

**REVISITING THE EXPERIENCE RECOMMENDATION THEORY
IN ACCESS-BASED FASHION CONSUMPTION**

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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JULY 2018

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Acknowledgments

As I look back on my doctoral studies, I feel amazed about how lucky I have been to have had the support of such wonderful people. First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Juanjuan Wu, who has provided me with indispensable guidance and insights at all stages of my doctoral studies. Her invaluable advice has greatly helped me on my journey toward becoming a consumer researcher and an instructor in higher education. Without her help, I could not have completed this degree. I would also like to thank the other members of my research committee. Dr. Hye-Young Kim has always shown great enthusiasm and positivity, which has inspired me to become more interested in research. With great patience and support, Dr. Bob delMas has encouraged me to expand my knowledge of research methods and analysis techniques. Dr. Elizabeth Bye has helped and encouraged me, with smiles and kind words, to move forward with my work. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Hyunjoo Im, who has advised me from the very beginning of this project. I am also grateful to Dr. Kim Johnson, who has helped me develop critical thinking and application skills, and to Dr. Dave Loranger, who was always been willing to meet me and provide me with excellent advice and moral support whenever needed.

Although the Ph.D. program has involved a lot of hard work, there were many enjoyable moments too. I wish to thank Claire and Nokyeon for those unforgettable moments filled with much laughter and many tears. My special thanks go to my husband, parents, and parents-in-law for their love, dedication, understanding, and trust. These people have saved me from the difficult moments in which I suffered low self-esteem and doubted my ability to complete this arduous task. It is my sincere honor to acknowledge them and their contributions to my successful journey toward gaining a doctoral degree.

Abstract

Access-based consumption refers to market-mediated transactions without transfer of ownership. Due to recent advances in technology, access-based services provide consumers with convenience and increased choice without the commitment associated with ownership. In particular, access-based fashion service providers have achieved considerable successes in recent years. However, despite the growing practical importance and academic interest in this regard, studies concerning access-based consumption in the fashion industry have not yet sufficiently explained this alternative consumption practice.

In order to shed light on the complex nature of access-based fashion consumption, this literature-based research study aims to determine whether a certain consumption approach with respect to access-based fashion consumption may lead to more favorable consumer responses than another consumption approach. To do so, two studies were conducted in which data were collected from American female millennials via Amazon Mechanical Turk. The pilot study (n=105) was conducted to assess the main effect of experience recommendation theory in an online clothing rental context, which represents a type of access-based fashion consumption. The results indicated the reverse effect of experience recommendation theory, suggesting the superiority of material framing over experiential framing. These unexpected results may stem from the focus of the pilot study, which was rented (as opposed to owned) fashion products (as opposed to functional products). To validate the results of the pilot study and answer the additional questions raised by it, the main study (n=141) was designed to explain the unexpected results by suggesting potential mediators (i.e., psychological ownership, hedonic value,

and social value), as well as a moderator (i.e., consumer materialism). The main study demonstrated that material (rather than experiential) framing was associated with greater happiness and higher word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions, thereby confirming the results of the pilot study. Psychological ownership and hedonic value mediated the relationship between framing and purchase-related happiness, while hedonic and social values mediated the relationship between framing and WOM intentions. However, consumer materialism did not moderate the relationship between material framing and consumer responses.

This research contributes to the literature by investigating the ambiguous nature of access-based fashion consumption. It tested experience recommendation theory in a new context, and suggested the underlying mechanisms that explain whether a certain framing with respect to access-based fashion is superior to another framing. This research also has practical implications due to suggesting the importance of material framing for access-based fashion service providers and marketers in terms of managing ambiguity so as to generate positive consumer evaluations and behaviors.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	i
Abstract.....	i
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
Research background	1
Research objectives	5
Significance of research	6
Definition of key terms	7
LITERATURE REVIEW	9
Theoretical background.....	9
Access-based consumption.....	9
Happiness and WOM intentions.....	12
The experience recommendation theory.....	14
The fuzzy boundary between material and experiential consumption	17
Psychological ownership	18
Consumer materialism.....	20
Overview of Studies	21
PILOT STUDY.....	25
Hypothesis development	25
Methods.....	27
Results	31
Discussion	34
MAIN STUDY.....	37
Hypothesis development	37
The Mediating role of psychological ownership	37
The mediating role of perceived value	39
The moderating role of consumer materialism.....	42
Methods.....	44

