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The effects of mall personality and fashion orientation on shopping value and mall patronage intension

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ABSTRACT

It is imperative for mall operators in China to gain insights into consumer shopping behaviours that will allow them to further develop their mall personalities, in order to better differentiate themselves from the competition. The overarching objective of the present study was two-fold: to increase our understanding about contemporary Chinese shoppers; and to examine the relationships among mall personality, fashion orientation, shopping value and mall patronage intention. This study presents the results of a research survey conducted in Wuhan, China. Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS SEM) was used to analyze the survey responses from 324 shopping mall patrons. The findings indicate that consumers' fashion orientation has a significant influence based on their perception of the shopping mall personality. The path model analysis revealed that consumers' perception of shopping value had the strongest effect on their shopping intentions at the mall.

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1. Introduction

Due to its tremendous economic growth, China has emerged as the second largest economy in the world (Teather, 2010). According to a study conducted by Li and Fung (2013), from 2008 to 2012, the total retail sales of consumer goods increased dramatically, from 10.8 trillion yuan to 20.7 trillion yuan. Many urban dwellers have experienced and benefited from this rapid economic growth, including residents of the inland cities. In Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province, for example, the retail sales of consumer goods increased more than 100 percent in five years, from RMB129.3 billion in 2006 to RMB295.9 billion in 2011 (HKTDC, 2012). Wuhan is considered to be a major economic hub and the most affluent city in the central region.

As the economy grows, many global retailers and property developers have rushed to China for different business opportunities, including the development of massive shopping malls in both first and second tier cities (Li et al., 2003). As Rapoza (2013) reported, "There is more mall space under construction in one single city in China than in 86 cities throughout Europe (not counting Russia and Turkey). Last year, the country was the No. 1 developer of that ubiquitous symbol of consumer capitalism: the shopping mall."

To maximize the space productivity and sales opportunities within a shopping mall, it is imperative for mall owners, operators and store managers to gain a sound understanding of today's consumer behaviour (Atsmon et al., 2010). The purpose of our exploratory study was to provide insights into the shopping behaviours of Chinese consumers through the examination of our proposed conceptual framework, which is comprised of various constructs including: mall personality, fashion orientation, shopping value, and mall patronage intention. The overarching objective of the present study was two-fold: (1) to increase our understanding about contemporary Chinese shoppers; and (2) to examine the relationships among mall personality, fashion orientation, shopping value and mall patronage intention.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

Despite the impact of the 2008/2009 global financial crisis, the retail market in China still remains strong, and consumer spending power continues to grow (Cavender, 2010). The shopping-mall format has been widely accepted by Chinese shoppers, although this format is quite different from their traditional mode of shopping. Extant literature has previously examined consumer behaviour within the shopping mall context in Western societies (Bloch et al., 1994; Haytko and Baker, 2004; Millan and Howard, 2007; Michon et al., 2007, 2008). Several other studies are

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particularly relevant to the retail market in China (see Chan et al. (2007), Li et al. (2003, 2004) and Yu (2011)). Although research relating to the Chinese retail market has made significant progress over the last decade, much remains to be explored and further research is needed to gain a greater understanding of this rapidly changing market. For example, how the personality of the mall and fashion orientation might impact Chinese shoppers' intent and behaviour remains unaddressed. In fact, as far as we could determine, the concept of store/mall personality has never been studied in China at all. Thus, this study was intended to generate meaningful information and contribute important knowledge to the existing literature of mall shopping in China at both theoretical and practical levels. For example, as a result of our research, for the first time a number of theories developed in the West (personality scale, shopping value, fashion orientation) have now been tested in a non-Western retail market. In addition, most previous studies of consumer behaviour and retail market have been focused on the first-tier cities including Beijing (Anderson and He, 1998; Dickson et al., 2004; Yu, 2011), Shanghai (Davis and Sensenbrenner, 2000; Delong et al., 2004), and Guangzhou (Dickson et al., 2004), and little research has previously been conducted in second-tier cities such as Wuhan.

2.1. Fashion orientation and shopping value

"Shopping orientation" is a term used to describe shoppers' styles or patterns in certain"activities, interests, and opinions concerning the shopping process" (Moschis (1992) p. 231). Prior research has revealed that shopping orientation is a multi-dimensional construct consisting of personal, economic, social, and recreational motivations (Kwon, 1991; Shim and Kotsiopulos, 1993; Visser and du Preez, 2001).

By contrast, "fashion orientation," as defined by Gutman and Mills (1982), is a latent construct consisting of four factors: fashion leadership, fashion interest, importance of being well dressed, and anti-fashion attitudes. According to a number of studies (Darley and Johson, 1993; Trautmann-Attmann and Johnson, 2009), consumers' fashion interests are related to their shopping behaviours. For example, Darley and Johson, (1993) found that American female adolescents' shopping behaviours were greatly influenced by fashion orientation. Shoppers who are fashion leaders seem to be more involved in shopping in general, and more concerned about shopping value and shopping mall environment specifically, than are those with less interest in fashion.

