Journal of Comparative International Management
2020, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1–25

Printed in Canada

Use of Social Media Platforms for Purchasing Fashion Items: A Comparison of US and Chinese Consumers

by

Li Shen, Ph.D.
Juniata College, Huntingdon, PA, U.S.A.

This paper develops a conceptual connection between the Revised Technology Acceptance Model and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in explicating the adoption by customers of a social media platform in the fashion industry in the context of the US and China. This study shows that the trustworthiness of Facebook is positively related to US customers' intention to purchase fashion items and the trustworthiness of WeChat is positively related to Chinese customers' intention to purchase fashion items. Also, US customers' perceived usefulness is not positively related to the intention of using Facebook to buy fashion items. However, their Chinese counterparts had the opposite result. The findings enhance our understanding of the factors that influence customers' adoption of social media platforms for purchasing fashion items and provides suggestions for marketing managers as to how they can utilize social media platforms to market fashion items. The paper concludes with a discussion of possible future research in this field.

1. Introduction

The emergence of social media has been one of the most impactful developments for marketing in the 21st century. Although it is widely known that consumers across the world have been increasingly using social media for online shopping, surprisingly, very little research has been done to date that systematically investigates the factors that motivate consumers to adopt a social media platform for purchasing fashion items online. Given the fact that worldwide revenues in the fashion and apparel industry are expected to rise from $481.2 billion in 2018 to $712.9 billion by 2022, largely aided by increasing online access, smartphone penetration, and emergence of advanced technologies, it is imperative that we have a better understanding of customers' online shopping decisions with respect to luxury items. This paper is devoted to partially filling this gap in the literature and providing a better understanding of emerging online consumer behavior.

One of the interesting aspects of online shopping for fashion items is that even though it originated in the US, China has recently surpassed the US (Statista, 2019[2]) as the largest market in the world with a revenue of $303 billion in 2019 (Statista, 2019[1]) (Statista, 2019[3]). Together, these two countries represent over 46% of the global market share of online shopping for fashion products (Striapunina, 2019; Statista, 2019[3]). This paper strives to compare and contrast consumer behavior in these two global behemoths. In so doing, we analyze in this paper empirical data collected from Facebook and WeChat – the two most widely used social media in the US and China respectively – to capture how consumers use social media to purchase fashion items online.

The objective of this study is to establish a conceptual connection between the Revised Technology Acceptance Model, discussed later in the paper, and Hofstede's cultural dimensions. This will contribute to the research field of customers' adoption of social media platforms to purchase fashion items in the US and China, providing managerial suggestions for social media platforms in both countries.

This paper intends to explain why and how customers adopt social media platforms to purchase fashion items. The study mainly addresses two research questions: 1) Is there any difference in buyers'

behavior between the US and Chinese social media users? In particular, this study examines differences such as different preferences in using social media platforms regarding ease of use, whether to follow the critical mass or not, assessing their capabilities to navigate the site, evaluating the playfulness of using the site, etc. 2) What factors may influence buyers' purchasing of fashion items via social media platforms in the US and Chinese markets respectively?

2. Some Artifacts in Social Media Use

With increasing use of technology in our day-to-day life, many researchers have preferred models that explicate how people adopt and use technology in their decision making. In this regard, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989), is a widely used model in different areas such as information systems (Hu *et al*., 1999), software applications (Szajna, 1996; Gao, 2005), and e-commerce (Morris & Dillon, 1997). TAM is used in such fields as management, supply chain, and finance, among others. Although many researchers have used TAM to gain an understanding of consumers' use of social media, Rauniar et al. (2013) opine that it fails to consider the characteristics of social media as it was originally developed with a focus on the design of system features. TAM originally assumed that information systems are used in organizational settings to improve workers' efficiency (Davis, 1986). Due to different cultural backgrounds, social media and its usage in China are different from what they are in the US (Crampton, 2011). Table 1 below provides a snapshot of some key digital statistical indicators in China and the US (Hootsuite, 2017).

Table 1. Key Digital Statistical Indicators of China and the US (Hootsuite, 2017)

Country/Data	Total population	Urbanization rate	Number of Internet users	Penetration rate of Internet users	Number of active social media users	Penetration rate of active social media users
US	325.5 M	82%	286.9 M	88%	214 M	66%
China	1,385 M	57%	731 M	53%	787 M	57%

As noted earlier, the Chinese social media platform that we are focusing on in this study is WeChat; a voice and text communications app released in 2011 by the Chinese investment holding company, Tencent Holdings Limited, and is available for a wide variety of operating systems (Mintel, 2017). WeChat is an online messaging app that allows users to communicate domestically and internationally, and ranks third in the world just behind Facebook's WhatsApp and Messenger (Kharpal, 2019). In February 2018, Tencent CEO Pony Ma announced that WeChat's monthly active users had surpassed one billion for the first time, with a significant fifteen-point-eight percent increase compared to the same period of the previous year (Jao, 2018).

In China, WeChat is a popular promotional platform for many brands, content-creators, and marketers. In a recent study by Freier (2015), it was found that more than forty-six percent of surveyed respondents use WeChat more than any other app. In April 2016, WeChat started offering video advertisements in its social networking section, *Moments*, with a minimum CPM (Cost Per Mille, advertising cost per thousand views) of 180 RMB (US $27.7) in Beijing and Shanghai (CIW team, 2016). The minimum purchase of a WeChat Moments advertisement reduced advertising budgets from 200,000 RMB (US $30,418) to 50,000 RMB (US $7,605) in an attempt to attract smaller and medium sized companies to post their ads via WeChat Moments (CIW team, 2016). Earlier research by Freier (2015) stated that forty six percent of surveyed respondents used WeChat more than any other app. WeChat launched coupon ads on Moments in May 2016, local ads in September, original ads in August, and ad exchanges in October 2016 (CIW Team, 2017). Many Chinese brands have signed up for WeChat official accounts to communicate with their target audiences according to a report from

Lvyouquan (CIW, 2016). As a result, 25% of customers are buying goods or services offered on-line using WeChat, and 11.3% are clicking on WeChat ads (CIW, 2016). Although WeChat is the Chinese equivalent of Facebook in the US, the differences between the US and Chinese customers use of social media platforms to purchase fashion items needs to be understood so that retailers can move away from operating solely in brick-and-mortar stores and include Internet shopping experiences by integrating social media engagement in marketing management. Therefore, this study attempts to unearth how consumers' usage of social media platforms to shop for fashion items is affected by different cultural values and practices and attempts to identify the elements that influence their fashion shopping intentions and purchasing actions in the US and China respectively.

While the focus of this study is cultural factors that may affect the purchase of fashion products through social media, Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), Gross Domestic Product (GDP), social media usage, and penetration rates are all likely to affect how consumers order fashion products via social media. These factors provide the basis for comparison of consumers' usage of social media websites to purchase fashion items in the US and the People's Republic of China markets.

In a global web index survey, Smith (2010a) found that online social media usage tends to be driven by national and cultural factors. Culture plays an important role in the ways social media is used in a specific country. This paper studies the US and China - the two largest markets with social media platforms in the world. While social media is widely prevalent in both countries, it has evolved differently in China and the US due to the differences of culture, sets of values, Internet infrastructure, and consumer behavior. Thus, the direct implication is that social media is influenced by culture and vice versa. Figure 1 illustrates the differences between the US and China in terms of cultural values as measured by Hofstede (2018).

