

Dr. Paulo RIBEIRO-CARDOSO

Universidade Fernando Pessoa- Universidade Lusíada. Porto. Portugal. pjrcardoso@gmail.com

Dra. Sandrina-TEIXEIRA

Instituto Superior de Contabilidade y Administración de Porto. Portugal. sfranciscateixeira@gmail.com

Dra. Ana-Luisa SANTOS

Universidade de Porto. Portugal. anasantos400@gmail.com

Fashion opinion leadership, innovativeness and attitude toward advertising among Portuguese consumers

Liderazgo de opinión de moda, adhesión a la innovación y actitud hacia la publicidad entre los consumidores portugueses

Fecha de recepción: 21/01/2016

Fecha de revisión: 21/04/2016

Fecha de preprint: 23/05/2016

Fecha de publicación final: 01/07/2016

Abstract

In the context of the fashion market, this study aims to analyze opinion leadership and, specifically, to verify the correlation that may exist between opinion leadership, fashion innovativeness and attitude towards fashion advertising. It is also intended to identify two different consumer groups: opinion leaders and fashion followers based on "opinion leadership" construct. Data collection was done through a self-administered questionnaire with a convenience sample of 203 graduate and post-graduate students of two universities of Porto, the second major city of Portugal. Results show a positive correlation between fashion innovativeness, fashion opinion leadership, and attitude towards fashion advertising. It was possible to identify two groups of consumers: fashion influencers, who exhibit a moderate sense of innovativeness and a positive attitude towards fashion advertising; and fashion followers who don't consider themselves neither innovators nor opinion leaders, but have a moderate positive attitude towards fashion advertising.

Keywords

Opinion leadership, attitude toward advertising, fashion, innovativeness, consumer behavior.

Resumen

Este estudio tiene como principal objetivo analizar el liderazgo de opinión en el contexto del mercado de la moda, más concretamente, verificar si existe una correlación entre las variables liderazgo de opinión, adhesión a la innovación en la moda y actitud hacia la publicidad de la moda. A partir de la variable liderazgo de opinión, se pretende también identificar dos grupos diferentes de consumidores: los líderes de opinión y los seguidores en el mercado de la moda. Se seleccionaron 203 estudiantes de tercer ciclo y de postgrado de dos universidades de Oporto, la segunda ciudad más grande de Portugal. Fue solicitado a los participantes que rellenasen un cuestionario sobre actitudes y comportamientos sobre moda. Los resultados muestran que existe una correlación positiva entre la adhesión a la innovación, el liderazgo de opinión y la actitud hacia la publicidad. Fue posible identificar dos grupos de consumidores. Por un lado, "los influyentes", que puntúan moderadamente en la variable adhesión a la innovación y presentan una actitud positiva hacia la publicidad de la moda, y por otro, "los seguidores", que no se consideran ni innovadores ni líderes de opinión, pero mantienen una actitud positiva moderada hacia la publicidad de la moda.

Palabras clave

Liderazgo de opinión, actitud hacia la publicidad, innovación, moda, comportamiento del consumidor.

1. Introduction

Described succinctly, fashion is a sociocultural norm that involves novelty, change, aesthetics, and a certain uniformity (Ma et al., 2012). Fashion apparel industry is a dynamic sector, where products are renewed permanently in short life cycles, allowing the consumer to reflect his identity and, simultaneously, to project himself towards the others. This phenomenon is linked to a consumption system that subsists in a society grounded in industrial production and commerce (Martín- Cabello, 2016). In this industry, the competitiveness of the brands depends, in large part, on the creativity and innovation that these are able to put in their products, but also in the capacity to develop effective marketing and communication strategies directed to consumers.

Consumers are, in fact, a key component of this market. Fashion is part of their daily life, but it is also an important element in their socialization and self-expression. They are, also, communication agents, particularly those who exercise influence on other consumers.

This raises some aspects to reflect, particularly the willingness of consumers to adhere to the innovations proposed by the brands, their attitude towards fashion brands advertising, and the extent to which consumers exercise influences each other.

In this context, this study aims to analyze opinion leadership in the context of the fashion market, together with two other constructs: fashion innovativeness and attitude towards fashion advertising. Specifically we aim to: 1) verify the correlation that may exist between the three constructs and; 2) confirm the possibility of identifying two different consumer groups: opinion leaders and followers, grounded on "fashion innovativeness".

This research was carried out in Portugal, where the Textile and Apparel Industry is one of the largest and most important national business sectors. This sector has a major impact in terms of economic and social cohesion, and is dominated by a large number of small and medium enterprises (Steng, 2001). In terms of exports, 2014 was the best year for the Textile and Apparel Industry in the last decade, with exports of around 4.6 billion euros and an 8% growth compared to 2013. Clothing was the main category of exported products, accounting for 60% of total sector exports, and grew by 9% (INE, 2015).

A quantitative approach, operationalized through a survey, was used. Data collection was done through a self-administered questionnaire with a convenience sample of 203 graduate and post-graduate students of two universities of Porto, the second major city of Portugal. Three established scales were used to measure the different constructs: Opinion Leadership (Feick and Price, 1987); Domain Specific Innovativeness (Goldsmith et al., 1998); and Attitude Towards Advertising (Pollay and Mittal, 1993).