In this research, the latent construct "shopping value" is made up of indicator variables relating to both "utilitarian" and "hedonic" shopping values. In other words, shopping value is the way that consumers assess the worth of their shopping experiences, including both utilitarian and hedonic factors. Previous research (Kang and Park-Poaps, 2010) has shown that fashion orientation is linked to shopping value, including both utilitarian and hedonic components. This implies that individuals may seek out or prefer specific shopping environments on the basis of their fashion orientation. However, it is important to note that utilitarian and hedonic values should not be viewed as two opposed shopping motives (Michon et al., 2007, 2015). In many cases, they are positively correlated and complement each other. As Michon and Chebat (2004) point out, hedonic shoppers are also motivated by perceived shopping goals. On the basis of these findings, we believe that both utilitarian and hedonic benefits could play an important part in shoppers' behaviour, and it is reasonable to suggest that consumers who are fashion oriented may greatly influence the construct of shopping value. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed to explore the relationship between fashion orientation and shopping value:

H_1. : Fashion orientation significantly influences perceived shopping value.

2.2. Shopping orientation and mall personality

Over the years, Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale (BPS) has been widely applied in different domains and various countries including retail stores in Germany (Zentes et al., 2008), family-type restaurants in South Korea (Lee et al., 2009) and web site brand communication in the United States (Opoku et al., 2007). Despite the widespread application of BPS, the value of its universal applicability across industries and countries has been questioned and criticized. For example, Musante et al. (2008, p. 308) point out that "the primary fault is that many of the 42 traits that were used in the scale were not easily applicable," and Zentes et al. (2008), p. 180 suggest that "whether the scale is generalizable to other European markets remains open for further research." Due to the concerns of scale appropriateness, some researchers have developed their own personality scales for different domains based on Aaker's (1997) concept. For example, store personality scales (SPS) were developed for the retail market by d'Astous and Lévesque (2003) and Das (2014).

Although many studies (Brengman and Willems, 2009; Das, 2014a, 2014b; d'Astous and Lévesque, 2003; Zentes et al., 2008) have examined the store personality in different countries, the specific topic of "shopping centre/mall personality" has received little attention (Michon et al., 2015). For this research study, the personality traits of the store personality scale (SPS) developed by d'Astous and Lévesque (2003) were adapted in order to elucidate how mall personality is linked to fashion orientation, shopping value and mall patronage intention in the context of the shopping environment in Wuhan, China. We chose to use the SPS scale of d'Astous and Lévesque because the shopping motives and activities (e.g., service/product acquisition, entertainment, self-gratification and social experiences) at both retail stores and shopping malls are similar.

Some prior studies (e.g., Darley and Johson (1993)) have shown that fashion orientation and store environment are related. A number of researchers (e.g., Goldsmith and Flynn (1992); Goldsmith et al. (1991)) have found that fashion leaders tend to patronize clothing stores more frequently than do other consumers. Shoppers with high fashion orientation are more likely to shop at upscale department stores (Gutman and Mills, 1982). Another study of fashion retailer personality conducted in Belgium (Brengman and Willems, 2009) also found that consumers' perception toward a store was influenced by its personality. It is evident that the mall environment plays a significant role in the behaviour and experiences of fashion oriented shoppers (Michon et al., 2007). In other words, consumers' perceptions of a shopping mall could be closely related to their affective responses to various associative stimuli, including attributes associated with mall personality (e.g., sophistication and solidity). Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed to explore the relationship between fashion orientation and mall personality:

H_2. : Fashion orientation significantly influences shoppers' perceptions of mall personality.

2.3. Mall personality and shopping value

Prior research has revealed that shopping activities can generate both hedonic and utilitarian outcomes for consumers (Fischer and Arnold, 1990; Sherry 1990). Utilitarian values often refer to the functional, instrumental, practical, and task-related benefits, whereas hedonic values refer to ones that are aesthetic, experiential, emotional, and pleasure-related (Batra and Ahtola 1990;

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Chitturi et al., 2007; Dhar and Wertenbroch 2000). Utilitarian benefits can be obtained through problem-solving or tangible/objective outcomes, while hedonic benefits are often manifested through consumers' self-fulfillment/-gratification (Triandis, 1977). These two types of values are useful in describing shopping experiences and benefits (Babin et al., 1994; Rahman et al., 2010). In the context of retail or shopping mall environments, shoppers do not merely focus on the utilitarian aspects – such as ease with which they can access and navigate the mall, – but also seek hedonic benefits, such as ambience and atmospheric experience. In other words, utilitarian and hedonic shopping values often co-exist in a retail shopping environment. Thus, it is reasonable to postulate that mall personality could influence perceived shopping value as whole.