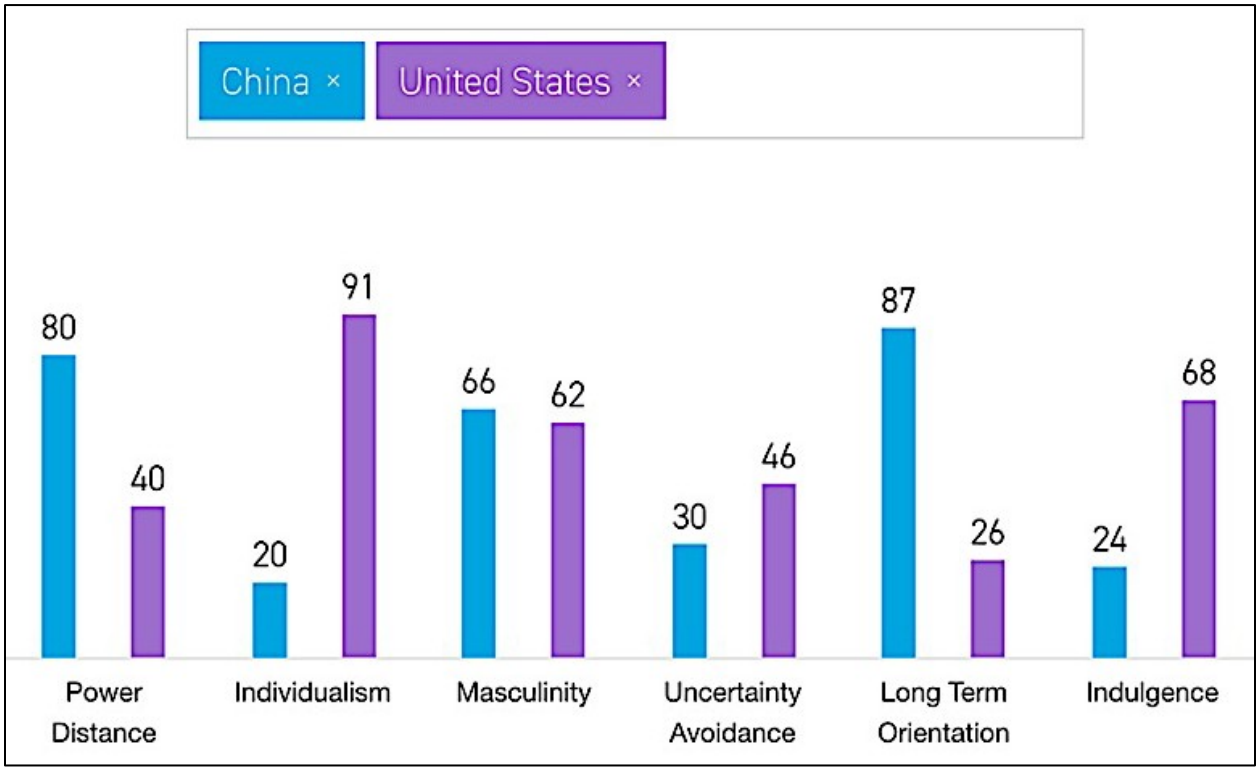

Figure 1. Country Comparison in Cultural Dimensions of the US and China (Hofstede Insights, 2018)

Rauniar et al., (2013) posits that the key component of widespread usage of social media by billions of users is the implementation of technology that enables social interaction processes, such as sharing of photos, videos, and self-presentations, etc. The massive popularity of social media sites, as shown by the number of users reported in Figure 3, could be attributed to acceptance and usage of the personal, social, and professional life of each user. Since the usage behavior of social media by the individual users is mainly voluntary, the causes of these behaviors have to be generated from personal intentions and motives.

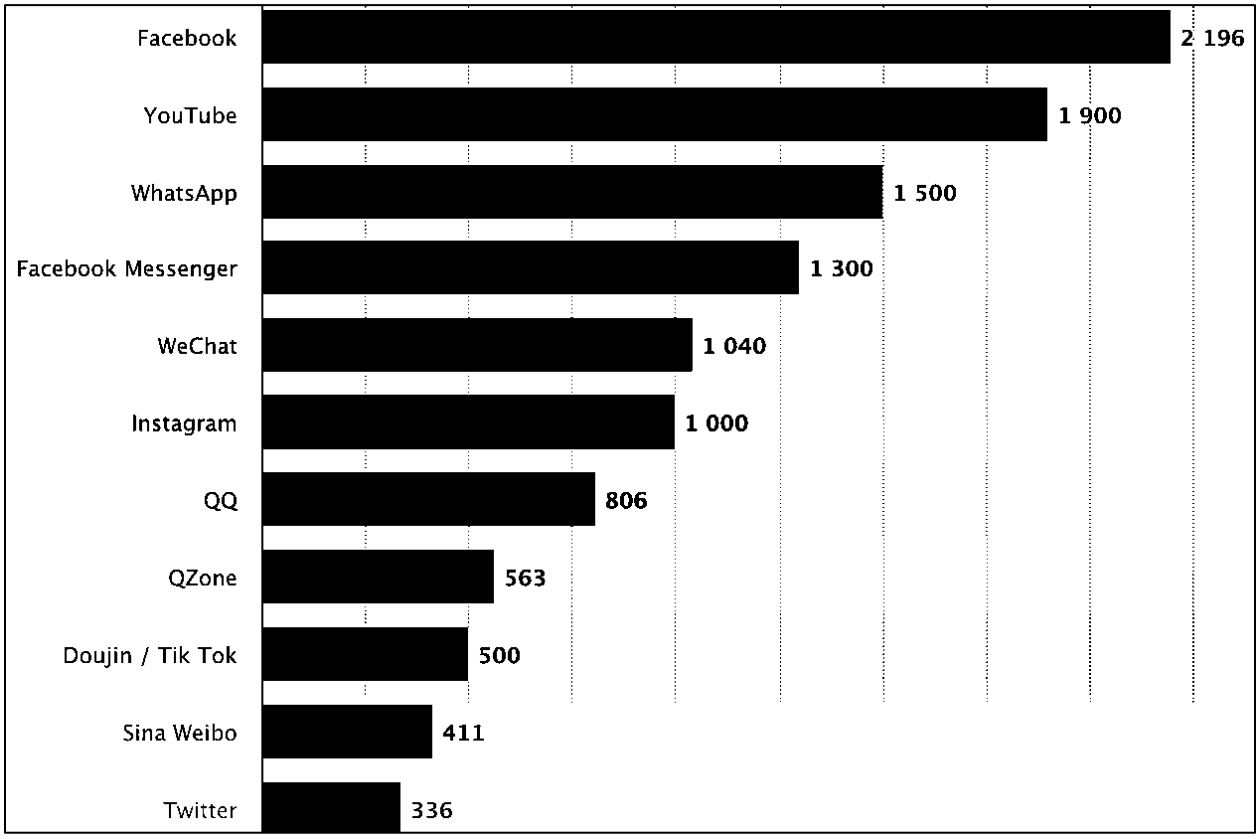

Figure 3. Most Popular Social Network Sites Worldwide as of July 2018, Ranked by the Number of Active Users in the Millions (Statista, 2018)

3. Theoretical Underpinnings and Hypotheses

This study applies the Revised Technology Acceptance Model (RTAM) as the theoretical framework to test the following key factors in the adoption of social media platforms: Perceived Ease of Use (POEU); Critical Mass (CM); Capabilities (CPs); Perceived Playfulness (PP); Perceived Usefulness (PU); Intention to Use (IU); Trustworthiness (TW) of the social networking platforms; and Actual Use (AU) in adopting social media platform for online fashion shopping.

RTAM stems from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which originated in the psychological Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Davis, 1986). Davis (1989) introduced the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and has evolved into a dominant model for understanding and examining elements of human behavior affecting users' acceptance or rejection of the technology. The TAM considers the role between two variables: *Perceived Ease of Use* (PEOU) and *Perceived Usefulness* (PU) in relationship to system characteristics (external variables) and

potential system usage. In the later experimental phases, Davis (1989) fine-tuned his TAM in order to include more variables, and refined the relationships that were originally formulated.

Social media serves as a technological application of online communication. This research combines the Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Framework with RTAM as a conceptual framework in explicating the customer adoption decision and consumers' behavior in different cultural settings. When individual consumer behavior of a social media platform is primarily voluntary, then the causes of these behaviors stem from personal intentions and motives. In Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Framework (Hofstede Insights, 2018), individuals' motivation varies in different cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980).

The associations and connections as summarized in Table 2 are explained in the next section which presents the review of extant literature and proposes the hypotheses.

Table 2. Conceptual Framework of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions and RTAM (Hofstede Insights, 2018)

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions: U.S. vs. China	Revised Technology Acceptance Model
Power Distance Index (PDI) 40 vs. 80	Critical Mass
Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV) 91 vs. 20	Critical Mass
Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS) 62 vs. 66	Capabilities
Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) 46 vs. 30	Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Usefulness, Intention of Use & Actual Use
Long Term Orientation vs. Short Term Normative Orientation (LTO) 26 vs. 87	Trustworthy
Indulgence vs. Restraint (IND) 68 vs. 24	Perceived Playfulness

The basic technology acceptance model (TAM) is diagrammatically presented in Figure 4.

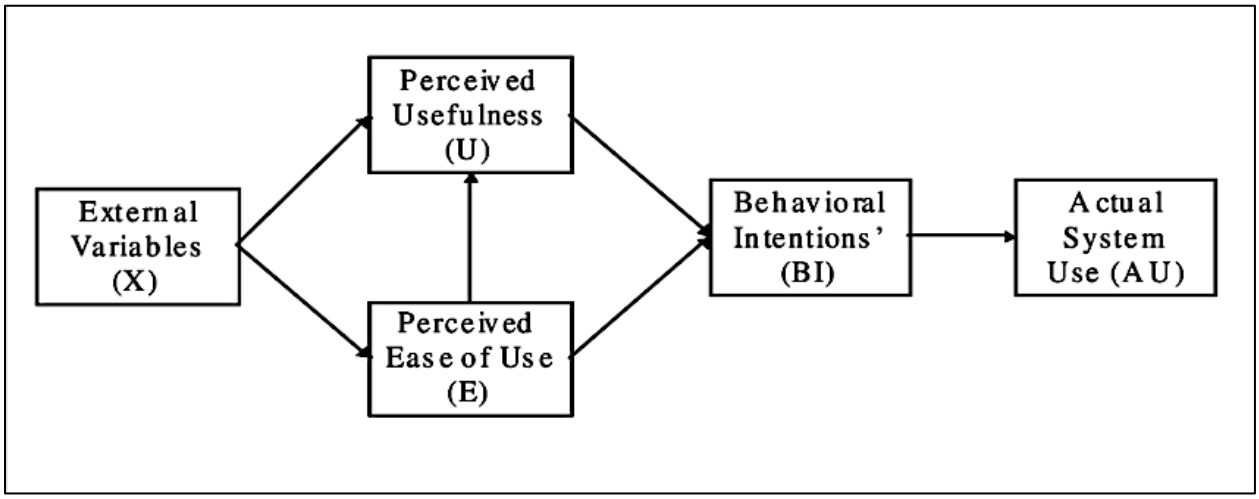

Figure 4. Technology Acceptance Model, TAM (Davis, 1986, 1989)

The scales for perceived EU, PU, IU, and AU were adopted from prior studies, with their validity already established (Davis, 1986, 1989; Mathieson, 1991; Moore & Benbasat, 1991; Taylor & Todd, 1995; Venkatesh & Davis, 1996).