The article begins with a conceptual framework exposing some fundamentals about the constructs that constitute this study. Then, research hypotheses are presented and research method is explained. Finally, main results, conclusions and discussion are exposed.

2. Literature review

2.1 Fashion consumers

Consumer's trends and attitudes are essential elements in the fashion market. Targeted by the marketing communications strategies developed by fashion brands, consumers use fashion simultaneously as an object of social integration and as an expression self-expression instrument (Rabolt and Miller, 1997; Miles, 1998; Teixeira, 2013).

In last decades, fashion consumer behavior has been studied in various perspectives, such as information requirements for the purchase decision (Martin, 1971), shopper typologies and their lifestyles (Miriam, 1982), fashion leadership (Beaudoin and Goldsmith, 1998), or consumer decision-making styles for segmentation purposes (Walsh et al., 2001). Fashion consumer profiles has been, in particular, a subject of interest of various researchers that worked in different geographic

contexts, and using different samples and constructs. From this body of research, various consumer groups emerged with relatively analogous characteristics even if they were labelled with different labels.

One particular group of consumers exhibits high levels of interest in fashion, perceiving and using clothing as an important part of their lives, and consuming information about this universe. Some of these consumers were described as fashion innovators and as opinion leaders, and were labelled as "leaders" (Gutman and Mills, 1982) "shopping enthusiasts" and "dynamics" (Du Preez et al., 2007), "fashion innovators", "fashion opinion leaders" and "innovative communicators" (Workman and Studak, 2006, Kim & Martinez, 2012).

Another group, with a more temperate profile, reveals fair levels of fashion interest, being categorized as "fashion followers" (Gutman and Mills, 1982; Workman and Studak, 2006, Kim & Martinez, 2012), and also "Laggards" (Du Preez et al., 2007).

Specifically, the study of Birtwistle and Moore (2006), done in United Kingdom, demonstrated that fashion innovators, compared to fashion followers, shopped more frequently and spent more in clothing per month, were heavily influenced by fashion magazines, celebrity magazines, newspapers and TV programs. Late adopters were more moderate and practical in their attitude towards fashion and in their consumption habits.

In the context of the Portuguese market, Cardoso et. al. (2010) identified three fashion consumer segments. One segment, labeled as "Enthusiasts", very involved with fashion, are innovative, express themselves through fashion products, and buy clothes with considerable frequency. The second segment, the "Moderates", although involved with fashion, and somewhat innovative, buy clothes with moderate frequency, and do not especially use clothing to express themselves. Finally, the "Apathetic" show no involvement with fashion, rarely shop for clothes, but value the functional aspects of clothing like quality and comfort.

2.2 Opinion leadership

Opinion leadership is an important component of fashion consumer behavior. It can be defined as the tendency that some individuals have to influence the purchase decisions of other consumers (Ruvio and Shoham, 2007). In fact, the influence of opinion leaders on other persons can be systematized in three aspects: first, they act as role models to other consumers and inspire imitation; second, they spread information among their group of colleagues, friends, acquaintances and family; and third, they directly give specific advices towards the search, purchase and use of a product or service (Merwe and Heerden, 2009). Opinion leadership is domain-specific, that is, the opinion leader exerts his influence in a specific area in which he/she is perceived to be especially well-informed (Grewal et al., 2000).

Since opinion leaders influence other consumers but also consume, themselves, information from the media, they are considered "opinion brokers" (Vernette, 2004). This concept has origin in the model of a two-step flow of communication proposed by Katz and Lazarsfeld (2006). According to this model, the power of mass media is considerably improved by sending messages to opinion leaders who "mediate" the information and distribute it to a larger population. In this context, some authors considered that advertising can play an important role in word-of-mouth: it can be a first step of communication that opinion leaders can use in order to influence their groups (Keller and Fay, 2009). Nowadays, blogs and social networks provide opinion leaders optimal conditions to disseminate communication and exercise their influence (Segev et al. 2012).

In this line of thought, advertising media strategies can benefit by taking in consideration the role of opinion leaders. The two-step-flow model originates that an advertising campaign might directly reach the global audience, and be reinforced by the interpersonal communication established by the opinion leaders. Because the considerations of the opinion leader are

recognized as impartial, the persuasion function of advertising might be strengthened through this interpersonal communication.

According to the study of Vernet (2004) fashion opinion leaders are more exposed and more motivated to consume advertising than non-leaders. They also use advertising as a topic for discussion more frequently than non-leaders. In a strategic perspective, one sole contact with an opinion leader will spontaneously produce various free contacts in his/her area of influence.

2.3 Fashion innovativeness

Innovativeness can be defined as the consumer's propensity to buy new and different products (Im et al., 2003). This willingness to adopt new ideas happens relatively earlier than other members of the population (Rogers, 1995). In the fashion market, consumer innovativeness refers to the propensity of individuals to adopt new products, new designs, and related services (Mathur, 2012; Choo et al. 2014). Consumers with high fashion innovativeness tend to be heavier shoppers of fashion products and services and adopt new trends that appear in this market (Goldsmith and Stith, 1993; Choo et al. 2014).

This tendency to try new things is, like in opinion leadership, "domain specific", that is consumers who are probable to adopt the latest new products in one category may not have such a behavior in another field (Goldsmith et al., 1998). Therefore, innovativeness should not be considered and evaluated as a general concept, but contextualized in a specific category (Goldsmith and Hofacker, 1991).