Prior research (e.g., Fischer and Arnold (1990) and Sherry (1990)) has indicated that shopping experience can indeed generate both hedonic and utilitarian values. For example, Michon et al. (2015) found that a fashion shopper's perception of mall sophistication could positively affect their perception of product quality/utilitarian value. It is reasonable to suggest that mall personality traits are associated with consumers' shopping value. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed to examine the relationship between mall personality and shopping value:

H_3. : Mall personality significantly influences $s_h$opping value

2.4. Shopping value and mall patronage intention

Retailers and shopping mall operators are interested in attracting new shoppers while also retaining their existing ones. Jin and Kim (2003) suggested that shopping outcomes can be expressed in terms of a shopper's level of excitement, satisfaction, and involvement – e.g., the amount of time and money that they are willing to spend in the mall. Thus a mall operator must provide for an optimum shopping experience for their customers.

In a study of retailer evaluation and outcome, Gurel-Atay et al. (2010) pointed out that approach behaviour is a latent construct that includes indicator variables – mall preference, re-patronage intention, customer recommendation and loyalty. Approach behaviour can be more clearly understood when the concept is dichotomized into “approach behaviour” and “avoidance behaviour” (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Approach behaviours are exhibited by those shoppers who engage and show interest in exploring the retail environment. On the contrary, “avoidance” describes the behaviours of those who have no interest in exploring or returning to certain shopping environments, or are unwilling or reluctant to do so.

According to some researchers (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Sweeney and Wyber, 2002), approach behaviours include: time spent browsing and exploring the store; willingness to interact with others in the store; tendency to spend more than anticipated; likelihood of returning to the store; willingness to buy; and likelihood of recommending the store. However, the current study was primarily focused on mall patronage intentions (loyalty for the shopping mall, likelihood of returning to the mall, and likelihood of recommending the mall to others) rather than the time/money spent, purchasing experience and interactivities.

In previous studies of retail stores (Yu, 2011; Michon et al., 2007; Michon et al., 2008), the shopping value (including both utilitarian and hedonic aspects) perceived by consumers is often cited as having an important and direct impact on or linkage to their mall patronage intentions. In other words, if consumers experience positive and beneficial shopping encounters in a particular shopping environment, they are more likely to patronize the venue again, and to recommend it to others. To confirm the findings reported in previous literature, the fourth hypothesis was developed to explore the relationship between shopping value and mall patronage intention:

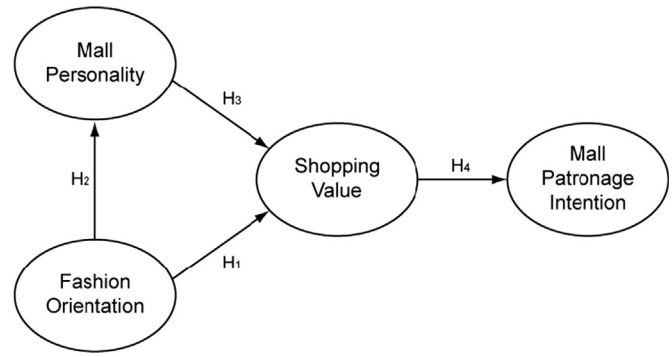

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

H_4. : Shopping value significantly influences mall patronage intention.

Fig. 1 summarizes the conceptual model examined in this study and illustrates the hypotheses and relationships among several constructs: fashion orientation, mall personality, shopping value and mall patronage intention. This framework suggests that shoppers' fashion orientation significantly influences their assessment of the shopping value as well as their perception of the shopping mall personality. We expected that the perceived mall personality could significantly influence the shopping value. In this study, shopping value is an endogenous variable. As mentioned earlier, other latent constructs such as mall personality and fashion orientation are hypothesized to influence shopping value, which in turn affects shoppers' patronage intentions. Thus, shopping value can play a mediatory role between fashion orientation/mall personality and mall patronage intention as illustrated in Fig. 1.

2.5. Research site

The Guanggu International Shopping Centre where the data were collected is a newly established regional mall (opened in 2010) in a second-city of Wuhan in Hubei Province. Its target market is 18–to38-year-old professionals who are more fashion forward than their older counterparts (Guanggu Positioning Report, 2013; Chan et al., 2007). According to some studies conducted in China (e.g., Lee et al. (2004)), younger consumers are increasingly savvy, sophisticated, and demand higher-quality products and services than do older consumers (Lee et al., 2004). They often look for both utilitarian and hedonic value when they shop. In addition to the age factor, the positioning, merchandise offering, and target clientele of this particular mall also made it a suitable site for researching the shopping behaviours of fashion-oriented shoppers.

3. Research methodology and data collection

3.1. Mall intercept surveys

An intercept survey was carried out in the Guanggu International Shopping Centre. Trained graduate students from Wuhan Textile University handled the fieldwork using a tightly controlled procedure adapted from Sudman (1980). The questionnaire was translated into Chinese by one of the researchers, and the translation was verified by another bilingual colleague who was not part of the research team for its equivalency. Then the

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questionnaire was sent to a collaborator in China to conduct a pilot study with five individuals. Based on the pilot study, the wording of certain questions was slightly adjusted to improve clarity of communication. The final survey was written in Simplified Chinese.

Convenience sampling was used for data collection. A total of 324 questionnaires were included in the data analysis. The collected questionnaires contained less than 5% of missing data per indicator, so the mean replacement procedure was used to treat missing data.