Results	46
Discussion	52
GENERAL DISCUSSION	55
Summary of findings	55
Contributions of research	59
Limitations and future research directions	62
REFERENCES	65
Appendix A. Measurement items	78
Appendix B. Exploratory factor analyses	81

List of Tables

Table 1. <i>Empirical results of the experience recommendation theory</i>	16
Table 2. <i>Overview of two studies</i>	22
Table 3. <i>Correlation of variables (the pilot study)</i>	33
Table 4. <i>ANCOVA results (the pilot study)</i>	34
Table 5. <i>Correlation of variables (the main study)</i>	48
Table 6. <i>ANOVA results (the main study)</i>	49
Table 7. <i>Indirect effects of three mediators (the main study)</i>	51
Table 8. <i>Summary of the current project</i>	56

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1.</i> Rent The Runway website	2
<i>Figure 2.</i> Gwynnie bee website	2
<i>Figure 3.</i> Types of access-based services with examples.....	11
<i>Figure 4.</i> The proposed model.....	44
<i>Figure 5.</i> Direct and indirect effects on purchase-related happiness (the main study).....	51
<i>Figure 6.</i> Direct and indirect effects on WOM intentions (the main study).....	52

INTRODUCTION

Research background

Access-based consumption refers to “*transactions that can be market-mediated but where no transfer of ownership takes place*” (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012, p.881). Due to the advances of the Internet and wireless networking technology, access-based services are now providing users with convenience and many choices for relatively low prices and without any commitment of ownership. As consumers shift away from traditional ownership to sharing and exchanging (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; R. Belk, 2014), forward-looking firms are considering the growing interest in access-based consumption as an opportunity, rather than a threat, and they are hence attempting to gain competitive advantages (Schaefers, Wittkowski, Benoit, & Ferraro, 2016). Access-based consumption is now expanding into multiple service categories, including accommodation (e.g., Airbnb), toys, (e.g., Pley), transportation (e.g., Zipcar, Lyft, and Uber) and fashion (e.g., Rent the Runway and Girl Meets Dress). Global access-based consumption revenues are expected to increase from \$15 billion in 2014 to over \$335 billion by 2025 (Zhuo, 2015).

Among these various access-based service categories, access business models in the fashion industry have achieved noteworthy successes in recent years (Hamari, Sjöklint, & Ukkonen, 2016). One of the best-known fashion rental/subscription business models is Rent the Runway. The brand launched in 2009 and has over 5.5 million members in the US; in 2014, it rented out \$809 million worth of dresses and accessories (Strang, 2016). Recently, several companies have begun targeting specific niche markets, and these include Gwynnie Bee (plus-size fashion rental) and Borrow For Your Bump

(maternity wear rental). Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the websites of fashion rental/subscription service companies.

Ways to Rent

		
RTR Reserve Styles starting at \$30	RTR Update \$89/month	RTR Unlimited \$159/month
Pay as you rent	+ rentals per month	Access a constantly rotating wardrobe.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Rent for tonight or a few months from now✓ Borrow for 4 or 8 days✓ Get a free backup size with every dress order✓ Choose from 450+ top brands and designers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Build a monthly shipment of 4 pieces✓ Wear your pieces for the month, return & repeat✓ Purchase pieces at our members-only discount✓ Access everyday styles from a curated edit of 200+ top brands	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Get 4 pieces on constant rotation✓ Keep pieces as long as you want, swap anytime✓ Purchase pieces at our members-only discount✓ Choose from 450+ top brands and designers
BROWSE NOW	LEARN MORE TRY_RTR_UPDATE	LEARN MORE TRY_RTR_UNLIMITED

Figure 1. Rent The Runway website

gwynnie bee



CREATE YOUR ULTIMATE CLOSET
Try it free for 30 days!
Sizes 10-32
Cancel Anytime
[GET STARTED](#)