Figure 5 below depicts the basic technology acceptance model (TAM) diagrammatically together with the assumed relationships.

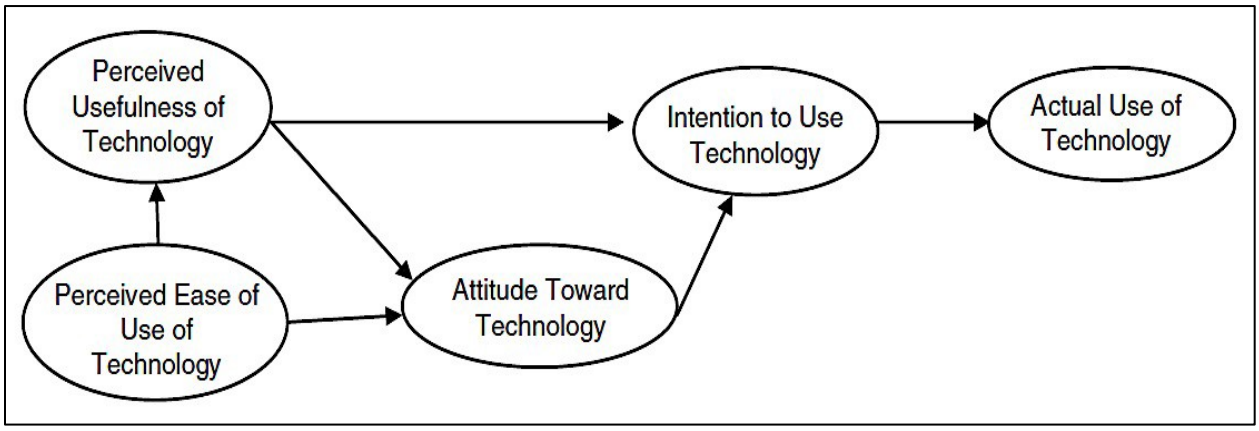

Figure 5. Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975)

Based on the previous empirical studies, the TAM model is extended and revised here to include additional hypotheses from related literature on acceptance of Internet technology in this research. Figure 6 below is the Revised TAM (RTAM) for social media technology.

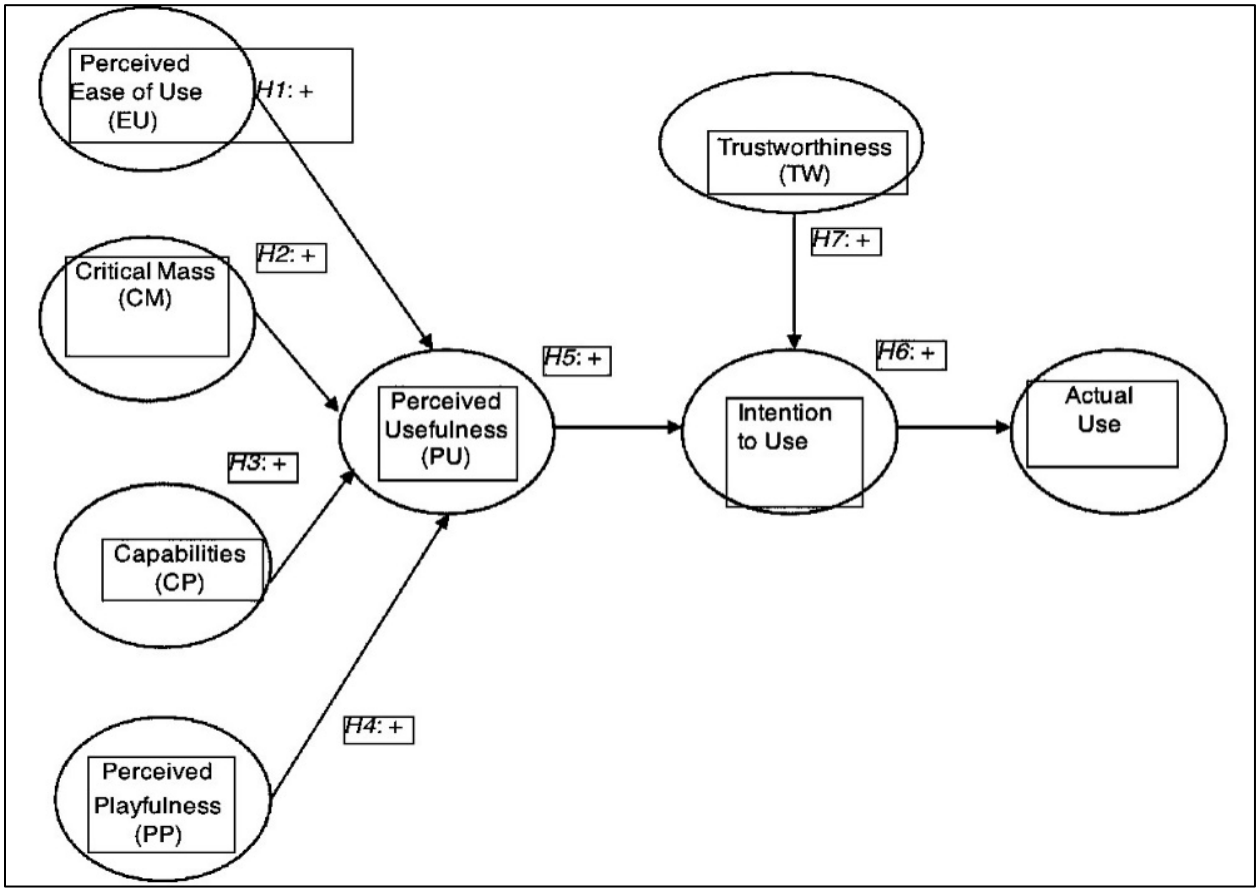

Figure 6. Revised TAM (RTAM) for Social Media Technology

According to the review of existing scientific literature on social media, very few empirical studies have been conducted to assess and clarify the usage behavior of social media like Facebook (Rauniar *et el*. 2013). A confirmed tool of usage behavior of social media can present usability professionals and practitioners with a proven instrument to evaluate social media acceptance and usage in consumer behavior. Boyd and Ellison (2007) state that it can aid us with a better understanding of "who is and who is not using these sites, why and for what purposes".

3.1. *Perceived Ease of Use* (PEOU) and Uncertainty Avoidance

Dahbolkar (1996) posits that ease of use is one of the five important attributes to consumers in assessing and utilizing technology-based services. If so, the customer will view social media as performing well on this feature and they will follow their preference and use this option. The customers' responses and reactions to the advertising content should be evaluated in order to measure the effects of the fashion retailors' social media activities (Mizobe, 2014). Social media websites integrate technology for customers to experience the service, in the hopes of not being burdensome or complicated, especially when the customer is not technologically proficient or Internet savvy. A greater familiarity with technology results in more favorable attitudes toward using technology-based services in general (Dabholkar, 1992; 1996).

The PEOU allows customers to engage with the fashion brand via social media, even if a customer does not click the ad link and does not generate sales. Once the page is opened, the conversion of profit starts, and the content will continue to spread and penetrate. For example, an ad banner displays an interactive game or survey that can draw consumers' attention so they will join in a two-way interaction.

To support this cross-cultural study with wide demographics of customers on the most popular social media platforms in both the US and China, the design and implementation of applications, tools, and gadgets needs to be user-centric with a simple overview of the service, smooth connectivity, interactive communication, and flowing navigation. A website that is easy to use can enhance users' experience (Rauniar *et al.*, 2009). The majority of studies about TAM conclude that perceived ease of use is directly linked to perceived usefulness (Davis, 1989; Nysveen *et al.*, 2005a, b). It is therefore hypothesized:

H1a: US customers' perceived ease of use in purchasing fashion items via Facebook is positively related to the perceived usefulness of Facebook.

H1b: Chinese customers' perceived ease of use in purchasing fashion items via WeChat is positively related to the perceived usefulness of WeChat.