The importance of identifying and targeting innovators is widely recognized by both marketing professionals and academics (Clark and Goldsmith, 2006). First, innovators are important in the beginning of the product life cycle because they generate sales, bring cash flow to the brand, and support the marketing effort needed in this phase. Second, they help to promote the new product to others, acting as influencers towards other consumers, through mouth-to-mouth or social networks. Finally, they support the maintenance and development of the category because, generally, they are heavy users and, therefore, represent an important volume of sales (McDonald and Alpert, 2007).

Various authors found important correlations between fashion innovativeness and a variety of variables. For example, Jordaan and Simpson (2006) have found that highly innovative consumers have a tendency to be better informed about new products. Other studies found a correlation between fashion innovativeness and information seeking in this specific category as well as a great exposure to specialized media contents (Muzinich et al., 2003; Wang and Cho, 2012). This tendency to be well-informed about a specific subject, puts innovators in a privileged position to be a reference to other consumers and to act as opinion leaders who influence their decisions. In fact, previous studies presented positive correlations between innovativeness and opinion leadership (Goldsmith and Hofacker, 1991; Flynn et al., 1996; Jordaan and Simpson, 2006).

In terms of demographic variables, prior research found that innovative consumers tend to be young and female (Leung, 1998). Specifically in the fashion market, Stith and Goldsmith (1989) found that women exhibited greater fashion innovativeness and opinion leadership than men. Nevertheless, a research study using a sample of young adult Portuguese consumers found no significant difference between female and male individuals (Cardoso et al., 2010).

2.4 Attitude toward advertising

Advertising is an important marketing communications technique used in the fashion marketing (Vernet, 2004) in order to generate product and brand awareness, stimulate consumer-brand relationship, and to build brand image. Attitude towards advertising can be defined as disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to advertising in general (Petrovici and Paliwoda, 2007).

The importance given advertising reflects, in part, the involvement that the consumer has with the product category itself. O'Cass (2000) found that the involvement with fashion advertising could be integrated in a larger model that encompasses the product involvement, the purchase decision involvement and consumption involvement.

In a given product category, the attitude towards advertising in general may be correlated with the attitude towards specific advertising campaigns. Mehta and Purvis (1995) verified that consumers who showed a positive attitude towards advertising in general were more likely to remember the ads and were more persuaded by advertising. This study reinforced the results of previous research showing that the attitude towards specific advertisements was conditioned by the attitude towards advertising in general (Muehling, 1987).

Pollay and Mittal (1993) identified different factors that can be related with the attitude towards advertising in general. Three of these factors can be directly related with the fashion products: advertising can give information about the product, can be a life-style imagery provider, and can be an entertainment object or an aesthetic experience. The original model, developed in various subsequent studies (Martin-Santana and Beerli-Palacio, 2008, Marinov et. al 2008; Blankson et al., 2012), predicts a positive correlation between these factors and the attitude towards advertising in general. This can be particularly important in the context of the fashion market. In addition to the information about the product (clothing, accessories), the lifestyle imagery and the aesthetic experience are fundamental components of fashion advertising. These aspects are important for the average fashion consumer, but are particularly interesting for those wishing to be aware of fashion trends, like fashion innovators.

In this context, opinion leaders tend to consume more specific media than non-leaders (Vermette, 2004). And being such media, like fashion magazines, good vehicles of fashion advertising, opinion leaders are naturally more exposed to this kind of communication. In fact, fashion leaders are particularly attentive to fashion advertising, especially to the product presentation (Janssen & Paas, 2014).

3. Objectives and Research hypotheses

This research work analyses fashion influence and more specifically opinion leadership in the context of the fashion market. Our study is guided by two objectives: 1) to verify the correlation that may exist between the three constructs and; 2) to confirm the possibility of identifying two different consumer groups: opinion leaders and followers, grounded on "fashion innovativeness".

Previously, in the literature review, we briefly described some studies that identified different fashion consumer's profiles, as well as a set of variables that may be correlated in the context of the fashion consumer behavior.

Fashion innovativeness was defined as a tendency to adopt new products and new designs, and related services (Mathur, 2012; Choo et al. 2014), and is generally related to other characteristics such as the propensity to buy more frequently and search more information from the media. Being heavy users of the category and attentive to new trends they are important references to other consumers and operate as opinion leaders (Goldsmith and Hofacker, 1991; Flynn et al., 1996; Jordaan and Simpson, 2006). In this line of thought we present the hypothesis:

H1: Consumer fashion innovativeness is positively correlated with fashion opinion leadership.

Following their interest in fashion, opinion leaders are more exposed and more motivated to consume information and fashion advertising than other consumers (Vermette, 2004). They use advertising as a topic of conversation serving as a duplicate of influence of those messages. In this context we propose the hypothesis 2:

H2: Fashion opinion leadership is positively correlated with Attitude toward fashion advertising.