Figure 2. Gwynnie bee website

Despite the growing practical importance, studies on access-based consumption in the fashion industry are still limited. Existing studies have not yet sufficiently explained this new, alternative consumption model. One theory that could provide an interesting perspective on access-based consumption is the experience recommendation theory (Guevarra & Howell, 2015; Howell & Hill, 2009; Kumar & Gilovich, 2016; Nicolao, Irwin, & Goodman, 2009). Prior studies on the experience recommendation theory have revealed that consumers are more satisfied, have greater subjective well-being, and feel happier after spending money on experiences, rather than on material goods (Van Boven, Campbell, & Gilovich, 2010; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Van Boven and Gilovich (2003) defined *material purchases* as “spending money with the primary intention of acquiring a material possession—a tangible object that you obtain and keep in your possession,” and *experiential purchases* as “spending money with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience—an event or series of events that you personally encounter or live through” (p. 1194). Experiential purchases usually are intangible and last a limited amount of time, whereas material purchases are tangible, take up physical space, and last for a substantial amount of time (Nicolao et al., 2010).

However, the distinction between material purchases and experiential purchases is not always clear in many cases, including access-based consumption. While using the access-based services, consumers experience tangible products (e.g., toys, cars, clothes, accessories.), but only have limited and temporary access to them. Thus, research questions such as how consumers perceive access-based consumption and how marketers should approach this ambiguity still require answers.

The theory of psychological ownership could provide a theoretical basis for understanding why a certain consumption approach is superior to another consumption approach. Psychological ownership refers to the cognitive/emotional state in which individuals feel the object is “theirs” (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2001). Recent analyses have indicated that psychological ownership can arise from either actual possession of an object or temporary access to that object (Heyman, Orhun, & Ariely, 2004). Given that a sense of ownership can develop upon merely accessing an object, such as temporary possession of tangible clothes, this theory has value in explaining access-based consumption.

In addition, consumer materialism may also play an important role in predicting whether material or experiential purchases in access-based consumption will cause different hedonic consequences. Materialism is a belief about the importance of possessions in one’s life (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Materialists consider acquiring material possessions as a goal around which to orient their behavior, and they prioritize material possessions over personal relationships or experiences (Karabati & Cemalcilar, 2010; Richins, 2013). Materialistic people center their self-identity on material purchases (Van Boven, 2005). Therefore, materialists may perceive a material versus experiential consumption approach with respect to access-based consumption as generating different consumer responses.

Therefore, investigating the interrelationship among the experience recommendation theory, psychological ownership, and consumer materialism could be meaningful in terms of promoting consumer positive responses toward access-based consumption.

Research objectives

This paper examines an experiential/material consumption approach to access-based fashion consumption. To shed light on the complex nature of access-based consumption, this research is based on the literature related to the experience recommendation theory, the theory of psychological ownership, and consumer materialism. This research attempts to find out whether a certain consumption approach with respect to access-based fashion consumption may enhance the relationship between the self and the products, and may offer a deeper feeling of ownership and greater value than another consumption approach. Consumer materialism is expected to play a significant role in the relationship between consumption approach and consumer responses since materialistic people place significant emphasis on material possessions and may feel more closely connected to material gains (Richins, 2013). Therefore, this study aims to identify the underlying mechanisms that explain consumers' evaluations of and behavioral intentions to access-based consumption. The following research questions were formulated:

1. Does the experience recommendation theory apply in the context of access-based fashion consumption?
2. What mechanism underlies the experience recommendation theory? (i.e., psychological ownership, hedonic value, and social value), and
3. Does consumer materialism have any effect on the applicability of the experience recommendation theory?

Significance of research

By addressing the aforementioned research questions, this study is expected to have both practical and theoretical implications. First, this research will extend our knowledge of access-based consumption, which is a rapidly growing research area attracting attention from both the industry and academia. To date, studies on access-based consumption have been exploratory or descriptive, and they have often overlooked the complex and dynamic nature of consumer behavior, making limited contributions to theory development. This research contributes to the literature by examining experiential and material frames of access-based fashion products. Second, this dissertation will test an underlying mechanism explaining whether a certain consumption approach to access-based fashion is superior to another consumption approach. The theories of psychological ownership (Pierce et al., 2001; 2003) and consumer materialism (Richins, 2004) provide a useful theoretical framework for understanding the ambiguous nature of the access-based consumption. This research will also test a boundary condition of the mechanisms by testing the moderating role of consumer materialism in the relationship between the consumption approach and consumer responses.

This research also has useful practical implications. First, this research will have several implications for access-based service providers and marketers regarding how to manage ambiguity to generate positive consumer evaluations and behaviors.