3.2. *Critical Mass* (CM), Power Distance and Individualism

Rauniar et el. (2013) posits that social media users employ tags such as "members", "friends," "contacts," "fans," "followers," etc. In this study, we adopt the definition of *Critical Mass* provided by Hootsuite (2019) as "*the extent of the membership of people that matter most in a user's social media network*." (Hootsuite, 2019). Cameron and Webster (2005) opine that the theory of critical mass indicates that once a certain number of users' *Critical Mass* (CM) have been attracted (belong to a specific social media platform), its usage should spread rapidly throughout the social networking community. Facebook users' intent to engage in "seeking" acquaintances from real life more than "browsing" for complete strangers proved the construct of critical mass. The role of critical mass in shopping for fashion items on social media platforms should be as a responsible collector and exchanger of fashion sales information. Rauniar et al. (2013) points out that the massive amount of social media users connected to individual users is a vital component in elucidating social media usage behavior. Thus, past literature on TAM has recognized the *Critical Mass* (CM) of users as important elements influencing usage behavior of a technology.

According to the Hofstede's cultural dimensions, individualism on the one side of a continuum and collectivism on the opposite side, are societal, not individual characteristics, referring to the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups. The US receives a fairly low score on Power Distance (40) in combination with one of the highest scores for Individualism (91) in the world. Americans are accustomed to doing business or interacting with people they do not know well. Consequently, US consumers are not shy about approaching others in order to obtain or seek information (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

To sum up, theories in diffusion of innovations, economics, and social psychology all support the notion that a perceived critical mass is a key factor for new technology acceptance. Social media users are most likely to communicate with the fellow users who are already in their extended social networks offline, which make the users in the user's online network closer than that of strangers. Social media-related interactions like sharing pictures, news, providing updates, etc., represent the social media usage behavior. The consumer's behavior assists in meeting the users' needs, which influence the attitude and intention generated toward the social media site by a user (Rauniar et el., 2013). Therefore, we hypothesize:

H2a: The critical mass of US customers is positively related to perceived usefulness regarding shopping for fashion items via Facebook.

H2b: The critical mass of Chinese customers is positively related to perceived usefulness regarding shopping for fashion items via WeChat.

3.3. *Capabilities* (CPs) and Masculinity

Customers have various technological options in selecting services to suit their needs (Blumberg, 1994, Quinn, 1996). According to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (Pewinternet.org, 2018), the Internet is an astonishing platform for innovation, economic growth, entertainment, and social communication.

The score of the US on Masculinity is high at 62, and this can be seen in the typical American behavioral patterns. This can be explained by the combination of "a high Masculinity drive together with the most Individualist drive in the world" (Hofstede Insights, 2018). Typically, Americans "live to work" so that they can obtain monetary rewards and as a consequence attain higher status based on how good they can be in their profession (Hofstede & Mooji, 2010; Hofstede Insights, 2018).

At 66 points, China is a Masculine society – success-oriented and driven. The need to ensure success can be exemplified by the fact that many Chinese will sacrifice family and leisure priorities to work (Hofstede & Mooji, 2010). Service people (such as hairdressers) will provide services until very late at night. Another example is that Chinese students care very much about their exam scores and ranking as this is the main criteria in achieving success or not (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

In order to manage customer relationships and improve the customer experience in purchasing fashion items via social media platforms such as Facebook and WeChat, fashion companies and social media advertisers are encouraged to devote immense resources to finance, human resources, and maintenance to keep up their social media presence. For customers who prefer to receive new information and current events via social media platforms, fashion ads released on the social network websites before they hit the traditional mainstream media will satisfy the customer since they believe the channel is authentic. Therefore, the fashion retailer and social media advertiser need to always be on the same page in releasing product information and deploying all the relevant resources for the ads. Within the fashion industry, brands' online traffic has increased by 52% via social media channels (Wungkana, Amelia, & Evitho, 2014). A fashion ad on a social media website must translate the brand essence to the web and leverage niche functionalities such as the capability of social media to bond customers in a unique way. Customers would only identify and recognize brands that add value image to their personal value and image (Wungkana, Amelia, & Evitho, 2014).

H3a: US customers' capabilities to purchase fashion items via Facebook are positively related to perceived usefulness.

H3b: Chinese customers' capabilities to purchase fashion items via WeChat are positively related to perceived usefulness.

3.4. *Perceived Playfulness* (PP) and Indulgence

TAM was introduced and developed with an original emphasis on the design of system characteristics, (Davis, 1989) and explained some noticeable features of new technology. TAM originally assumed that information systems are used in organizational settings to improve the efficiency of the employees or workers. Enjoyment, ease of use, control, speed, and reliability consist

of the essential features to customers when assessing and applying technology-based self-services (Dabholkar et al., 2003). The first three attributes strongly determine the perceived service quality, according to Dabholkaer. Thus consumers perceive enjoyment in using social media as involving recreation and relaxation. Stephenson (1967) states that the mixture of work and play can boost productivity and performance. This point of view was extended and identified by Davis *et al.* (1989), and the *Perceived Playfulness* (PP) of social media-related activities is the extension of the enjoyment from the outcome of performance. It was also discovered that when perceived usefulness is the main factor in technology acceptance in the organizational context, fun and enjoyment outweighed the *Perceived Usefulness*. Recently, a couple of researchers strengthened the prominence of *Perceived Playfulness* on technology usage behavior.

The indulgence dimension of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions is defined as "the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were raised." (Hofstede Insights, 2018). A tendency toward a relatively weak control over impulses is called "Indulgence", whereas a relatively strong control over urges is called "Restraint". Cultures can be described as Indulgent or Restrained. "The United States scores as an Indulgent (68) society on the sixth dimension. It is reflected by the following contradictory attitudes and behavior: the Americans work hard and play hard. China is a "Restrained" society as can be seen in its low score of 24 in this dimension. Societies with a low score in this dimension have a tendency to cynicism and pessimism (Hofstede & Mooji, 2010). Also, in contrast to Indulgent societies, restrained societies do not put much emphasis on leisure time, and control the gratification of their desires. People with this orientation have the perception that their actions are restrained by social norms and feel that indulging themselves is somewhat wrong (Hofstede, Insights, 2018).

It is very common for a Facebook or WeChat user to constantly log in to the site/platform several times a day. Childers et al. (2001) argued that the level of interaction a website provides is a strong supportive element of the relationship between the site visitor and the website because the former usually find enjoyment in interactive environments. It is beneficial for online fashion retailers to design interactive and fun campaigns on social media to attract traffic with tangible benefits while the customers are using text, image, hyperlinks, and video to communicate with their critical mass. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H4a: US customers' perceived playfulness is positively related to purchasing fashion items via Facebook.

H4b: Chinese customers' perceived playfulness is positively related to purchasing fashion items via WeChat.

3.5. *Perceived Usefulness* (PU) and Uncertainty Avoidance

TAM posits that beliefs or attitudes about *Perceived Usefulness* determine intention to use the technology, and eventually leads to actual usage (Davis, 1989; Venktatesh & Davis, 2002). According to the base theory of TAM, TRA defined the relationship of *Perceived Usefulness*, intention to use, and actual use (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). It was argued that users' social media behavior is determined by their intention to perform the behavior. In other words, the intention can be converted to a function of his/her perceived benefit from the social media. "Intention reflects a decision that the person has made about whether to perform a behavior or not, and as such gets formed through a process of mental deliberation, conflict, and commitment that may span a significant time period" (Davis, 1986). In this case, intention presents a steadier mental condition of a user in regards to usage behavior of social media. Davis (1989) recommended reentering the original TAM by removing the "attitude" construct, and the study results backed up the revised TAM model as a useful model for predicting and explaining user

behavior on only three theoretical constructs of ease of use, perceived usefulness, and intention to use (Davis *et al.*, 1992; Venktatesh & Davis, 2000; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2002; *et al.*, 2002; Lee *et al.*, 2007; etc.).

H5a: US customers' perceived usefulness is positively related to their intention to use Facebook to purchase fashion items.

H5b: Chinese customers' perceived usefulness is positively related to their intention to use WeChat to purchase fashion items.

3.6. *Trustworthiness* (TW) and The Long Term Orientation

Based on Chi's research (2011) with different social media platforms, consumers see advertisements in different ways. The indication is that the customers' interest and motivation for using online social media platforms would serve as an essential parameter that determines the customers' responses to social media marketing. The TAM decided that customers would pay close attention to those they trust on social media platforms. They would start at the highest level of trust with their "real" friends, followed by Facebook friends, and then the professional or paid blogs and unpaid reviews. The last two in a row are celebrities' pages and the online retailer's website. Harris and Dennis (2011) used TAM as a loose framework that combined trust and the elements related to TAM- that is perceived enjoyment, ease of use, and usefulness.

Based on the result of conducting the country comparison on the website of Hofstede Insights (2018), this dimension describes how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future, and societies prioritize these two existential goals differently. Normative societies are societies that score low on this dimension. People in such societies prefer to maintain time-honored traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion. For instance, while comparing the US with China in terms of the Long-term Orientation index, the low score of 26 indicates that the US is a normative society. Americans are prone to analyzing new information to check whether it is true or trustworthy. Thus, Americans are very practical, which is reflected in the "can-do" mentality mentioned above. The polarization mentioned above is, so to speak, strengthened by the fact that many Americans have very strong ideas about what is "good" and "evil" and are able to tell right from wrong. On the other hand, China scores 87 on this dimension, which means that it is a very pragmatic culture. In pragmatic-oriented societies, people believe that truth depends very much on the situation, context, and time. They show an ability to adapt traditions easily to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest, thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

Thus, it can be argued that the issue of *Trustworthiness* (TW) of a social media platform is a vital construct to the TAM for social media. *Trustworthiness* of social media platforms will influence the user's intention to use it. As social media users create and share their fashion shopping data, the users must feel their privacy is intact and trust the social media site with their related activities, such as transaction records, online banking information, privacy protection, and more. In addition to the perceived usefulness of social media, we suggest that intention to use social media will also be influenced by the extent to which the user finds such a social media site trustworthy. Therefore:

H6a: The trustworthiness of Facebook is positively related to US customers' intention to purchase fashion items.

