | .666 | .873 |
| | I am willing to pay more for VR fashion products that highlight a higher social status. | .813 | | |
| | I am interested in VR fashion products because they can improve my social status. | .814 | | |
| | I hope that the VR fashion products I purchase will attract others' attention. | .819 | | |
| Brand Image | VR fashion products have unique personalities | .845 | .661 | .927 |
| | VR fashion products are different from other fashion products | .825 | | |
| | When I think of VR fashion products, a clear image can come to my mind. | .812 | | |
| | VR fashion products have a differentiated image from other fashion products. | .803 | | |
| | VR fashion products are of better quality than other fashion products. | .780 | | |
| Brand Attitude | I like VR fashion products. | .827 | .599 | .933 |
| | VR fashion products are good. | .774 | | |
| | I want to try VR fashion products. | .791 | | |
| | VR fashion products are attractive. | .784 | | |
| | I pay attention to VR fashion products. | .687 | | |
| Purchase Intention | I prefer buying VR fashion products. | .823 | .643 | .899 |
| | I will buy a VR fashion product without a doubt. | .819 | | |
| | There is a high possibility of purchasing a VR fashion product for me. | .798 | | |
| | I want to buy a VR fashion product. | .776 | | |
| | I will purchase VR fashion products among similar fashion products. | .803 | | |

the statistical test, the Harman's one-factor test was used to check for the occurrence of common method bias. We discovered that all components were driven into one factor, which accounted for 78.336% of the variance overall while only accounting for 35.78% of the variance in the first factor. Consequently, common technique bias is not a serious issue.

3. Hypothesis Testing

We used the AMOS 25.0 to test the hypotheses. The model fit was good ($\chi^2/df = 2.713$, $GFI = 0.83$, $CFI=0.926$, $NFI=0.903$, $TLI=0.919$, $RMSEA=0.073$). The path analysis results (Hypotheses 1-3) in Table 6 showed that while Status Consciousness ($\beta = 0.121$, $p > 0.05$) did not significantly affect

Brand Attitude, all other paths were significantly.

Therefore, Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3 are supported, and Hypothesis 2 is partially supported.

In this study, in order to analyze the mediating effect of brand equity, a mediating effect model was established, and a structural equation model was analyzed. In order to evaluate the mediating effect, the effect of the independent variable of consumer consciousness of MZ generation on mediating brand equity should be noted, and the effect of the mediator of brand equity on the dependent variable purchase intention should be noted.

The validity of the measurement model was evaluated using the RMSEA value, which was found to be 0.04. This result indicates that the latent variables were independent and had sufficient

(Table 5) Discriminant validity analysis.

| Variable | Environmental Consciousness | Value Consciousness | Status Consciousness | Brand Image | Brand Attitude | Purchase Intention |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Environmental Consciousness | .607 | | | | | |
| Value Consciousness | .552*** | .620 | | | | |
| Status Consciousness | .705*** | .550*** | .666 | | | |
| Brand Image | .605* | .205*** | .125 | .661 | | |
| Brand Attitude | .312* | .102 | .302* | .325*** | .599 | |
| Purchase Intention | .268* | .528** | .254* | .605* | .524* | .643 |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

(Table 6) Path of latent variables

| Path of latent variables | β | SE | t | p |
|--|---------|-------|-------|------|
| Environmental consciousness → Brand image | .246** | .0043 | 2.750 | .004 |
| Value consciousness → Brand image | .189* | .0051 | 2.288 | .032 |
| Status consciousness → Brand image | .360*** | .0059 | 3.857 | .000 |
| Environmental consciousness → Brand attitude | .268** | .0046 | 2.742 | .003 |
| Value consciousness → Brand attitude | .260** | .0056 | 2.799 | .005 |
| Status consciousness → Brand attitude | .121 | .0062 | 1.796 | .069 |
| Environmental consciousness → Purchase intention | .154** | .0074 | 3.171 | .002 |
| Value consciousness → Purchase intention | .160** | .0085 | 2.903 | .004 |
| Status consciousness → Purchase intention | .178** | .0066 | 2.663 | .008 |
| Brand image → Purchase intention | .235** | .1258 | 2.941 | .003 |
| Brand attitude → Purchase intention | .254** | .0652 | 3.013 | .003 |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

discriminant validity. Table 6 shows the path of latent variables.

As a result of SEM, the paths of independent variables to mediator variables were statically significant except the path of status consciousness to brand attitude. All paths of mediator variables to dependent variables were also statically significant.

Fig 3 shows the mediating effect of brand image and brand attitude between the consumer consciousness and purchase intention.

To analyze the mediating role of brand equity between consumer consciousness and purchase intention, the entire consumer consciousness was regarded as a whole and the measure of consumer consciousness was obtained by calculating the average value of the independent variables.