Distinguishing between consumption frames (i.e., experiential versus material) with respect to access-based services is meaningful because the consumption approach is closely related to consumer evaluations and business performance. For example, activating a certain frame can be used for marketing communications or advertising to

produce positive outcomes. Next, this research will provide insights for policymakers and consumer advocates by suggesting an alternative consumption approach for fashion consumption.

Definition of key terms

The following terms and definitions will be used for the research.

Access-based consumption refers to “transactions that can be market-mediated but where no transfer of ownership takes place” (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012, p.881).

Collaborative consumption refers to consumer practices that take place through swapping, sharing, bartering, trading and renting goods via peer-to-peer marketplaces (Botsman & Rogers, 2010).

Experiential purchases refer to “spending money with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience—an event or series of events that you personally encounter or live through” (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003, p.1194).

Happiness (in consumer research) refers to a predominance of positive over negative affect derived by owning desirable possessions (Belanche, Casaló, & Guinalfú, 2013; Srikant, 2013).

Instrumental materialism refers to "the acquisition of things that enable people to do something.” (Kazmi & Batra, 2009, p. 260)

Material purchases refer to “spending money with the primary intention of acquiring a material possession – a tangible object that you obtain and keep in your possession” (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003, p.1194).

Materialism refers to “a set of centrally held beliefs about the importance of possessions in one's life” (Richins & Dowson, 1992, p. 308)

Psychological ownership is defined as ‘the state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership or a piece of that target is ‘theirs’ (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2001, p.85).

Sharing economy refers to “forms of exchange facilitated through online platforms, encompassing a diversity of for-profit and non-profit activities that all broadly aim to open access to under-utilized resources through sharing” (Richardson, 2015, p.121).

Terminal materialism refers to “acquisition and possession of material objects by individuals for their own sake” (Kazmi & Batra, 2009, p. 260)

Web 2.0 refers to “the social use of the Web which allows people to collaborate, to get actively involved in creating content, to generate knowledge and to share information online” (Grosseck, 2009, p.487).

Word-of-Mouth (WOM) intentions refer to “informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization or a service” (Harrison-Walker, 2001, p.63).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical background

Access-based consumption

Various alternative modes of consumption have begun to emerge in recent years. Consumers rent cars by the hour with Zipcar, rent a local's spare room with Airbnb, or take a ride in someone else's vehicle with Uber. Exchanging or sharing goods is not a new phenomenon since these behaviors among family members, friends, neighborhoods, or community members have existed throughout human history. However, researchers have pointed out that the scale of these service models has expanded beyond the traditional context (Satama, 2014). The significantly low transaction costs and incredibly large scale of sharing, which now extends beyond regional boundaries, are due to new technologies, such as the Internet and mobile applications. Participating in sharing goods has become much easier and more convenient than in earlier eras. Moreover, by employing feedback systems populated with multiple users, many access-based services have reduced information asymmetry (Satama, 2014) and consumers' sense of uncertainty about their services while simultaneously increasing adoption intentions (Perea y Monsuwé, Dellaert, & De Ruyter, 2004).

Various researchers have described the phenomenon of sharing and exchanging in different ways, employing terms such as *collaborative consumption* (Botsman & Rogers, 2010), *sharing* or the *sharing economy* (Belk, 2013), and *access-based consumption* (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Although the lines separating these types of alternative consumption are somewhat blurry, conceptual differences do exist. Belk (2007) defined *sharing* as “the act and process of distributing what is ours to others for their use and/or

the act and process of receiving or taking something from others for our use” (p.126). Based on that definition of sharing, the *sharing economy* refers to “forms of exchange facilitated through online platforms, encompassing a diversity of for-profit and non-profit activities that all broadly aim to open access to under-utilized resources through sharing” (Richardson, 2015, p.121). The sharing economy covers all types of sharing activities facilities for assets that have idling capacity by the Internet (Belk, 2014).

Various disciplines in the literature have loosely defined *collaborative consumption*, and these definitions primarily center on peer-to-peer sharing, swapping, lending, or similar activities that take place on a large scale that would not have been possible before the Internet and wireless technologies (Belk, 2014; Botsman & Rogers, 2011; Pedersen & Netter, 2015). On the other hand, *access-based consumption* refers to “transactions that can be market-mediated but where no transfer of ownership takes place” (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012, p.881). Collaborative consumption includes giving or receiving non-monetary compensation (e.g., CouchSurfing) or non-profit communal sharing, but access-based consumption is limited to market-mediated exchanges for acquiring temporary access to objects (Belk, 2014).