H6b: The trustworthiness of WeChat is positively related to Chinese customers' intention to purchase fashion items.

3.7. *Intention to Use* (IU) and Uncertainty Avoidance

The dimension Uncertainty Avoidance has to do with the way that a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known. This ambiguity brings with it anxiety and different cultures have learnt to deal with this anxiety in different ways. This index depicts the members of a culture who feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations. With a low score of 46, the US is below average on the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension. Thus, the perceived context in which Americans find themselves will impact their behavior more than if the culture would have either scored higher or lower. A score of 46 shows a fair degree of acceptance for new ideas, innovative products, and a willingness to try something new or different, whether it pertains to technology, business practices, or food. Americans tend to be more tolerant of ideas or opinions from anyone, and allow freedom of expression. Meanwhile, Americans do not require a lot of rules and are less emotionally expressive than higher-scoring cultures. At 30 China has a low score on the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension. The Chinese are comfortable with ambiguity, which makes them adaptable. For instance, the Chinese language is full of ambiguous meanings that can be difficult for Western people to follow (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

In the current one-on-one marketing or value-marketing era, more and more consumers around the globe would purchase fashion products out of desire instead of actual need. The decision to put a fashion item in the shopping cart is not made to chase trends or satisfy tastes, but is based on affordability and disposable income. To look at the big picture on both sides of the sphere regarding the development of "emerging economies", India might keep pace with the United States. A large group of local fashion companies in the emerging economies is empowered in competing with the still growing global fashion giants. It is crucial for marketers and retailers to be conscious of the drives that influence customers' behaviors and attitudes. Customers can contribute to a fashion company's advertising strategy since they share their feedback and comment after they experience the product (Heinonen, 2011). Several studies have examined the role of social media platforms in influencing customers' motives and interests. For instance, Chu (2011) tested the linkage between advertisement interactivities; the psychological element of self-exposure, attitudes among Facebook users and non-users, and brand related group participation on Facebook, and found that the linkage between Facebook users and brand related group participation are positively related with advertisement interactivities, the psychological element of self-exposure, and attitude, respectively, compared to non-Facebook users. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H7a: US customers' intention to use Facebook to purchase fashion items is positively related to their actual use of the platform.

H7b: Chinese customer's intention to use WeChat to purchase fashion items is positively related to their actual use of the platform.

4. Data, Methodology, Results and Discussion

4.1. Data

In order to empirically investigate the RTAM model, a questionnaire was designed for collecting primary data. A five-point Likert scale was used to identify the responses for each item. Also, some demographic items were included in the questionnaire that used different measurement scales. Initial item purification was done with factor analysis using principal component analysis in SPSS 22 for checking the loadings of each variable and their correlations. The structural equation model (SEM) was conducted to analyze the measurement and structural models using AMOS 5.0. With the application of the SEM methodology, the study should be considered exploratory in nature. Based on the literature review, we revised the TAM (Davis, 1986) to represent our research model. The focus on e-commerce via social

media platforms seems to be a crucial determinant of the attitude and usage behavior of social media users. Next, we present the research methodology and empirical analysis of the revised TAM model (RTAM). We discuss the results from the empirical study, followed by the conclusion including limitations of this study and managerial recommendation for business practitioners.

In a previous empirical study, an online survey was distributed to 900 full-time students from two business schools (one public university and one private university) in the US. This survey asked recipients to share their experiences in using Facebook. There were 405 valid survey results at the end. The components of questions included demographic data such as gender, age, employment situation, and marital status along with behavioral data such as membership of fan pages or groups, and the frequency of Facebook use.

4.2. Methodology

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is a statistical approach that helps researchers reduce the number of observed variables into a smaller number of latent variables through examining the correlation among the observed variables. For example, when researchers are interested in variables that can't be directly observed, for instance, attitude, intentions, beliefs, etc. Researchers use terms such as latent factors or latent variables to describe unobserved variables by collecting information about latent variables through observable factors (Schreiber, et al., 2006). So the planning of the analysis is driven by the theoretical relationships among the observed and unobserved variables (Rauniar, et al., 2013). In CFA, the observed variables or the indicators are designated graphically by a square or rectangle.

4.3. Results and Discussion

In Figure 7 and Figure 8, the circles or ovals are the unobserved factors or latent variables. To note, *Common Factor* is another term to use since the effects of unobserved variables are commonly shared with one or more observed variables. For example, in Figure 7 and Figure 8, the ovals on the right side are the unobserved or latent variables; the circles on the left side are the *Unique Factors*, which measure errors in the variable. The difference between the unique factors and the latent factors is that the former's affect is associated with only one observed variable. The straight solid line pointing from a latent variable to the observed variable means that the latent variable's causal effect is on the observed variables. The curved arrow between latent variables means that they are correlated.

The results of confirmatory factor analysis and the measurement model help in identifying the important dimensions for the revised TAM model for social media. It is believed that this is a significant addition to the social media literature. Results have implications for practitioners in the service sectors such as social media firms, online retailers, and fashion industry in terms of social media based communications and marketing. It will also benefit social media educators and trainers in regards to instructional design and development of social media sites, and finally for future researchers to use this instrument as a reference (Rauniar, et al., 2013).

Figure 7 below shows the CFA results in a model of the US market, and Figure 8 below shows the CFA results in a model of the Chinese market.