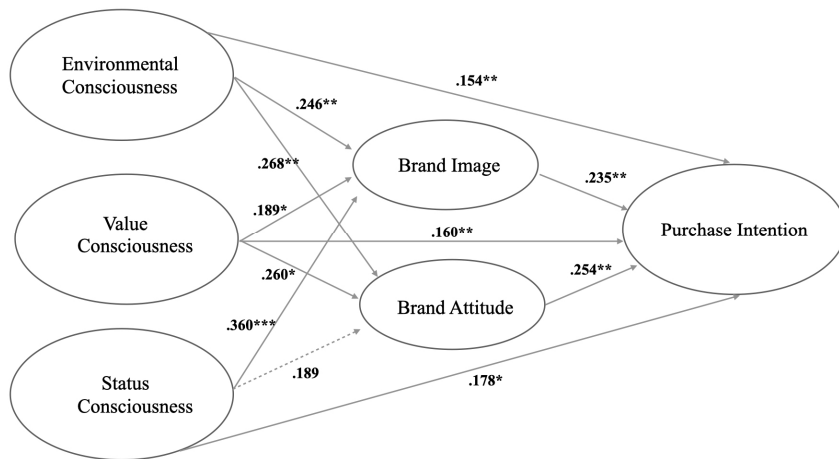
Next, this study used the AMOS SEMs bootstrapping process to do the mediation analysis. To test the significance of the mediation effects, 5000 bootstrapped re-samples were used, along with a bias-corrected confidence level of 95%. Table 7 revealed that both

brand image and brand attitude played a partial mediating role in the impact of consumer consciousness on purchase intention. Hence, Hypotheses 4 and Hypothesis 5 were supported.

V. Conclusion

This study delves into the influence of consumer consciousness and brand equity on purchase intentions for VR fashion products targeted at Chinese MZ generation consumers.

The research revealed that the consumer consciousness of the Chinese MZ generation significantly impacts the brand image and brand attitude of VR fashion products(Hypotheses 1 and 2). Furthermore, this consumer consciousness significantly affects the purchase of VR fashion products(Hypothesis 3). Additionally, the brand image and brand attitude mediate the relationship between consumer consciousness and purchase intentions for VR fashion products



[Figure 3] Structural Equation Model

<Table 7> Mediation analysis

| Path | Effect Type | Effect | Boot SE | Bootstrap 95% CIs | |
|----------|-------------|--------|---------|-------------------|-------|
| | | | | Lower | Upper |
| CC-BI-PI | Direct | .109 | .068 | .020 | .242 |
| | Indirect | .155 | .071 | .030 | .297 |
| CC-BA-PI | Direct | .145 | .075 | .011 | .297 |
| | Indirect | .210 | .076 | .079 | .360 |

(Hypotheses 4 and 5). Consequently, the consumer consciousness of the Chinese MZ generation can boost purchase intentions and contribute to the creation of robust brand equity, with VR fashion brands effectively influencing purchase intentions.

The significance of the brand image in the context of VR fashion is evident in its role in addressing environmental concerns and its potential societal impact. Therefore, to captivate the attention of the Chinese MZ generation, marketing strategies that offer a valuable shopping experience hold more significance than merely focusing on hedonistic shopping experiences. A limitation of this study is its narrow research scope, confined to China and a specific age group (MZ generation). Future studies should aim to broaden the geographical coverage and age range while conducting in-depth analyses of variations in technology acceptance.

Keywords: Brand attitude, Brand image, Chinese MZ generation, Consumer consciousness, VR fashion product

REFERENCES

- Aaker, D. A. (1991). *Managing brand equity*. New York: The Free Press.
- Adams, N. B. (2004). Digital intelligence fostered by technology. *Journal of Technology Studies*, 30(2), 93-97.
- Awan, H. M., Hayat, Z., Hayat, S., & Faiz, R. (2020). Impact of status consciousness on consumer purchase intention and brand equity: the Mediating role of brand associations. *Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economies*, 6(1), 23-42.
- Bian, Q., & Forsythe, S. (2012). Purchase intention for luxury brands: A cross cultural comparison. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(10), 1443-1451.
- Bilgin, Y. (2018). The effect of social media marketing activities on brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty. *Business & Management studies: an international journal*, 6(1), 128-148.
- Bivainienė, L., & Sliburytė, L. (2008). The brand image as an element of brand equity. *Social Research*, 2(12), 22-31.
- Casciani, D., Chkanikova, O., & Pal, R. (2022). Exploring the nature of digital transformation in the fashion industry: opportunities for supply chains, business models, and sustainability-oriented innovations. *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy*, 18(1), 773-795.
- Choi, S. H., & Han, S. P. (2012). A study on the effect of on-line brand community characteristics and self-determination on brand equity. *Korean Journal of Consumer and Advertising Psychology*, 13(1), 41-62.
- Ding, Y. (2021.09.07). Four fashion personalities of China's Generation Z. *Global Times*, 006.
- Dodds, W. B., Monroe, K. B., & Grewal, D. (1991). Effects of price, brand, and store information on buyers' product evaluations. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 28(3), 307-319.
- Engel, J. F., Blackwell, R. D., & Miniard, P. W. (1995). *Consumer behavior* (8th ed.). New York: Dryden Press.
- Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2005). Self-construal, reference groups, and brand meaning. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(3), 378-389.
- Gaffar, A. A. M. (2021). Metaverse in heritage conservation evaluation: using fully immersive virtual reality techniques to evaluate preservation quality. *International Journal of Architecture, Arts and Applications*, 7(4), 97-106.
- Halvadia, N. B., Bhatt, K., Sharma, M., Sharma, A., & Dash, S. (2022). Consumers' intention to use bicycle-sharing services: The role of consumer consciousness. *Cleaner and Responsible Consumption*, 7, 100076.
- Hao, S. (2004). Evaluation of clothing brand assets. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Dongguk University, Seoul.