Previous studies have divided consumers in two groups: fashion leaders and fashion followers, exhibiting different profiles (Gutman and Mills, 1982; Workman and Studak, 2006; Du Preez et al., 2007). Unlike followers, fashion leaders show high levels of interest in fashion, perceiving and using clothing as an important part of their lives, and consuming information about this universe. This research intends to identify fashion opinion leaders and fashion followers based on "Opinion Leadership" construct, and to verify the differences between the two groups. As the literature shows, this difference is found in the interest that consumers show in fashion and also in communication about fashion. Thus we present the hypothesis 3 and 4:

H3: Opinion leaders present higher levels of fashion innovativeness than non-opinion leaders.

H4: Opinion leaders have a more favorable attitude towards fashion advertising than non-opinion leaders.

In terms of demographic variables, prior research found that fashion innovators tend to be young and female (Leung, 1998; Stith and Goldsmith, 1989). Since we anticipate that fashion innovativeness is positively correlated with fashion opinion leadership, we propose hypotheses 5 and 6:

H5: Opinion leaders have a higher percentage of female than non-opinion leaders.

H6: Opinion leaders have a higher percentage of younger consumers than non-opinion leaders.

4. Method

For the present study, data collection was done through a self-administered questionnaire. Three established scales were used to measure the different constructs. An adaptation of the Domain Specific Innovativeness Scale (DSI) was used to measure consumer fashion innovativeness (Goldsmith et al, 1998); the revised Opinion Leadership Scale was used to measure fashion opinion leadership (Feick and Price, 1987); and finally an adaptation of the Attitude Towards Advertising Scale (Pollay and Mittal, 1993) was used to measure attitude towards fashion advertising. The items of each scale were measured with a 5 points scale ranging from "totally disagree" (1) and "totally agree" (5). The questionnaire also included a group of questions designed to gather demographic information, namely: age and sex.

The study used a sample of young adults, an age segment that shows attractiveness to the brands (Sheriff and Nagesh, 2007) and economic autonomy. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of graduate and post-graduate students of two universities of Porto, the second major city of Portugal.

The sample was composed of 203 individuals, 55,7% female and 44,3% male. Regarding age, 51,7% were 18-25 years old, and 48,3% were 26-35.

5. Results

5.1 Scales reliability

We began our data analysis examining the internal consistency of the constructs, using Cronbach's coefficient alpha for each one of the original scales (Table 1). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were satisfactory, with values ranging between $\alpha=0.817$ and $\alpha=0.907$. Therefore, all the values were within or above the acceptable level of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978).

After having checked for internal consistency, the composite of each one of the constructs was obtained through the mean score of its various items.

Table 1 – Constructs, items and Cronbach's Alpha

Constructs	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Fashion opinion leadership	During the past six months, I have told many people about the latest fashions.	0,907
	When I talk to my friends about the latest fashions I am able to share a great deal of information about it.	
	Compared to my circle of friends, I am very likely to be asked about new fashions.	
	In general, I talk frequently to my friends about the latest fashions	
	In discussions of the latest fashions, my friends tell me about the latest trends.	
	Overall, in all of my discussions with friends and neighbors, I am often used as a source of advice.	
Fashion innovativeness	In general, I am among the first in my circle of friends to buy a new fashion item when it appears.	0,868
	If I heard that a new fashion was available through a local store I would be interested enough to buy it.	
	Compared to my friends I own many new fashion items.	
	I would consider buying new fashion items, even if I hadn't heard of them yet.	
	In general, I am among the first in my circle of friends to know the names of the latest fashions and styles.	
	I know more about new fashions than other people do.	
Attitude towards fashion advertising	Overall, I do like fashion advertising	0,817
	My general opinion about fashion advertising is favorable	
	Overall, I consider fashion advertising a good thing	

Source: own construction.

5.2 Descriptive analysis

In order to understand the general scores on Fashion opinion leadership, Fashion innovativeness, and Attitude towards fashion advertising, a descriptive analysis was carried out involving the final constructs (Table 2).

In general, individuals don't consider themselves as being Opinion leaders or Fashion innovators, since the mean scores for these two constructs are rather low. In fact, in previous studies, these characteristics occur in a minority of the population (Verette, 2004; Birtwistle and Moore, 2006), and probably for that reason don't appear with all its intensity when the results refer to the global sample.

On the contrary, we verify a positive mean value regarding attitude towards fashion advertising among the whole sample. Perhaps this might be explained by the aesthetics elements of this kind of advertising.

Table 2 – Descriptive analysis of the constructs

Constructs	Mean	Standard Deviation
Fashion opinion leadership	2,13	0,83
Fashion innovativeness	2,26	0,89
Attitude towards fashion advertising	3,44	0,73

Source: own construction



5.3 Simple Linear Regressions

In order to test the hypotheses 1 and 2 a simple linear regression was carried out. As a preliminary step we conducted a Pearson correlation to verify the extent to which constructs related to one another (Table 3). The significance criterion was set at $p < 0,05$, in other words at least 95% confidence.

Table 3 – Correlation between constructs

	Fashion opinion leadership	Fashion innovativeness
Fashion innovativeness	,740**	-
Attitude towards fashion advertising	,408**	,434**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: own construction

We found a strong correlation between “Fashion innovativeness” and “Fashion opinion leadership” ($r = .740$; $p < 0,05$), and a moderate correlation between “Fashion opinion leadership” and “Attitude towards fashion advertising” ($r = .408$; $p < 0,05$).