Multiple types of access-based consumption exist. Following the distinctions outlined by Schor and Fitzmaurice (2015), access-based consumption can be divided into four categories based on market structure (peer-to-peer or business-to-peer) and market orientation (non-profit or for-profit). In particular, the business-to-peer for-profit type often takes the form of users renting items, such as toys, cars, clothes, or accessories. As opposed to peer-to-peer exchange, this type of access-based consumption does not create a sense of community and is primarily guided by self-serving or utilitarian motivations

(Belk, 2014). Bardhi and Eckhardt (2016) have pointed out that this variant is different from pure sharing activities but similar to market exchange; it features a high level of market mediation with temporary access to tangible objects. Figure 3 shows the examples of each type of access-based service.

		Market structure	
		Peer-to-peer	Business-to-peer
Market orientation	Non-profit		
	For-profit		

Figure 3. Types of access-based services with examples

This paper particularly focuses on the business-to-peer for-profit type of access-based consumption in the fashion industry. This category includes online rental arrangements which allow customers to rent fashion items for a set period of time instead of purchasing individual items for special occasions (Cook & Hodges, 2015). This category appears similar to traditional fashion rental models. However, the scale of this type of access-based fashion service, as demonstrated by the Rent the Runway case, has expanded beyond the traditional context due to new technologies; the new model features significantly low transaction costs and diminished regional boundaries (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Despite the growing practical importance, studies are lacking on consumer experiences with fashion sharing services. A handful of works have

investigated consumer experiences with renting clothes through physical stores but have not shed light on the implications for online fashion rental service providers.

Happiness and WOM intentions

Happiness is “a state of well-being and contentment, a pleasure of satisfying experience” (Merriam-Webster’s collegiate dictionary, 2014). Happiness has tremendous benefits in everyday life. For example, happy employees are more productive; happy patients are more cooperative and healthier; happy consumers are more engaged with and loyal to brands.

Consumer research has focused on investigating what we can do to be happier (Mogilner, Whillans, & Norton, 2018). Happiness is a common goal when individuals spend money. However, in contrast to what intuition would suggest, money cannot buy happiness—especially, at least in first-world Western societies, where the majority of people enjoy a substantial disposable income and see their basic needs met (Van Boven, 2005). However, it raises the question of what makes people happy, and more specifically, of how to spend money to be happier. The question of how to invest our resources to maximize our happiness has been the focus of enormous debate among both scholars and the general public (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). Consumer happiness is important not only because it is a final positive outcome of a consumer purchase choice, but also because it influences consumers’ thinking and behavior. For example, happiness increases abstract construal and high-level thinking, which allow consumers to decipher abstract marketing messages, help them to make consumption decisions with confidence,

and leave them less suspicious of brand persuasion attempts (Dolan, Peasgood, & White, 2008; Mogilner et al., 2018; Nicolao et al., 2009; Wood & Bettman, 2007)

Previous research on consumer happiness has found that spending money on others increases happiness (Guevarra & Howell, 2015; Howell & Hill, 2009; Kumar & Gilovich, 2016; Nicolao et al., 2009). For example, buying a cup of coffee for a friend or donating money to help neighbors makes people happier than spending money on themselves. The more people give, the higher their happiness level; notably, this is not limited to affluent consumers (Dunn et al., 2008). Prosocial spending is expected to increase happiness more than personal spending due to the emotional and social benefits of giving (Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008, 2014). However, when it comes to personal expenditures, spending money on acquiring positive experiences, as compared to spending money on material possessions, increases consumer happiness (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003).

In this dissertation, in an effort to identify consumer approach with respect to access-based fashion consumption that increases consumer purchase-related happiness—defined as consumer happiness derived from owning desirable possessions (Belanche et al., 2013; Srikant, 2013)—was treated as a dependent variable. Along with this, the present research also suggests WOM intentions as possible outcomes of accessing a certain object. A Word-of-Mouth (WOM) intention refers to “informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service” (Harrison-Walker, 2001, p. 63). Talking about oneself or about something relevant to oneself is quite natural (Argo, Dahl, & Morales, 2008; Bastos & Brucks, 2017). Several researchers emphasized the

importance of WOM intentions in access-based consumption. For example, many access-based service users came to know their service providers through personal recommendations (47%), social media (13%), or blogs (3%), and those users also recommended the service to others (Visioncritical, 2014). Therefore, there must be a virtuous circle in which recommendations drive further use of the service and produce more WOM communications about access-based fashion services.