- Husic, M., & Cicic, M. (2009). Luxury consumption factors. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 13(2), 231-245.
- Ikram, M. (2022). Transition toward green economy: Technological Innovation's role in the fashion industry. *Current Opinion in Green and Sustainable Chemistry*, 37, 100657.
- Itani, O. S., Kassar, A. N., & Loureiro, S. M. C. (2019). Value get, value give: The relationships among perceived value, relationship quality, customer engagement, and value consciousness. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 80, 78-90.
- Jang, J. Y., Hur, H. J. & Choo, H. J. (2019). How to evoke consumer approach intention toward VR stores? Sequential mediation through telepresence and experiential value. *Fashion and Textiles*, 6, 12.
- Ji, J. (2018). Research on Smart Product Design for Generation Y. Master thesis, Beijing Institute of Technology.
- Jia, X., Alvi, A. K., Nadeem, M. A., Akhtar, N., & Zaman, H. M. F. (2022). Impact of Perceived Influence, Virtual Interactivity on Consumer Purchase Intentions Through the Path of Brand Image and Brand Expected Value. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 947916.
- Jung, J., Yu, J., Seo, Y., & Ko, E. (2021). Consumer experiences of virtual reality: Insights from VR luxury brand fashion shows. *Journal of Business Research*, 130, 517-524.
- Keller, K. L., Apéria, T., & Georgson, M. (2008). *Strategic brand management: A European perspective*. New Jersey: Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- Khan, N., Rahmani, S. H. R., Hoe, H. Y., & Chen, T. B. (2014). Causal relationships among dimensions of consumer-based brand equity and purchase intention: Fashion industry. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 10(1), 172-181.
- Kim, J., & Ha, J. (2019). User needs for haptic communication of VR fashion product shopping. *Fashion & Textile Research Journal*, 21(4), 401-411.
- Kim, R. B., & Chao, Y. (2019). Effects of brand experience, brand image and brand trust on brand building process: The case of Chinese millennial generation consumers. *Journal of International Studies*, 12(3), 9-21.
- Lai, Y., Zhou, H. & Li, J. (2022). Understanding China's "Generation Z" and embracing the new wave of consumption. *Development Research*, (03), 44-55.
- Lee, H., & Sung, Y. (2018). The Effects of Value Proposition Factors of PB Products on Brand Attitude and Repurchase Intention: Focusing on E-Mart's No Brand. *A Journal of Brand Design Association of Korea*, 16(1), 19-30.
- Lee, J. S., Hsu, L. T., Han, H., & Kim, Y. (2010). Understanding how consumers view green hotels: how a hotel's green image can influence behavioural intentions. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 18(7), 901-914.
- Lee, K. (2008). Opportunities for green marketing: young consumers. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 26(6), 573-586.
- Lee, S. (2017). The relationship between product attributes, brand image and quality satisfaction of poomsae uniforms. *Taekwondo Journal of Kukkiwon*, 8(4), 335-356.
- Lee, S. H. (2021). A study on selection attributes of hotel reservation applications using revised IPA analysis: Focused on MZ generation. *Journal of Hotel & Resort*, 20(5), 93-110.
- Lehdonvirta, V. (2009). Virtual consumption. *Turku School of Economics*, A(11).
- Lertwannawit, A., & Mandhachitara, R. (2012). Interpersonal effects on fashion consciousness and status consumption moderated by materialism in metropolitan men. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(10), 1408-1416.
- Lillie, H. (2022), 10 brands that are leading virtual fashion. Thefashionstarter. Retrieved from <https://>