Backed by these results we performed a linear regression (Tables 4 and 5). A first linear regression analysis was conducted to test the relationship between “Fashion innovativeness” as independent variable and “Fashion opinion leadership” as dependent variable. Table 4 shows that the independent variable explains the dependent variable at 54% ($R^2 = 0,545$; $F = 242,887$; $p < 0,001$). Thus, “Consumer fashion innovativeness” is positively correlated with “Fashion opinion leadership” ($\beta = 0,740$; $p < 0,001$), giving support to H1, and showing that the higher the propensity to adopt new products the greater the tendency to influence the purchase decisions of other consumers.

Table 4 – Fashion innovativeness as a predictor of Fashion opinion leadership

Independent variable	Dependent variable		
	Fashion opinion leadership		
	β	t-value	p-value
Fashion innovativeness	0,740	15,585	0,000
$R^2 = 0,545$; $F = 242,887$; $p < 0,001$			

Source: own construction

Table 5 - Fashion opinion leadership as a predictor of Attitude towards fashion advertising

Independent variable	Dependent variable		
	Attitude towards fashion advertising		
	β	t-value	p-value
Fashion opinion leadership	0,408	6,344	0,000
$R^2 = 0,163$; $F = 40,247$; $p < 0,001$			

Source: own construction

A second linear regression analysis was performed to test the relationship between “Fashion opinion leadership” as independent variable and “Attitude towards fashion advertising” as

dependent variable. Table 5 shows that the independent variable explains the dependent variable at 16% ($R^2 = 0,163$; $F=40,247$; $p<0,001$). Hence, "Fashion opinion leadership" is positively correlated with "Attitude toward fashion advertising" ($\beta=0,408$; $p<0,001$), confirming H2. These results support, at least to some extent, the idea that opinion leaders are strong consumers of media and use advertising as a topic of discussion with other consumers. They are also consistent with the concept that fashion innovators seek information about fashion products and are very exposed to media contents.

5.4 Opinion leader's identification and profiling

In order to verify the Hypotheses 4 and 5 the original sample was split in two groups: opinion leaders and non-opinion leaders. Previous studies have used the scores obtained through the Domain Specific Innovativeness scale to divide the sample in two groups: Innovators and Later adopters (Goldsmith et al., 1999), or fashion innovators and fashion followers (Birtwistle and Moore, 2006). Because our study focus on the construct of opinion leadership, we based our method on Vernette (2004) procedures to identify fashion opinion leaders. The author defined a threshold on the scores of the opinion leadership scale, taking as reference other studies that used a similar approach (Goldsmith and Stith, 1993; Keller and Berry, 2003). Vernette (2004) used two scenarios using the opinion leadership scale: the upper 10 percent represented the "opinion leaders", and the next 15 percent were labeled as "moderate opinion leaders". Taking into consideration the size of our sample we decided to establish a balance between these two values and set a limit of 15 percent. This method permitted to identify two different groups. The scores of each construct were compared using Student T-test (Table 6).

The first group, who scored between 1 and 3 in the opinion leadership scale, comprehended 33 individuals, represented 16,3% of the sample, and were labeled "Fashion influencers". These consumers consider themselves fashion opinion leaders, with a moderate sense of innovativeness and with a positive attitude towards fashion advertising. Therefore, they combine these three features simultaneously demonstrating that fashion opinion leaders are also innovators and appreciate fashion advertising.

The second group, scored between 3,1 and 5 in the same scale, was composed of individuals, representing 83,7% of the sample, and named "Fashion followers". These consumers don't consider themselves neither innovators nor opinion leaders, but have a moderate positive attitude towards fashion advertising. This positive attitude might be explained because fashion advertising generally displays images with design and life-style, which are components that may be consensual and appealing to a wider group of consumers.

Table 6 – Comparison between fashion influencers and fashion followers

Constructs	Fashion influencers (n=33)	Fashion followers (n=170)	Student T-test	
			t	Sig.
Fashion opinion leadership	3,68 (0,31)	1,83 (0,61)	25,680	0,000
Fashion innovativeness	3,28 (0,53)	2,06 (0,73)	9,075	0,000
Attitude towards fashion advertising	3,92 (0,46)	3,34 (0,73)	5,839	0,000

Source: own construction

The segments profiling was completed by the analysis of the variables sex and age (table 7). Cross-tabulation analysis and the chi-square statistic were used to assess whether there were any statistical differences between the groups.

Chi-square showed significant differences in sex ($X^2(1, N=203) = 6,446, p < .05$), meaning that, in this sample, fashion influencers have a higher percentage of female consumers than fashion followers, which confirms H6. However, there was no significant differences between the groups in the variable age ($X^2(1, N=203) = 2,239, p > .05$). Therefore, H7 is not confirmed. On aspect that might explain this result is the fact that this study used a sample of young adults (18-35) with a short age range, which may partially explain this similarity between the two age groups (18-25 and 26-35).

Table 7 – Segments demographics – sex and age

Demographics	Categories	Fashion influencers	Fashion followers	Total
Sex ($p=0,011$)	Female	25 (75,8%)	88 (51,8%)	113 (55,7%)
	Male	8 (24,2%)	82 (48,2%)	90 (44,3%)
Age ($p=0,135$)	18-25	21 (63,6%)	84 (49,4%)	105 (51,7%)
	26-35	12 (36,4%)	86 (50,6%)	98 (48,3%)

Source: own construction

6. Conclusion

6.1 Main conclusions and discussion

This study aimed to verify the correlation that exists between “fashion opinion leadership”, “fashion innovativeness” and “attitude towards fashion advertising”. Another objective of this research was to identify two consumer groups: opinion leaders and fashion followers.