The experience recommendation theory

Consumer researchers have demonstrated interest in questions about what uses of money lead to the most positive outcomes. Some people primarily spend money on material items, such as jewelry, cars, or houses, whereas others chiefly spend money on life experiences, such as traveling, watching movies, or eating out. Studies have illustrated that purchase types, and consumer satisfaction and happiness are significantly related (Peng & Ye, 2015).

Although experiential purchases inevitably focus on consumer experience like other similar concepts such as experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999), they are conceptually different. For example, experiential marketing focuses on marketing activities delivering brand experiences to consumers; these experiences can be delineated into different dimensions such as sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral experiences (Schmitt, 1999; Schmitt, Brakus, & Zarantonello, 2015). Rather than focusing on brand experiences given by service providers or brands, experiential purchases focus on spending money on experiences such as dining out or taking trips (Gilovich, Kumar, & Jampol, 2015; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003)

Recent research has suggested that experiential purchases are superior to material purchases, a principle called *the experience recommendation theory* (Guevarra & Howell, 2015; Howell & Hill, 2009; Kumar & Gilovich, 2016; Nicolao et al., 2009). Dating back at least as early as David Hume (1711-1776), philosophers and social scientists have asserted that individuals gain more happiness from life experiences than material possessions.

Applying this wisdom to the consumer research context, Van Boven and Gilovich (2003) first empirically tested the effects of the purchase type (i.e., material versus experiential purchases) on consumer happiness and found the superiority of experiential purchases over material purchases. After this groundbreaking research, during the past decade, an extensive amount of research has examined the comparative advantages of experiential purchases relative to material purchases. Gilovich et al.'s study and subsequent analyses by other researchers (Carter & Gilovich, 2010; Guevarra & Howell, 2015; Howell & Hill, 2009; Nicolao et al., 2009; Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012; Thomas & Millar, 2013; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003) yielded consistent results reaffirming that experiential purchases are superior over material purchases in different contexts. Their research underscored that the experiential purchases offer consumers a more pleasant experience, greater satisfaction, and happiness (See Table 1).

Table 1. *Empirical results of the experience recommendation theory*

Method (experiential vs. material)	Dependent & confounding variables	Findings	Reference
Recall (study 1, 3) Nationwide survey (study 2), scenario (study 4)	Happiness, financial value, current mood, positive/negative feelings, temporal distances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiential (vs. material) purchases led to greater happiness • Experiential purchases led to more positive feelings • In a temporal distal (vs. proximate) perspective, experiences were expected to lead greater happiness 	Van Boven & Gilovich (2003)
Recall (study 1, 2) Lab dollars (study 3)	Happiness with the purchase, materialism, time since choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiential purchases led to greater happiness only when purchases were positive • Hedonic adaptation happened more quickly for material purchases than experiential purchases 	Nicolao et al. (2009)
Recall (study 1,2) choice set (study 3) prize (study 4) scenario (study 5)	Initial and current satisfaction with the purchase, maximizing/satisficing strategy, Decision quality, looking time, superior/inferior, rumination, comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material purchases led to rumination • Maximizing strategy for material purchases, satisfying strategy for experiential purchases • Comparisons to others options, different price options, other people weakened satisfaction derived from material purchases 	Carter & Gilovich (2010)
Recall	Happiness, impact on the self, SES, relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiential (vs. material) purchases led to greater happiness • Impact on the self mediated the effects • SES moderated; people low in SES were happy via material (vs. experiential) purchases 	Thomas & Millar (2013)
Recall (study 1, 2, 3)	Hedonic well-being (happiness), subjective economic value, identity, competence, relatedness,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiential purchases provided similar levels of well-being compared to life experiences and more well-being than materials purchases • Experiential purchases increased feelings of competence, but life experiences increase feelings of relatedness 	Guevarra & Howell (2014)

The fuzzy boundary between material and experiential consumption

Van Boven et al. (2010) pointed out that the distinction between material and experiential consumption resonates clearly and intuitively with consumers. Although substantial consensus exists regarding what constitutes a material or an experiential purchase, there is a gray zone between them (Peng & Ye, 2015) because the distinction is a continuum, rather than a dichotomy (Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Nicolao et al., 2009; Schmitt, Brakus, & Zarantonello, 2015). The same purchase can be perceived differently depending on where consumers place that acquisition on the material-experiential consumption continuum (Nicolao et al., 2009).