3.2. Questionnaire

The questionnaire collected basic demographic information (e.g., gender, age, marital status, family size, education, employment and income level), and it also asked mall patrons to provide feedback in four major areas that reflected the latent construct in our model: (1) fashion orientation; (2) mall personality; (3) shopping value; and (4) mall patronage intention. Using a measurement scale from 1 to 7 (strongly disagree to strongly agree), mall patrons were asked to evaluate statements (i.e., indicator variables) such as "This mall is chic," "This mall is high class," etc. (see Table 2). Participants were also asked to identify the type of shopping mall activities in which they engaged during the visit (see Fig. 2).

3.3. Partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)

The structural equation modeling technique is often used in retail shopping environments to explore the relationships between different constructs (Michon et al., 2007, 2008). We used a second-generation multivariate statistical technique called partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The chosen technique is one of the preferred methods for statistical modeling in exploratory social science research (Chin, 2010; Haenlein and Kaplan, 2004; Hair et al., 2012; Henseler et al., 2012; Ringle et al., 2005).

PLS-SEM works efficiently with small sample sizes (Reinartz et al., 2009) and it does not make strict assumptions about the underlying data (Wong, 2011, 2013; Hair et al., 2013). This is particularly suitable because the sample size of this research ($N=96$ for male; $N=228$ for female) was relatively small. Our sample size satisfies both the "10 times rule" (Barclay et al., 1995) and the guidelines as suggested by Hair et al. (2013). The SmartPLS software (Ringle et al., 2005) and SPSS Statistics were used in this research study.

3.4. Reflective–reflective hierarchical component models

This research covered a total of 30 indicator variables. Since the sample size was larger than 50, the indicators were designed to make use of multiple items instead of single items for measuring the latent construct (Diamantopoulos et al., 2012). In order to increase theoretical parsimony and to reduce model complexity, the PLS-SEM is designed to include the observable "lower-order components" and unobservable "higher-order components" (Lohmöller 1989). The use of such a hierarchical component model helps to reduce bias due to collinearity issues, and it may even solve potential discriminant validity problems (Hair et al. (2013), p. 229).

In this research, the latent construct (mall personality) is a higher-order component; it is represented by a number of first-order components that capture separate attributes of mall personality such as "sophistication" and "solidity." Similarly, "fashion orientation" is represented by "lower-order components" – "fashion leadership," "fashion interest," and "importance of being well dressed." All latent variables are based on a reflective measurement model with highly correlated indicators. "Fashion orientation" serves as an exogenous latent variable, whereas "mall personality," "shopping value" and "mall patronage intention" serve as endogenous latent variables. Each of these constructs is measured by means of multiple indicators.

4. Data analysis and results

4.1. Descriptive statistics – demographics

The collected data reveals that 70.4% of the shopping mall patrons were female. The largest age group was 18–25 (65.4%) followed by 26–30 (25%). As to marital status and dependents, 67% of our respondents were single and 89.8% did not have any children in the household. The majority of the surveyed shopping mall patrons (94.8%) had received some form of tertiary education. Regarding their employment status, 53.1% were students whereas

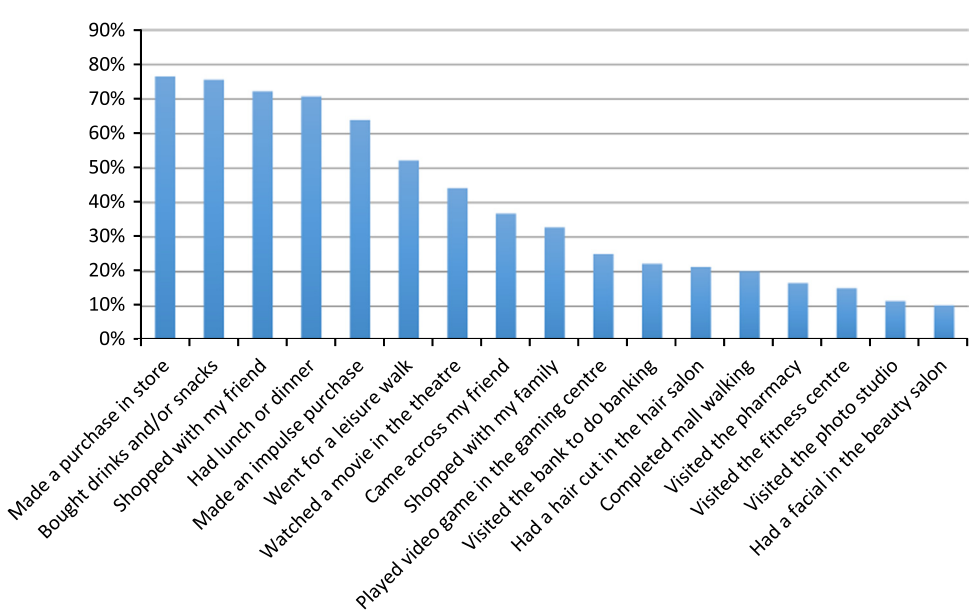

Fig. 2. Shopping mall activities.

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Table 1
Demographic characteristics of the sample ($N=324$).