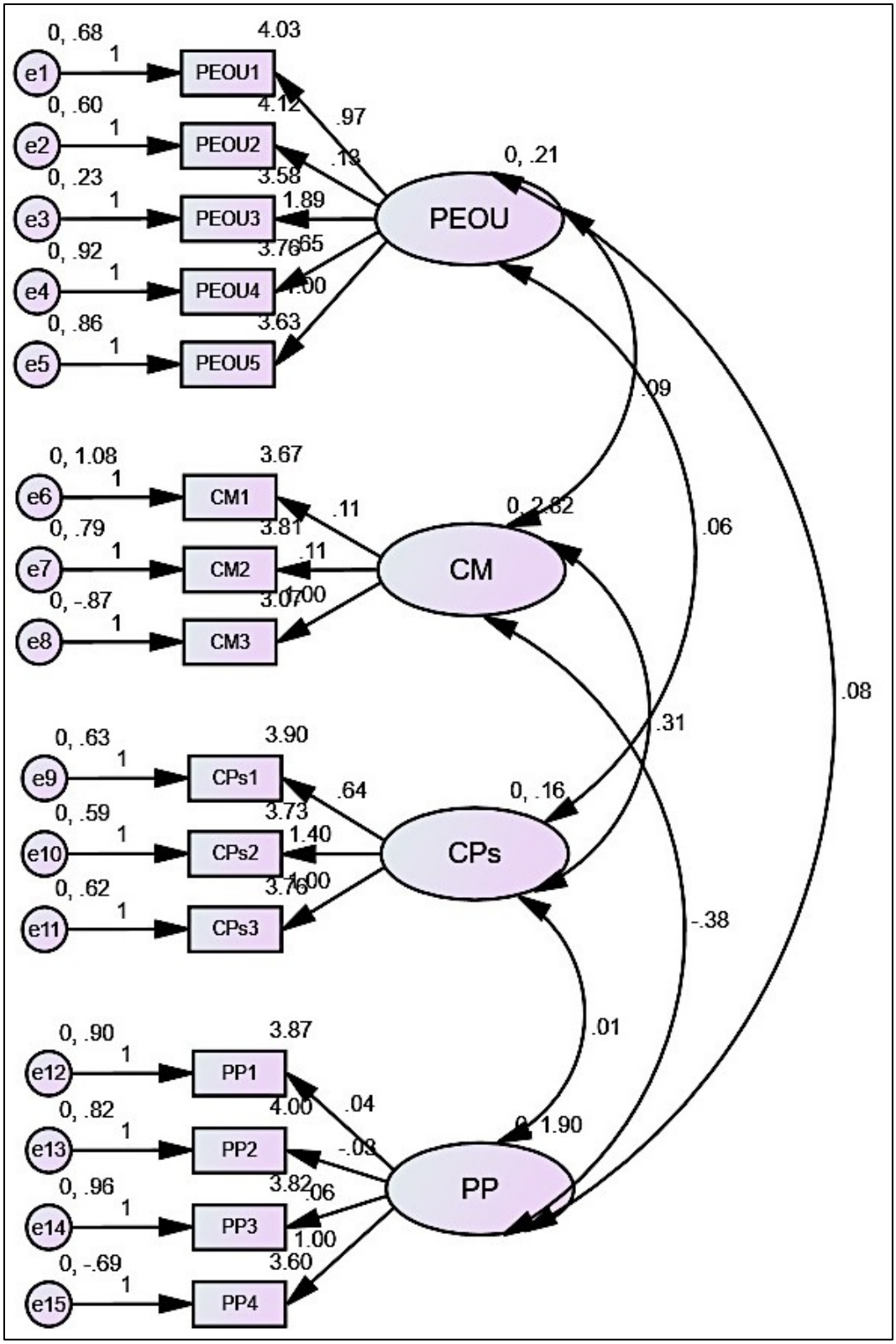

Figure 7. The CFA Results in a Model of the US Market

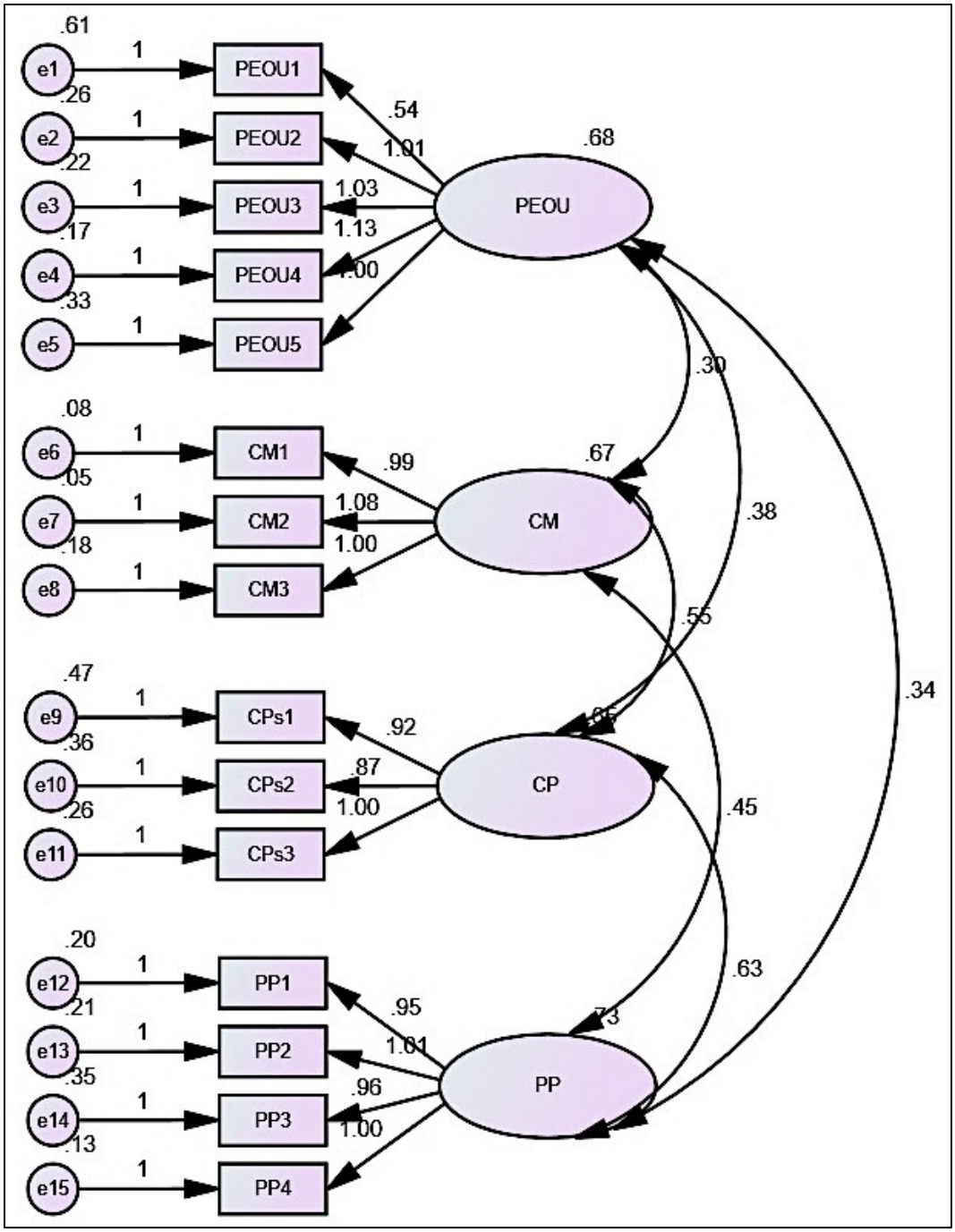

Figure 8. The CFA Results in a Model of the Chinese Market

In a factor analysis, all the responses and all the individual values for different items are entered into (or loaded into these variables). A major component of a CFA is the test of the reliability of the observed variables. Factor loadings are estimated to derive the best indicators of latent variables prior to testing a structural model. Table 3 below is the Maximum Likelihood Estimates and Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model) factor loading.

Table 3. Maximum Likelihood Estimates; Regression Weights: Factor Loading

U.S.					China				
			Estimate	*p*				Estimate	*p*
PEOU5	<---	PEOU	1		PEOU5	<---	PEOU	1	
PEOU4	<---	PEOU	0.649	***	PEOU4	<---	PEOU	1.134	***
PEOU3	<---	PEOU	1.892	***	PEOU3	<---	PEOU	1.034	***
PEOU2	<---	PEOU	0.131	0.32	PEOU2	<---	PEOU	1.012	***
PEOU1	<---	PEOU	0.974	***	PEOU1	<---	PEOU	0.539	***
CM3	<---	CM	1		CM3	<---	CM	1	
CM2	<---	CM	0.109	0.12	CM2	<---	CM	1.075	***
CM1	<---	CM	0.113	0.13	CM1	<---	CM	0.995	***
CPs3	<---	CPs	1		CPs3	<---	CP	1	
CPs2	<---	CPs	1.397	***	CPs2	<---	CP	0.868	***
CPs1	<---	CPs	0.637	0	CPs1	<---	CP	0.922	***
PP4	<---	PP	1		PP4	<---	PP	1	
PP3	<---	PP	0.063	0.67	PP3	<---	PP	0.959	***
PP2	<---	PP	-0.03	0.7	PP2	<---	PP	1.012	***
PP1	<---	PP	0.038	0.68	PP1	<---	PP	0.949	***

Reliability is the "consistency" or "repeatability" of the measures (Trochim, 2006). It is the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consistent results (Phelan & Wren, 2005). The reliability test measures how stable and consistent the results are. Test-retest reliability is a measure of reliability obtained by administering the same test twice over a period of time to a group of individuals. The scores from Time 1 and Time 2 can then be correlated in order to evaluate the test for stability over time (Phelan & Wren, 2005). The closer each respondent's scores are on Test 1 and Test 2, the more reliable the test measures, and consequently, the higher the stability will be. For instance, 0.9 and greater mean excellent reliability. The score of good reliability is between 0.9 and 0.8 while the acceptable reliability is between 0.8 and 0.7. Initial item purification was conducted with factor analysis using principal component analysis. The ideal reliability score is 0.70 and 0.5 as a low pass score (Idre, 2018). I applied Cronbach's Alpha test to test the reliability of the US and Chinese market respectively in SPSS 22 (Table 3 & 4). Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency that measures coefficient of reliability or consistency. In other words, the test tells how closely related a set of items are as a group (Idre, 2018). Chronbach alpha meet the criteria set by Nunnally. Table 5 below presents the descriptive statistics of mean, variance, and standard deviation of both the US market and the Chinese market from two reliability tests.

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha Test of the US and Chinese Markets

	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China
Variables	*PEOU*1-5		*CM*1-3		*CPs2-3*	*CPs1-3*	*PP3-4*	*PP1-4*	*PU4-5*	*PU1-5*	*TW*1-4		*IU1&3*	*IU1-3*	*AU1-2*	
N of Items	5		3		2	3	2	4	2	5	4		2	3	2	2
Cronbach's Alpha (Reliability Scores)	0.559	0.892	0.397	0.951	0.448	0.828	0.322	0.926	0.527	0.935	0.476	0.898	0.642	0.830	0.258	0.331

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Mean, Variance, and Standard Deviation from Two Reliability Tests

1st test	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China
Variables	*PEOU*1-5		*CM*1-3		*CPs1-3*		*PP1-4*		*PU1-5*		*TW*1-4		*IU1-3*		*AU1-2*	
N of Items	5		3		3		4		5		4		3		2	
Mean	19.120	17.650	10.560	13.240	*11.390*	12.120	*15.290*	15.160	*18.730*	20.460	15.650	12.360	11.220	10.800	*7.060*	7.560
Variance	8.281	16.629	5.310	6.612	*3.234*	6.246	*4.714*	12.133	*8.955*	17.031	5.395	12.026	*5.808*	6.718	2.031	3.931
Std. Deviation	2.878	4.078	2.304	2.571	*1.798*	2.499	*2.171*	3.483	*2.992*	4.127	2.323	3.468	*2.410*	2.592	1.425	1.983
2nd test	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China
Variables	*PEOU*1-5		*CM*1-3		*CPs2-3*	*CPs1-3*	*PP3-4*	*PP1-4*	*PU4-5*	*PU1-5*	*TW*1-4		*IU1&3*	*IU1-3*	*AU1-2*	
N of Items	5		3		2	3	2	4	2	5	4		2	3	2	2
Mean	19.120	17.650	10.560	13.240	7.490	12.120	7.860	15.160	7.770	20.460	15.650	12.360	7.060	10.800	7.700	7.560
Variance	8.281	16.629	5.310	6.612	2.155	6.246	*0.322*	12.133	3.175	17.031	5.395	12.026	4.240	6.718	2.031	3.931
Std. Deviation	2.878	4.078	2.304	2.571	1.468	2.499	1.439	3.483	1.782	4.127	2.323	3.468	2.059	2.592	1.425	1.983

The Structural Equation Model (SEM) was conducted to analyze the measurement and structural models using AMOS 5.0 (Arbuckle, 2003). Although I used the SEM methodology, the study should still be considered exploratory in nature. To interpret the test results, below are the standard ranges of the parameters. Figure 9 below is the SEM result for the US market.