Van Boven, Campbell, and Gilovich (2010) also indicated that certain purchases are undeniably material but still deliver experiential value. For example, buying a car is obviously a material purchase, but that vehicle may serve as a conduit for experiences. Ambiguous purchases such as 3D televisions can be framed as either experiential or material goods by asking consumers to focus on their experiential or material elements, and each frame leads to different hedonic consequences (Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012).

This ambiguity also exists in access-based consumption. If we consider this consumption to represent a temporal acquisition of material goods, it seemingly constitutes a material purchase. If we consider spending money on time-limited consumption that would result in life experiences, it is seemingly an experiential purchase. There are a few studies examined whether the very same purchase produced different views. These researchers chose a barbecue grill or 3D TV (Bastos & Brucks, 2017; Carter & Gilovich, 2012), which can be perceived using either an experiential or a

material lens, and tested which consumption approach led to higher levels of predicted enjoyment and happiness. Although these studies have provided empirical evidence, their results may be limited to certain types of products. It remains unclear whether rented fashion products would produce different outcomes based on consumers' consumption approaches.

Psychological ownership

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) argued in his book *Being and nothingness: A phenomenological essay of ontology* as “the totality of my possessions reflects the totality of my being...I am what I have...what is mine is myself” (Sartre, 1969, p. 591-582). *Psychological ownership* is defined as “the state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership or a piece of that target is ‘theirs’” (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2001, p.86). Individuals, who psychologically experience the connection between themselves and their possessions, shape their identities through these objects (Belk, 1988; Pierce et al., 2001). A pioneering study by Pierce, Rubinfeld, and Morgan (1991) found the positive effects of psychological ownership on attitudinal and behavioral responses of employees.

Recently, consumer researchers have begun to investigate psychological ownership in a wider context including virtual gaming goods and merely rented goods. For example, studies have found the feeling of “mine” (Watkins, Denegri-Knott, & Molesworth, 2016) can be generated by digital virtual goods, the experience of touching objects that are not legally owned (Shu & Peck, 2011), or objects that have been ordered but not yet delivered (Wood, 2001). Consumers can develop an experiential “sense” of ownership

through mere accessing an object (Heyman et al., 2004). Psychological ownership is independent of legal or actual ownership (Kirk, Swain, & Gaskin, 2015). The feeling of “mine” represents the relationship between a person and a target object (Pierce et al., 2001). Thus, if the person experiences a close connection with the object, that person perceives psychological ownership, regardless of whether he or she actually owns the object.

The theory of psychological ownership posits that there are three routes to psychological ownership (Pierce et al., 2001). Following Pierce et al., (2001), these paths are: (1) controlling the target, (2) coming to know the target intimately, and (3) investing the self in the target. If individuals have enough control over an object, they can experience it as part of them. The more control the users have, the more psychological ownership they perceive (Furby, 1978; Pierce et al., 2001). In addition, if individuals develop deeper associations with the object, such as intimate knowledge about the item, they experience strong feelings of ownership (Pierce et al., 2001). The more the associations one has with an object, and the deeper one’s knowledge or information about it, the more intense the relationship between the person and the object (Pierce et al., 2001). Lastly, if individuals significantly invest in an object, the object becomes more closely connected to the self, thereby heightening their feeling of ownership (Csikszentmihalyi & Halton, 1981; Pierce et al., 2001). Such investments, which can take the form of time, effort, skills, ideas, or physical or psychological energy, vary, but the more an individual invests in a target object, the greater his or her feeling of ownership (Pierce et al., 2001).

Consumer materialism

Richins and Dawson (1992) defined *materialism* as “a set of centrally held beliefs about the importance of possessions in one’s life” (p. 308). In their definition, materialism is composed of three highly correlated components: (1) acquisition centrality, (2) acquisition as the pursuit of happiness, and (3) possession-defined success.