Variable		Number of respondents	% of respondents
Sex	Male	96	29.6%
	Female	228	70.4%
Age	18–25	212	65.4%
	26–30	81	25.0%
	31–35	21	6.5%
	36–40	2	0.6%
	41–45	8	2.5%
	45 or older	0	0.0%
Marital status	Married	54	16.7%
	Single	217	67.0%
	Others	53	16.4%
No. of children in household	0	291	89.8%
	1	29	9.0%
	2	4	1.2%
	3 or more	0	0.0%
Education	Junior High School	1	0.3%
	Senior High School	9	2.8%
	College	41	12.7%
	Undergraduate	188	58.0%
	Graduate	78	24.1%
	Others	7	2.2%
Employment status	Employed	114	35.2%
	Student	172	53.1%
	Seeking employment	29	9.0%
	Stay-at-home parent	9	2.8%
	Retired	0	0.0%
Monthly income	¥1000 or lower	187	57.7%
	¥1001 to ¥2000	62	19.1%
	¥2001 to ¥3000	36	11.1%
	¥3001 to ¥4000	16	4.9%
	¥4001 to ¥5000	9	2.8%
	¥5001 and over	14	4.3%

35.2% were employed full-time. Since many of the respondents were students, it is not surprising to learn that their average monthly income was ¥1000 or lower. The detailed demographic information is presented in Table 1.

4.2. Descriptive statistics – shopping mall activities

The questionnaire asked shopping mall patrons about the types of activities that they had carried out during the mall visit. As indicated in Fig. 2, the five activities most frequently cited included: making store purchases (77%); buying drinks and/or snacks (76%); shopping with friends (72%); having lunch or dinner (71%); and making impulse purchases (64%). In addition, it is interesting to note that more than half of the respondents (52%) said that they enjoyed browsing the mall as a leisure activity.

4.3. PLS path model estimation

The conceptual framework was drawn in SmartPLS for path model estimation (see Fig. 3). The higher-order components were presented using the repeated indicators approach (Hair et al., 2013). The indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity of the reflective measurement model were checked, and the model was adjusted, before we assessed the structural model (Wong, 2013).

4.4. Reliability assessment

In this research, nine indicators were removed, as their outer loadings were smaller than 0.4, which is the threshold level according to Hair et al. (2013). Fifteen indicators had loadings between 0.4 and 0.7, hence the loading relevance test was performed. One indicator was deleted because its deletion resulted in an increase of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) above its suggested threshold level of 0.5 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). The resulting indicators and their outer loading values are shown in Table 2.

The composite reliability for the constructs "mall patronage intention," "fashion orientation," "personality" and "shopping value" were found to be 0.8756, 0.8785, 0.8920 and 0.8338, respectively, indicating high levels of internal consistency reliability (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

4.5. Validity assessment

Regarding convergent validity, the AVE for the constructs "mall patronage intent," "fashion orientation," "mall personality" and "shopping value" were 0.6386, 0.4005, 0.5112, and 0.4192, respectively, suggesting that all latent variables were able to explain more than 40% of the variance of its indicators on average. Using the Fornell–Larcker criterion approach (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), discriminant validity was found to be satisfactory because the square root of AVE for "mall patronage intention," "fashion orientation," "mall personality" and "shopping value" were larger than the corresponding latent variable correlations (see Table 3).

4.6. Collinearity assessment

Potential collinearity problems of the structural model were assessed using the variance inflation factor (VIF). As Table 4 shows, all VIF values were lower than 5, suggesting that there were no indications of collinearity between sets of predictor variables.

4.7. Coefficient of determination (R^2)

"Mall patronage intention" was the main construct of interest in this exploratory retail research project. The overall coefficient of determination (R^2) varied from weak to moderate, suggesting that "mall personality," "shopping value," and "fashion orientation" could jointly explain 23.4% of the variance of "mall patronage intention." The PLS-SEM estimation also revealed that "mall personality" and "fashion orientation" jointly explained 27.5% of the variance from "shopping value," whereas "fashion orientation" could only explain 8.4% of "mall personality" variance.

4.8. Predictive relevance and effect sizes

Using the blindfolding procedure, the Stone–Geisser's predictive relevance (Q^2) was evaluated (see Table 5). It was found that the model had good predictive relevance for all of the endogenous variables because their Q^2 values were all larger than zero (Chin, 2010). Meanwhile, using Cohen's (1988) guideline, the exogenous variables were found to have moderate f^2 and q^2 effect sizes on the endogenous variables (see Table 6).