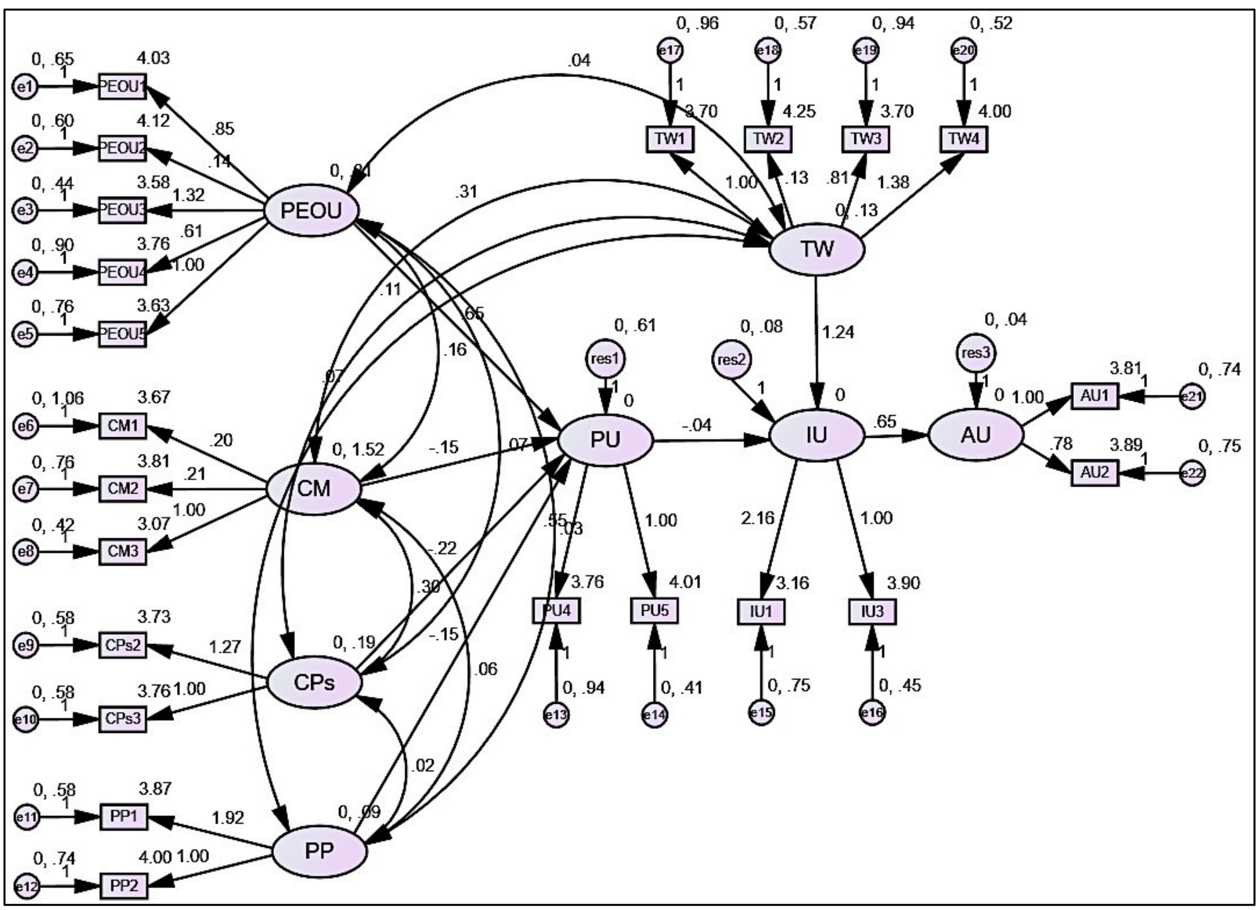

Figure 9. The SEM Result of the US Market

Figure 10 below is the SEM result for the Chinese market.

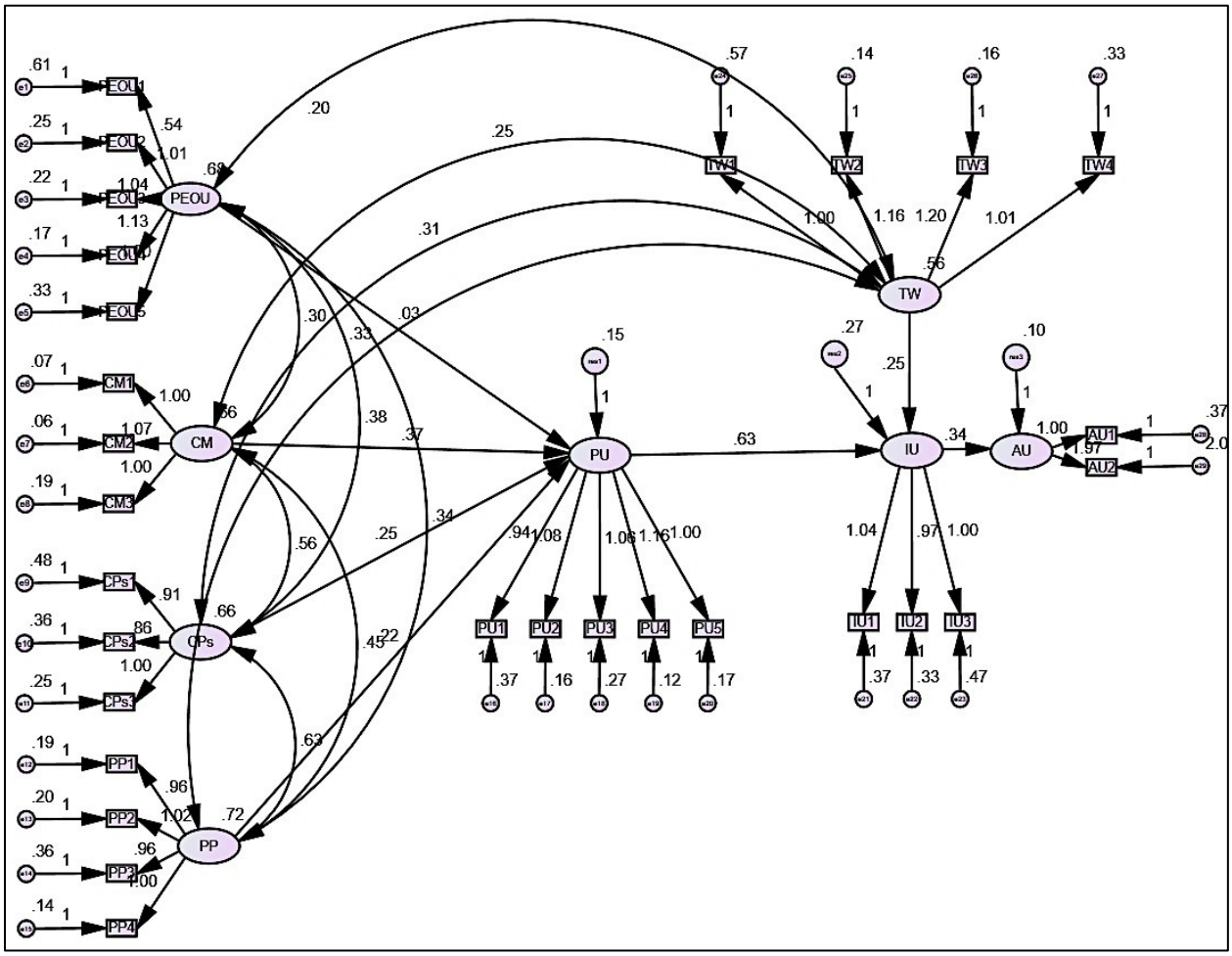

Figure 10. The SEM Result of the Chinese Market

Table 6 below presents the SEM results for the US market and the Chinese market in comparison.