We used Opinion Leadership Scale (Feick and Price, 1987), Domain Specific Innovativeness Scale - DSI (Goldsmith et al, 1998), and an adaptation of the Attitude Towards Advertising Scale (Pollay and Mittal, 1993) as research instruments.

The first conclusion concerns the confirmation of the reliability of the scales. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure internal consistency of the constructs, and verified that coefficients were satisfactory, with values ranging between $\alpha=0.817$ and $\alpha=0.907$.

In order to understand the general scores on the three constructs, a descriptive analysis was carried out. In general, individuals don't consider themselves as being opinion leaders or fashion innovators, since the mean scores for these two constructs are rather low. These results are in consistency with previous studies that found that only a small part of the population presented high scores in opinion leadership (Vernette, 2004). Similarly, fashion innovativeness is particularly salient in a small group of individuals and not in the global population (Birtwistle and Moore, 2006).

On the contrary, we verify a positive mean value regarding “attitude towards fashion advertising” among the whole sample. This confirms the results of the prior research were a generality of the sample of some countries (namely United Kindom and Spain) show a positive attitude towards advertising (Martin-Santana and Beerli-Palacio, 2008).

Pearson correlation was carried out to verify the relation between fashion opinion leadership, fashion innovativeness and attitude towards fashion advertising. Results show a positive correlation between fashion innovativeness and fashion opinion leadership, ratifying previous studies that showed positive correlations between the two constructs (Goldsmith and Hofacker, 1991; Flynn et al., 1996; Jordaan and Simpson, 2006). This also confirms the concept that innovators act as influencers towards other consumers (Clark and Goldsmith, 2006).

We also found a positive correlation between attitude towards fashion advertising and fashion opinion leadership. According to the literature, opinion leaders are attentive to media contents and advertising and act as “opinion brokers” (Verette, 2004) between the media and the other consumers. According to the of a two-step flow of communication model proposed by Katz and Lazarsfeld (2006), opinion leaders “mediate” the information received from the media and distribute it to a larger population (Keller and Fay, 2009). Although this result doesn't confirm directly that theory, it supports the idea that opinion leaders are strong consumers of fashion information, media and advertising, and also influencers that might represent the role of “opinion brokers” or “mediators” towards other consumers.

Finally, we found a correlation between fashion innovativeness and attitude towards fashion advertising, confirming the results of other studies that verified correlation between fashion innovativeness and information seeking and a great exposure to specialized media contents (Muzinich et al., 2003; Wang and Cho, 2012).

Finally we identified two groups of consumers: fashion influencers and fashion followers. Methodologically we split the sample in two groups basing our method on the approach used by Verette (2004) that used the scores obtained on the opinion leadership scale.

The first group, corresponding to 16,3% of the sample, were labeled “Fashion influencers”. These consumers assume themselves as fashion opinion leaders, exhibit a moderate sense of innovativeness and a positive attitude towards fashion advertising. They are mostly women, but do not present differences between the two age groups (18-25; 26-35). In the literature, some studies point to a preponderance of women in the group of opinion leaders (Stith and Goldsmith, 1989), while other studies have not found significant differences (Cardoso et. al., 2010). The present study confirms the existence of a higher percentage of women in the influencers group, point to the necessity to deepen this topic in future investigations.

The “Fashion influencers” group has certain characteristic traits of some segments identified in previous studies, in particular the “fashion opinion leaders” and “innovative communicators” (Workman and Studak, 2006), the “leaders” (Gutman and Mills, 1982), the “fashion innovators” (Workman and Studak, 2006; Birtwistle and Moore, 2006), and the ‘enthusiasts’ (Cardoso et. al., 2010).

The second group, corresponded to 83,7% of the sample, and was named as “Fashion followers”. These consumers don't consider themselves neither innovators nor opinion leaders, but have a moderate positive attitude towards fashion advertising. They present a balance in terms of gender and age groups.

This segment presents traits compatibles with some groups identified in other studies, especially the “fashion followers” (Gutman and Mills, 1982; Workman and Studak, 2006), the “Laggards” (Du Preez et al., 2007), the “Late adopters” (Birtwistle and Moore (2006), the “Moderates” and the “Apathetic” (Cardoso et. al., 2010).

6.2 Implications for professionals

The conclusions drawn from this research work bring some implications for marketing and communication professionals working in the fashion sector.

It was known, from previous studies, that the consumer is not a homogeneous group of people with the same attitudes and habits but rather a set of different groups with their own characteristics. In the present study we focused on identifying the fashion opinion leaders and fashion followers. Brand communication strategy should be developed taking in consideration these two groups. At an early stage the strategy is important to identify the specific characteristics of opinion leaders in the context of the product and the brand in question. This step can imply a conceptual analysis of the consumer profile or a consumer research with primary data.

From this phase the brand can use specific vehicles targeting messages that might be particularly effective to opinion leaders taking into consideration their profile. Appropriate media would include specific fashion magazines and television programs, specialized websites, fashion blogs and social networking. Ideally, opinion leaders will serve as mediators of these messages, and therefore as influencers of fashion followers.