4.9. Path coefficient

The structural model result demonstrated that "mall personality" had the strongest effect on "shopping value" (0.340), and

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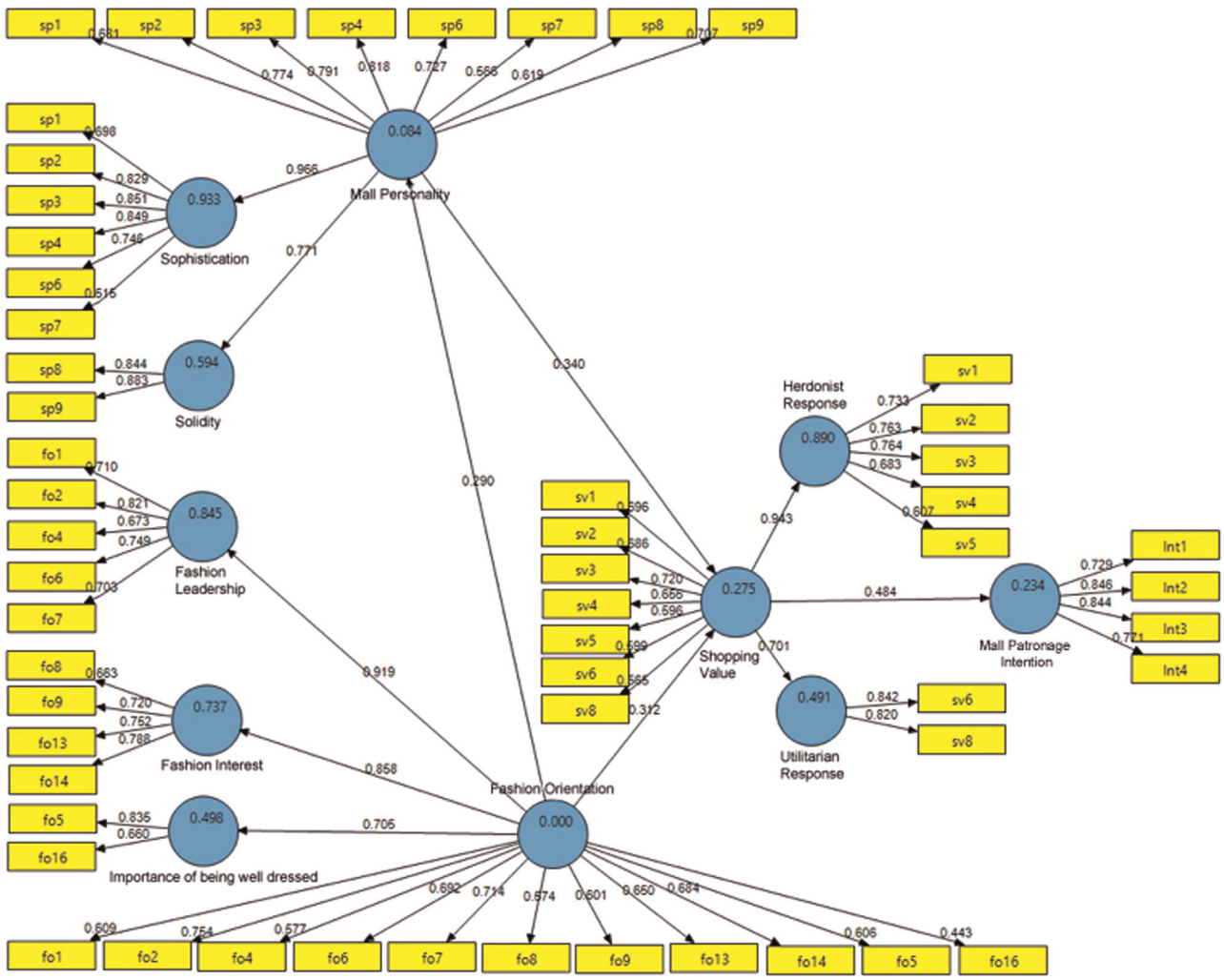

Fig. 3. PLS path model estimation.

that the next strongest was "fashion orientation" (0.312). PLS-SEM also revealed that the high-order construct, "mall personality," had strong relationships with its low-order constructs, "sophistication" (0.966) and "solidity" (0.771). Meanwhile, the other high-order construct, "fashion orientation," had strong relationships with its low-order constructs, "fashion leadership" (0.919), "fashion interest" (0.858), and "well dressed" (0.705). The "shopping value" construct was found to have strong relationships with its low-order constructs "hedonic" (0.943) and "utilitarian" (0.701). All of the structural model relationships were significant, confirming our various hypotheses about the construct relationships (see Table 7).

4.10. Summary of hypothesis testing

As summarized in Table 8, all of the hypotheses were accepted in this statistical analysis. Clearly, "fashion orientation" and "mall personality" significantly influenced "shopping value" (H_1 and H_3). Our results also indicated that "fashion orientation" does influence shoppers' perception of "mall personality," which confirms the hypothesis (H_2). Finally, "shopping value" was found to significantly influence "mall patronage intention" (H_4).

5. Conclusion and implications

Although extensive research has examined consumers' shopping behaviours, literature that focuses specifically on Chinese fashion shoppers is still limited. The current study extends our understanding of consumer behaviour in the context of the Chinese shopping mall.