Table 6. The SEM Results of the US Market and the Chinese Market in Comparison

Indexes	Shorthand	General rule for acceptable fit	U.S.	China
Degree of Freedom	*df*		192	360
Absolute/predictive fit Chi-Square	X2		454.313	939.812
Normed Chi-Square	X2/*df*	Ratio of X2 to *df* ≤ 2 or 3	2.366	2.611
	CMIN		454.313	939.812
	CMIN/df	2-5	2.366	2.611
Expected Cross-Validation Index	ECVI	Smaller the better	2.617	5.069
Normed Fit Index	NFI	≥0.9-0.95	0.521	0.842
Incremental Fit Index	IFI	≥0.9-0.95	0.653	0.897
Tucker-Lewis index	TLI	≥ 0.95	0.503	0.882
Comparative Fit Index	CFI	≥ 0.95	0.623	0.896
Parsimony Normed Fit Index	PNFI	≥ 0.50-0.90	0.396	0.747
Parsimony Goodness-of-Fitness Index	PGFI	0.50-0.90, closer to 1 the better,	0.491	0.630
Goodness of Fit	GFI	≥ 0.95	0.532	0.761
Adjusted Goodness of Fit	AGFI	≥0.9-0.95	0.597	0.712
Root Mean Square Residual	RMR	No less than 0.08 and all the way up to 1	0.053	0.098
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	RMSEA	< 0.06-0.08 with confidence interval	0.076	0.087

Table 7. The Findings of SEM and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions of the US and Chinese Markets

	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China	U.S.	China
Variables of Structural equation model (SEM)	*PEOU-->PU*		*CM-->PU*		*CPs-->PU*		*PP-->PU*		*TW-->IU*		*PU-->IU*		*IU-->AU*	
p	<0.010	0.578	0.171	0.033	0.524	0.536	0.696	0.372	<0.010	<0.010	0.46	<0.010	<0.010	<0.010
Uncertainty Avoidence	46	30									46	30	46	30
Power Distance			40	80										
Individualism			91	20										
Masculinity					62	66								
Indulgence							68	24						
Long Term Orientation									26	87				

Table 8. Hypotheses and Results

Hypotheses	**Results**
H1a: The US customers' perceived ease of use to buy fashion items via Facebook is positively related to the perceived usefulness of Facebook.	Positive
H1b: The Chinese customers' perceived ease of use to buy fashion items via WeChat is positively related to the perceived usefulness of WeChat.	Negative
H2a: The critical mass of the US customers is positively related to perceived usefulness regarding purchasing fashion items via Facebook.	Negative
H2b: The critical mass of the Chinese customers is positively related to perceived usefulness regarding purchasing fashion items via WeChat.	Negative
H3a: The US customers' capabilities to purchase fashion items via Facebook are positively related to perceived usefulness.	Negative
H3b: The Chinese customers' capabilities to purchase fashion items via WeChat are positively related to perceived usefulness.	Negative
H4a: The US customers' perceived playfulness is positively related to purchasing fashion items via Facebook.	Negative
H4b: The Chinese customers' perceived playfulness is positively related to purchasing fashion items via WeChat.	Negative
H5a: The US customers' perceived usefulness is positively related to their intention to use Facebook to buy fashion items.	Negative
H5b: The Chinese customers' perceived usefulness is positively related to their intention to use WeChat to buy fashion items.	Positive
H6a: The trustworthiness of Facebook is positively related to the US customers' intention to buy fashion items.	Positive
H6b: The trustworthiness of WeChat is positively related to the Chinese customers' intention to buy fashion items.	Positive
H7a: The US customers' intention to use Facebook to buy fashion items is positively related to their actual use of the platform.	Positive
H7b: The Chinese customers' intention to use WeChat to buy fashion items is positively related to their actual use of the platform.	Positive

The results indicate that *H1b* - the Chinese customer's perceived ease of use to shop for fashion items via WeChat is **not** positively related to perceived usefulness with the *p* equal to 0.578. The findings also confirm both *H2a* and *H2b* that the critical mass of the US customers is **not** positively related to perceived usefulness of purchasing fashion items via Facebook, and the critical mass of the Chinese customers is **not** positively related to perceived usefulness of purchasing fashion items via WeChat because the *p* equals 0.171 and 0.033 respectively. According to the result, *H3a*: the US customers' capabilities to buy fashion items via Facebook are **not** positively related to perceived usefulness and *H3b*: the Chinese customers' capabilities to purchase fashion items via WeChat are **not** positively related to perceived usefulness because the *p* equals 0.524 and 0.536 respectively.

The results $p = 0.696$ and 0.372 respectively, confirm both *H4a* and *H4b* that the US customers' perceived playfulness is **not** positively related to purchasing fashion items via Facebook and the Chinese customers' perceived playfulness is **not** positively related to purchasing fashion items via WeChat.

Our results ($p = 0.462$) also confirm *H5a* that the US customers' perceived usefulness is **not** positively related to the intention of using Facebook to buy fashion items. However, in the case of China, our results were the opposite. Our analysis ($p < 0.01$) confirm *H*5b that the Chinese customers' perceived usefulness is positively related to the intention to use WeChat to shop for fashion items.

The analysis confirmed *H6a* that the trustworthiness of Facebook is positively related to US customers' intention to purchase fashion items and *H6b* that the trustworthiness of WeChat is positively related to the Chinese customers' intention to purchase fashion items because the *p* for each market is smaller than 0.01.

The analysis also confirms *H7a* that US customers' intention to use Facebook to purchase fashion items is positively related to the actual use and *H7b* that the Chinese customer's intention to use WeChat to buy fashion items is positively related to actual use because the *p* for each market is smaller than 0.01.

5. Conclusions

This study tested the variables in the Revised Technology Acceptance Model (RTAM) with US Facebook users and Chinese WeChat users with the Structural Equation Model. This research also connected Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions with the Revised Technology Acceptance Model as a conceptual framework, differentiating between US and Chinese consumers' attitudes towards adopting social media as a shopping platform. To extend previous studies, this study examines US consumers' adoption of the US social network website Facebook to shop for fashion items. It also investigates Chinese consumers' adoption of the Chinese social network platform WeChat to shop for fashion items.

The results of the data analysis provide an insight into the pros and cons of utilizing social media platforms to promote fashion items in both the US and Chinese markets. Social media companies and online fashion retailers can benefit from this insight as the results provide a better navigation path regarding increasing the US fashion companies' return on investment and leading to greater marketing success. Since US customers' value Perceived Ease of Use in terms of adopting Facebook as a shopping portal, social media companies should work closely with marketing firms in simplifying the procedure for users to navigate and maneuver the social media platform- e.g., reduction in the number of clicks, steps to sign up, removal of transitions to different pages and sites, etc. Based on the research results, both US and Chinese customers intend to shop via Facebook and WeChat respectively because perceived usefulness is crucial to them. Thus, social media companies and marketing firms need to improve the data analysis and algorithms so that the ads banner on the page is relevant and valuable to the user. Given this study's findings, both US and Chinese customers intend to shop via Facebook and WeChat respectively because trustworthiness is important to them. Therefore, social media companies must provide cyber security to ensure the users' information is protected and the shopping experience is not compromised, and marketing firms need to offer factual information about the product information, sales promotion information, return policy, etc. Once the US and Chinese customers intend to, they will actually use Facebook and WeChat respectively to shop. So social media companies and marketing firms should work jointly to keep customers' interest and intentions high so that they will actually make purchases- e.g., create eye-catching ads (infographics, videos, vlogs, etc.), reduce click numbers while increasing Click-Through Rates, design pop-up banners that contain discount information to lock the user's purchase intention, and secure the transition process with the protection of the user's credentials and privacy. This will complete the conversion from attraction (noticing the ads banner on social media platform) to interest (clicking the page or banner) to desire (browsing the product description) to intention (selecting the product, putting the product in the shopping cart, signing up for newsletters to receive discounts, etc.) to action (purchase).

It is important to note that this study has some limitations. First, the sample size is relatively small and does not cover a broad spectrum of survey respondents (e.g. limited to universities and a few companies in both countries), which skews the data towards a pool of tech-savvy recipients with access to the Internet, higher educational backgrounds, and relatively high income levels. Future researchers should collect empirical data from a broader userbase. Secondly, a comment function is missing from the data.

Other users' input and feedback of user experience provides a complete package of ideas and suggestions. With the comment function, the audiences are able to leave their feelings, thoughts, questions, or even initiate debate in real time. However, with recent developments in machine learning, big data, and virtual reality, it is quite possible that new tools will develop that will aid in online shopping on social media platforms. Future researchers should examine how these latest technological developments can influence online customer behavior with respect to online shopping through social media. Thirdly, future researchers should also examine the role of demographic factors in the adoption of social media platforms for purchasing fashion items as this information might shed more light on the issue. Finally, although online customers usually welcome different types of online platforms, anecdotal evidence suggests that customers are getting weary of intrusive trends on social media platforms, such as advertisement banners, floating structured advertisements, expandable ads, or pop-ups. Future researchers should also examine what types of advertisements are appropriate and effective for promoting fashion items online.

This study is a small step toward our better understanding of the complex and still evolving world of online shopping for fashion items. I hope this study will generate further interest on this topic and more research will be undertaken to deepen our understanding of this dynamic area of marketing.

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