In another dimension of the campaign, mass media aimed at fashion followers can be used. Media and messages used in this dimension of the campaign should take into account their profile: a moderate level of innovativeness and lower predisposition to accept advertising messages than opinion leaders. In this sense, the contents of these campaigns should be simpler, consensual and less specific than those which are aimed at opinion leaders.

Consequently, and preferably, the fashion followers will be achieved in two ways. On one hand they will receive advertising messages disseminated in the mass news media. On the other hand, these messages will be confirmed and complemented by opinion leaders through word-of-mouth, blogs and social networks.

Therefore, brands should plan their communication strategies tailoring their messages, formats and media supports in order to achieve effectively these two profiles: fashion influencers and fashion followers.

6.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Although, in our view, interesting conclusions have been drawn from this study, it is possible to identify some limitations. We emphasize the fact that a convenience sample, constituted by young adults, was used, which inhibits the possibility of generalizing the results for the entire population.

Another limitation was the small number of constructs used, making correlational analysis somewhat restricted. Likewise, the consumer profile composition was limited to some variables. In future studies it is suggested to use a sample in which are represented other age segments, and also the use of more constructs in the study, in order to enhance the respective conclusions.

7. References

- [1] BEAUDOIN, P. & GOLDSMITH, R. E. (1998). Consumers' ethnocentrism and fashion leadership. *Psychological Reports*, 83(3), 239-1248.
- [2] BIRTWISTLE, G. & MOORE, C. (2006). Fashion innovativeness in the UK: a replication study. Proceedings of *Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference - ANZMAC*, Brisbane, Australia, 4-6 December 2006.
- [3] BLANKSON, C.; SPEARS, N. & HINSON, R. (2012). West African Immigrants' Perceptions of Advertising in General and Impact on Buying Decisions. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 24, 168-185.
- [4] CARDOSO, P. R.; COSTA, H. & NOVAIS, L. (2010). Fashion consumer profiles in the Portuguese market: involvement, innovativeness, self-expression and impulsiveness as segmentation criteria. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 34, 638-647.
- [5] CLARK, R. & GOLDSMITH, R. (2006). Global innovativeness and consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 14, 275-285.
- [6] CHOO, H.; SIM, S.; LEE, H. & KIM, H. (2014). The effect of consumers' involvement and innovativeness on the utilization of fashion wardrobe. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 38, 175-182.

- [7] DU PREEZ, R.; VISSER, E. & ZIETSMAN, L. (2007). Lifestyle, shopping orientation, patronage behaviour and shopping mall behaviour – a study of South African male apparel consumers. *European Advances in Consumer Behavior*, 8, 279–280.
- [8] FEICK, L. & PRICE, L. (1987). The market maven: A diffuser of marketplace information. *Journal of Marketing*, 51, 83-97.
- [9] FLYNN, L.R., GOLDSMITH, R.E. & EASTMAN, J.K. (1996). Opinion leaders and opinion seekers: two new measurement scales. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 24, 137–147.
- [10] GOLDSMITH, R. E., & HOFACKER, C. F. (1991). Measuring consumer innovativeness. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 19, 209–221.
- [11] GOLDSMITH, R. & STITH, M. (1993). The social values of fashion innovators. *Journal of Applied Business Research*, 9, 10–17.
- [12] GOLDSMITH, R.; D´HAUTEVILLE, F. & FLYNN, L. (1998). Theory and measurement of consumer innovativeness: A transnational evaluation. *European Journal of Marketing*, 32(3/4), 340-353.
- [13] GREWAL, R.; MEHTA, R. & KARDES, F. (2000). The role of the social-identity function of attitudes in consumer innovativeness and opinion leadership. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 21, 233-252.
- [14] GUTMAN, J. & MILLS, M. (1982). Fashion life style, self-concept, shopping orientation, and store patronage: an integrative analysis. *Journal of Retailing*, 58, 64–86.
- [15] IM, S., BAYUS, B. & MASON, C. (2003). An empirical study of innate consumer innovativeness, personal characteristics, and new product adoption behavior. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 31, 61–73.
- [16] INE - INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE ESTATÍSTICA (2015). Inquérito de Conjuntura às empresas e aos consumidores. *Destaque*, Março 2015, 1-16.
- [17] JANSSEN, D. M. & PAAS, L. J. (2014). Moderately thin advertising models are optimal, most of the time: Moderating the quadratic effect of model body size on ad attitude by fashion leadership. *Marketing Letters*, 25, 167–177.
- [18] JORDAAN, Y. & SIMPSON, M. (2006). Consumer innovativeness among females in specific fashion stores in the Menlyn shopping center. *Journal of Family Ecology and Consumer Sciences*, 34, 32–40.
- [19] KATZ, E. & LAZARFELD, P. (2006). *Personal influence: the part played by people in the flow of mass communications*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- [20] KELLER, E. B., & BERRY, J. (2003). *The Influentials*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- [21] KELLER, E. & FAY, B. (2009). The Role of Advertising in Word of Mouth. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 49(2), 154-158.
- [22] KIM, S. & MARTINEZ, B. (2012). Fashion consumer groups and online shopping at private sale sites. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 37, 367–372.
- [23] LEUNG, L. (1998). Lifestyles and the use of new media technology in urban China. *Telecommunications Policy*, 22(9), 781-90.
- [24] MA, F.; SHI, H.; CHEN, L. & LUO, Y. (2012). A Theory on Fashion Consumption. *Journal of Management and Strategy*, 3(4), 84-92.
- [25] MARINOV, M.; PETROVICI, D. & MARINOVA, S. (2008). Consumer Attitudes Toward Advertising in Bulgaria and Romania. *Journal of Euromarketing*, 17(2), 81-93.
- [26] MARTIN, C. R. (1971). What Consumers of Fashion Want to Know. *Journal of Retailing*, 47(4), 65-73.