It is important to note that holistic and reciprocal interactions between shoppers and shopping malls often occur during shopping trips – "People affect places, and places influence how people see themselves" (Hauge, 2007, p. 45). In other words, shopping malls often attempt to become associate with certain age groups, lifestyles and levels of social status. Our findings suggest that shoppers who are highly fashion-oriented derive higher shopping value not only directly from the shopping experience itself, but also from their positive perceptions of mall personality. In our study, consumers' shopping values impacted their mall patronage intention, particularly among young fashion leaders. Fashion leaders are relatively more involved in shopping and patronize stores more frequently than do fashion followers (Goldsmith and Flynn, 1992; Michon et al., 2007). Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that mall developers and managers focus their attention on their malls' fashion-forward positioning, and that they work to provide utilitarian and hedonic values to attract the market segments they value.

According to our findings, shoppers with high fashion orientation often sought to fulfill both utilitarian and hedonic values, even though the former played a more significant role in the context of mall shopping than did the latter (as indicated in Table 2). In addition to utilitarian benefits such as shopping

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Table 2
Outer loadings of indicators in the measurement model.

Constructs	Outer loadings
Mall personality	
Sophistication	
SP1 This mall is chic	0.681
SP2 This mall is high class	0.774
SP3 This mall is elegant	0.790
SP4 This mall is stylish	0.818
SP6 This mall is upscale	0.727
SP7 This mall has adequate product selection	0.566
Solidity	
SP8 This mall is reputable	0.619
SP9 This mall is an industry leader	0.707
Fashion orientation	
Fashion leadership	
FO1 It is important for me to be a fashion leader	0.609
FO2 I am aware of fashion trends and want to be one of the first to try them	0.754
FO4 I am confident in my understanding of fashion trends	0.577
FO6 Fashion is one of the important ways for me to express myself	0.692
FO7 I am an early adopter in fashion and am regarded as a fashion leader by many	0.714
Fashion interest	
FO8 I have an active lifestyle so I need a wide variety of clothes	0.574
FO9 I always buy at least one outfit of the latest fashion	0.601
FO13 I spend a lot of money on clothes and accessories	0.650
FO14 I spend a lot of time on fashion-related activities	0.684
Importance of being well dressed	
FO5 If you want to get ahead, you have to dress up fashionably	0.606
FO16 Wearing good clothes is part of leading good life	0.443
Shopping value	
Hedonist response	
SV1 This shopping trip was enjoyable	0.733
SV2 This shopping trip truly felt like an escape	0.763
SV3 Compared with other things I could have done, time spent shopping was truly enjoyable	0.764
SV4 I enjoyed being immersed in exciting new products	0.683
SV5 My shopping experience was adventurous	0.607
Utilitarian response	
SV6 I accomplished just what I wanted to do on this shopping trip	0.842
SV8 While shopping, I found just the items(s) I was looking for	0.820
Mall patronage intention	
Int1 I intend to revisit this mall	0.729
Int2 I would certainly recommend this mall to my friends	0.846
Int3 I am a loyal customer of this mall	0.844
Int4 When I go shopping, this mall is my first choice	0.771

efficiency and fulfillment, hedonic shopping values such as pleasurable experience, enjoyment, excitement and self-gratification

Table 4
Collinearity assessment.

First set			Second set		
Constructs	VIF	Collinearity Problem? (VIF > 5?)	Constructs	VIF	Collinearity Problem? (VIF > 5?)
Mall personality	1.226	No	Mall personality	1.092	No
Shopping value	1.251	No	Fashion orientation	1.092	No
Fashion orientation	1.379	No			

Table 5
Results of R^2 and Q^2 predictive relevance.

Endogenous latent variable	R^2 Value	Q^2 Value
Mall patronage intention	0.234	0.139
Shopping value	0.275	0.113
Mall personality	0.084	0.043

Table 6
Results of f^2 and q^2 effect sizes.

	Shopping value			Mall personality		
	Path coefficient	f^2 Effect size	q^2 Effect size	Path coefficient	f^2 Effect size	q^2 Effect size
Mall personality	0.340	0.058	0.048	n/a	n/a	n/a
Fashion orientation	0.312	0.124	0.041	0.290	0.092	0.045

Note: Target constructs appear in the first row, whereas the predecessor constructs are in the first column.

appeared to be important to this group of fashion leaders. As indicated in Fig. 2, all of the top five activities of shoppers at malls in the study involved making purchases, indicating that mall operators should strive to make the transaction processes as smooth as possible.

The vast majority of the respondents in this study were relatively young-aged between 18 and 25 years. As shown in Table 2, this group of consumers tended to spend a lot of money on clothes and accessories (FO13) and devoted time to fashion-related activities (FO14) such as browsing the store and searching for information. To engage the young consumers and enhance their patronage, "shoppertainment" (Wolf, 1999) and technology-focused experiences (e.g., interactive displays, live performances, and themed events) may provide consumers with novelty and excitement, and the perception of positive dimensions of mall

Table 3
Fornell–Larcker criterion.