- thefashionstarter.com/brands-that-are-leading-virtual-fashion/
- Lupien, P., & Oldham, R. (2012). Millennials and Technology: Putting suppositions to the test in an academic library. In *Meeting the Needs of Student Users in Academic Libraries* (pp. 89-126). Chandos Information Professional Series.
- Mao, Y (2000). Focus on China's Generation Z. *China Advertising*, (04), 14-17.
- Marx-Pienaar, N. J., & Erasmus, A. C. (2014). Status consciousness and knowledge as potential impediments of households' sustainable consumption practices of fresh produce amidst times of climate change. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 38(4), 419-426.
- McFerran, B., Aquino, K., & Tracy, J. L. (2014). Evidence for two facets of pride in consumption: Findings from luxury brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 24(4), 455-471.
- Mesjar, L., Cross, K., Jiang, Y., & Steed, J. (2023). The Intersection of Fashion, Immersive Technology, and Sustainability: A Literature Review. *Sustainability*, 15(3761), 1-22.
- Mitchell, A. A., & Olson, J. C. (1981). Are product attribute beliefs the only mediator of advertising effects on brand attitude. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(3), 318-332.
- Nagy, P., & Koles, B. (2014). The digital transformation of human identity: Towards a conceptual model of virtual identity in virtual worlds. *Convergence*, 20(3), 276-292.
- Nayeem, T., Murshed, F., & Dwivedi, A. (2019). Brand experience and brand attitude: examining a credibility-based mechanism. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 37(7), 821-836.
- Park, S., Lee, Y., Na, H., Lee, H. K., & Lee, S. (2021). Future directions of the virtual museum content with metaverse technology for the MZ generation. *Proceedings of The Korea Society of Design Academic Conference*(pp. 234-235), Hongik university, Korea.
- Park, S.H., Oh, K. W., & Na, Y. K. (2013). The effects of environment-conscious consumer attitudes towards eco-friendly product and artificial leather fashion product purchase intentions. *Fashion & Textile Research Journal*, 15(1), 57-64.
- Pillai, K. G., & Kumar, V. (2012). Differential effects of value consciousness and coupon proneness on consumers' persuasion knowledge of pricing tactics. *Journal of Retailing*, 88(1), 20-33.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879-903.
- Qiao, H. (2022,05,26). China's "Generation Z" determines the success or failure of Western brands. *Global Times*, 006.
- Richardson, T. Q., & Molinaro, K. L. (1996). White counselor self-awareness: A prerequisite for developing multicultural competence. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 74(3), 238-242.
- Sakaguchi, M., Aoki, E., & Nagamatsu, K. (2023). A study on changing consciousness of post coronavirus pandemic in fashion society and use of digital technology. *Conference on Complex, Intelligent, and Software Intensive Systems* (PP.367-376), Cham, Switzerland
- Sakdiyakorn, M., Golubovskaya, M., & Solnet, D. (2021). Understanding Generation Z through collective consciousness: Impacts for hospitality work and employment. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 94, 102822.
- Schlegelmilch, B. B., Bohlen, G. M. & Diamantopoulos, A. (1996). The link between green purchasing decisions and measures of environmental consciousness. *European Journal of Marketing*, 30(5), 35-55.
- Sestino, A., Guido, G., & Peluso, A. M. (2022). The interplay of consumer innovativeness and status consumption orientation when buying NFT-based fashion products. In *Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) Examining the Impact on*

- Consumers and Marketing Strategies*(pp. 63-75). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Shen, T. (2012). Research on the influence of personal statistical variables on the purchase decision-making inclination of "Generation Y" consumers. *Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Monthly* (10), 101-103.
- Smith, K. T. (2010). An examination of marketing techniques that influence Millennials' perceptions of whether a product is environmentally friendly. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 18(6), 437-450.
- Smith, T.J., & Nichols, T. (2015). Understanding the Millennial Generation. *Journal of Business Diversity*, 15(1), 39-47.
- Wedel, M., Bigné, E., & Zhang, J. (2020). Virtual and augmented reality: Advancing research in consumer marketing. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 37(3), 443-465.
- Yadav, R., & Pathak, G. S. (2016). Young consumers' intention towards buying green products in a developing nation: Extending the theory of planned behavior. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 135, 732-739.
- Yang, S. (2017). Talking about the impact of VR technology on clothing online marketing: taking alibaba buy+ project as an example. *Chinese Market*, (22), 100-101.
- Zerbib, S. (2020). How the Chinese consumer views sustainability. Retrieved from <https://www.fulljet.com.cn/how-the-chinese-consumer-views-sustainability/>.
- Zhao, T. (2023). The group identity of generation Z at station B: Taking the new generation of rap as an example. *Beauty and the Times*, 2(03), 141-145.

Received 29 August 2023;

1st Revised 4 October 2023;

Accepted 9 October 2023