[27] MARTÍN-CABELLO, A. (2016). El desarrollo histórico del sistema de la moda: una revisión teórica. *Athenea Digital*, 16(1), 265-289.

[28] MARTIN-SANTANA, J. & BEERLI-PALACIO, A. (2008). Why Attitudes Toward Advertising Are Not Universal: Cultural Explanations. *Journal of Euromarketing*, 17(3/4), 159-181.

[29] MATHUR, A. (2012). Consumer Acculturation in the Age of Globalization: A Study of First-Generation Indian Immigrants in the United States. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 24, 372-384.

[30] MCDONALD, H. & ALPERT, F. (2007). Who are "innovators" and do they matter? A critical review of the evidence supporting the targeting of "innovative" consumers". *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 25(5), 421-435.

[31] MEHTA, A. & PURVIS, S. (1995). When Attitude Towards Advertising in General Influence Advertising Success. *Proceedings of Conference of the American Academy of Advertising*, Baylor University, Norfolk, VA, Waco, TX., 1995.

[32] MERWE, R. & HEERDEN, G. (2009). Finding and Utilizing Opinion Leaders: Social Networks and the Power of Relationships. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 40(3), 65-76.

[33] MILES, S. (1998). *Consumerism: as a way of life*. London: Page Publications.

[34] MIRIAM, T. (1982). Skill and Motivation in Cloths Shopping: Fashion-conscious, Independent, Anxious, and Apathetic Consumers. *Journal of Retailing*, 58(4), 90-98.

[35] MUEHLING, D. (1987). An Investigation of Factors Underlying Attitude Toward Advertising in General. *Journal of Advertising*, 16(1), 32-40.

[36] MUZINICH, N., PECOTICH, A. & PUTREVVU, S. (2003). A model of the antecedents and consequents of female fashion innovativeness. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 10, 297-310.

[37] NUNNALLY, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

[38] O'CASS, A. (2000). An assessment of consumers product, purchase decision, advertising and consumption involvement in fashion clothing. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 21(5), 545-576.

[39] PETROVICI, D. & PALIWODA, S. (2007). An empirical examination of public attitudes towards advertising in a transitional economy. *International Journal of Advertising*, 26(2), 247-276.

[40] POLLAY, R. & MITTAL, B. (1993). Here's the Beef: Factors, Determinants and Segments in Consumer Criticism of Advertising. *Journal of Marketing*, 57, 99-114.

[41] RABOLT, N. J. & MILLER, J. K. (1997). *Concepts and cases in retail and merchandising management*. New York: Fairchild Publications.

[42] ROGERS, E. (1995). *Diffusion of Innovation*. New York: The Free Press.

[43] RUVIO, A. & SHOHAM, A. (2007). Innovativeness, Exploratory Behavior, Market Mavenship, and Opinion Leadership: An Empirical Examination in the Asian Context. *Psychology & Marketing*, 8, 703-722.

[44] SEGEV, S.; VILLAR, M. E. & FISKE, R. (2012). Understanding Opinion Leadership and Motivations to Blog: Implications for Public Relations Practice. *Public Relations Journal*, 6(5).

[45] SHERIFF, A., & NAGESH, P. (2007). The advertising challenge: Understanding the multifaceted youth. *ICFAI Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 2(4), 59-65.

[46] STENG, W. (2001). *The textile and clothing industry in the EU - A survey*. Enterprise Papers, No. 2. European Communities, Available in: <http://www.uni-mannheim.de/>

[47] STITH, M. & GOLDSMITH, R. (1989). Race, sex, and fashion innovativeness: a replication. *Psychology & Marketing*, 6, 249-262.

- [48] Teixeira, S. (2013). The importance of the catalogs for the Portuguese clothing sector. Aesthetic and graphic quality of the catalogs. *Proceedings of the International Marketing Trends Conference*. ESCP Europe, Venice.
- [49] VERNETTE, E. (2004). Targeting Women's Clothing Fashion Opinion Leaders in Media Planning: An Application for Magazines. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 44(1), 90–107.
- [50] WALSH, G., HENNIG-THURAU, T., WAYNE-MITCHELL, V. & WIEDMANN, K. (2001), "Consumers' decision-making style as a basis for market segmentation". *Journal of Targeting, Measurement & Analysis for Marketing*, 10(2), 117-131.
- [51] WANG, Y. & CHO, H. (2012). The effect of fashion innovativeness on consumer's online apparel customization. *The International Journal of Organizational Innovation*, 5(2), 263-283.
- [52] WORKMAN, J. & STUDAK, C. (2006). Fashion consumers and fashion problem recognition style. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 30, 75–84.