Convergent and discriminant validity			Latent Variable Correlations (LVC)				Discriminant validity met? (Square root of AVE > LVC?)
	AVE	Sq rt of AVE	Mall patronage intention	Fashion orientation	Mall personality	Shopping value	
Mall patronage intention	0.6386	0.7991	***0.7991***	0	0	0	Yes
Fashion orientation	0.4005	0.6329	0.3208	***0.6329***	0	0	Yes
Mall personality	0.5112	0.7150	0.4148	0.2901	***0.7150***	0	Yes
Shopping value	0.4192	0.6475	0.4838	0.4110	0.4305	***0.6475***	Yes

Note: The square root of AVE is shown on the diagonal in italics.

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Table 7
Significance testing results of the structural model path coefficients.

Hypothesis	Path	Path coefficients	*t* Values	Significance Levels	*p* Values
H_1	Fashion orientation➔ shopping value	0.312	5.7878	***	0.00
H_2	Fashion orientation➔ mall personality	0.290	5.2287	***	0.00
H_3	Mall personality➔ shopping value	0.340	6.6990	***	0.00
H_4	Shopping value➔ mall patronage intention	0.484	11.0342	***	0.00

*$p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$
*** $p < 0.01$

Table 8
Summary of hypothesis testing.

Hypotheses		Accepted? (Yes/No)
H_1	Fashion orientation significantly influences shopping value	Yes
H_2	Fashion orientation significantly influences shoppers' perception toward mall personality	Yes
H_3	Mall personality significantly influences shopping value	Yes
H_4	Shopping value significantly influences mall patronage intention	Yes

personality, such as sophistication and solidity.

In order to attract potential shoppers, in addition to the utilitarian values such as way-finding, circulation paths or navigation, mall developers, managers and operators should focus on the experiential or sensorial values that are part of interior décor, such as shopping space, mall ambience and atmospheric environment. As Fiore and Kimle asserted, "[Other than consumer products] the store or mall environment may also communicate something about the identity or image of the retail establishment" (Fiore and Kimle (1997), p. 66). In the current study, the perceived mall personality influenced perceived shopping values, which in turn played a significant role in contributing to mall patronage intention. Hence, mall managers should pay close attention to shoppers' antecedents, and the response process.

Overall, most of our findings are consistent with some previous studies (e.g., Michon et al. (2007) and Michon et al. (2015)) conducted in Western societies. As found in Michon et al. (2015), our research showed that fashion orientation was a factor that could significantly influence perceived shopping value, which in turn affected shoppers' approach behaviour – including their mall patronage intentions. As some researchers (Michon and Chebat, 2004; Bjerke and Polegato, 2006) have pointed out, consumers often express their values through shopping. Therefore, there is a correlation among the fashion orientation of a shopper, his or her perception of shopping value, and the shopping mall itself. In addition, Michon et al. (2007) revealed that fashion leaders patronize stores on a frequent basis, and they are familiar with a mall's environment. The findings of our study lend empirical support to the findings of Michon et al. (2007); for example, our findings indicated that the high-fashion-oriented shoppers (or fashion leaders) were concerned about the congruity of the mall personality and their fashion orientation, and exerted significant influence on the shopping value and generated a mediatory effect on the mall patronage intention.

Although similarities can be found between Western and Chinese shoppers, one of our findings seems to contradict a study conducted by Michon et al. (2008) in a regional shopping mall located in North America. They found that among shoppers who were high in fashion orientation placed no significance on shopping goal objectives, and they were less concerned about the mall atmosphere than were the middle-of-the-road fashion shoppers. However, our findings revealed that high oriented fashion shoppers significantly influenced perceived shopping value, which in turn affected mall patronage intention. In other words, if the shoppers were fashion leaders, the mall atmosphere – including both utilitarian and hedonic stimuli – could play a significant role in their shopping behaviour. This inconsistency between our findings and those of Michon et al. may be attributable to the type of shopping malls studied, their locations, and the target customer segments. Our focal shopping mall was relatively new and modern, located in downtown Wuhan, and it catered to a younger market, whereas the study by Michon et al. was conducted in a suburban shopping mall that catered to multicultural middle-class consumers. It is reasonable to expect that if the mall personality and its holistic values do not meet the expectations of high fashion-oriented shoppers, they may not shop there. As Michon et al. (2008), p. 465 asserted, "Fashion forward shoppers might be better off patronizing downtown trendy stores and specialized fashion malls" rather than shopping at a suburban mall. This indicates that international mall developers, operators and managers should use different and specific strategies to connect with their target shoppers, according to the shopping mall type, location and the consumer demographic profile.

6. Limitation of research and future directions

Like most research investigations, the current exploratory study has a few shortcomings. First, the focus on Wuhan may limit the generalizability of the results. Second, our focal shopping mall catered primarily to the younger demographic; it would be useful to compare different shopping malls and age groups, both within and across provinces. Thus, there is a need for replication of this study using a different geographic location (e.g., coastal and other second-tier cities), and a wider range of target shoppers.

Research studies on Chinese consumer behaviour and attitudes needs to be explored further and in greater depth, including such areas of focus as: the congruity of mall image and consumer self-image; experience of mall shopping versus online shopping; the salient impact of mall ambience and "shoppertainment." In addition, a longitudinal study could contribute to understanding of how shoppers' preferences change over time, and how mall operators can correspond with their changing needs and aspiration.

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