Acquisition centrality is similar to Belk’s concept of possessiveness, as it refers to the extent to which individuals “place possessions and their acquisition at the center of their lives” (p. 304). *Acquisition as the pursuit of happiness* refers to the degree to which individuals view material possessions as “essential to their satisfaction and well-being in life” (p. 304). *Possession-defined success* signifies the extent to which individuals “judge their own and others’ success by the number and quality of possessions accumulated” (p. 304). Materialists place possessions at the center of their lives (acquisition centrality), and they thus seek to acquire more possessions as a life goal intended to bring meaning (Richins & Dawson, 1992). The reason that material acquisition plays this central role in their life is that they view possessions as the greatest source of happiness (acquisition as the pursuit of happiness; Belk, 1984). Therefore, to pursue happiness, materialists prioritize acquiring material objects over investing in other activities, including experiences or social relationships. Lastly, materialists judge one’s success in life based on the number and quality of possessions accumulated (possession-defined success; Richins & Dawson, 1992; Wong, 1997). They consider themselves as successful based on to the extent that they can possess material objects since possessions represent their desired self-image (Campbell, 1987).

Overview of Studies

This research investigates the impact of the experience recommendation theory on purchase-related happiness and WOM intentions in the context of access-based fashion consumption. Although one can easily distinguish between material and experiential purchases via intuition rather than careful reasoning, a degree of fuzziness exists regarding the two types of purchase. Previous research has emphasized the ambiguous nature of certain purchases that can be perceived as either material or experiential. Understanding the perceived value and psychological processes of a certain purchase is important to derive better consumer responses. Thus, this research focuses on material and experiential consumption approaches by framing the material or experiential features of rented fashion products and further tests whether a certain frame is superior based on the experience recommendation theory.

A pilot study was conducted to assess the main effect of the experience recommendation theory in an online clothing rental context, which represents a type of access-based fashion consumption. Next, the main study sought to identify the mechanisms behind the main effect of the experience recommendation theory and a boundary condition of consumer materialism. Table 2 provides an overview of the two studies, including the data collection methods, sample sizes, and main analysis approaches.

Table 2. *Overview of two studies*

Study	Purposes	Method	Sample #	Main analyses
The pilot study	To assess the main effect of the experience recommendation theory	Experiment (recall)	105 female millennials	MANCOVA, ANCOVA
The main study	To test the mechanisms (i.e., psychological ownership, hedonic value, social value) and a boundary condition of consumer materialism	Experiment (scenario)	141 female millennials	MANOVA, ANOVA, Mediation analysis, Moderation analysis

The proposed studies utilized quantitative research methods. Quantitative research methods are an appropriate fit because they allow researchers to compare data in a systematic way and to test theories with hypotheses, such as identifying levels of determinations of consumer satisfaction toward a particular product or service (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Quantitative research methods employing large datasets collected by standardized tools are useful for making inferences about a target population (Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002). These techniques allow researchers to measure consumer responses via structured questionnaires and to understand the target population and their behavioral patterns (Gray, 2013).

For understanding the applicability of the experience recommendation theory in the context of fashion rental including the mechanisms and boundary conditions, two experiments were conducted. These two experiments included experimental manipulations using recall (the pilot study) and scenario (the main study) methods. The series of experiments provide strong empirical evidence of the superiority of a certain consumption frame over another frame with regard to accessed-based fashion product

consumption. Framing, especially attribute framing, was used to assess whether highlighting certain characteristics (i.e., either material or experiential) of a purchase to respondents would influence consumer judgments and behaviors (Levine et al., 2002).

In terms of administration, online surveys have many advantages as compared to traditional survey methods (e.g., mail, telephone, or face-to-face surveys). For example, online surveys can help researchers obtain a large sample spanning an extended geographic area within a short period and at a relatively low cost (Wright, 2005).

In terms of participants, this study used a self-administered online survey to collect data from young adults between the ages of 18 and 34 years. This millennial consumer group is appropriate for this study because its members have participated in many aspects of access-based consumption at a higher level than people aged 35 and above (eMarketer, 2017). In contrast to older generations, millennials consider sharing and renting as trendy and clever ways of enjoying an experience with a product without ownership (Entrepreneur, 2016). Among various online survey platforms, Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) has been selected for recruiting millennials. The platform includes over 100,000 potential participants for research (Arditte, Çek, Shaw, & Timpano, 2016) and has become a popular option for many consumer researchers to collect data since it provides access to inexpensive, efficient, and reliable behavioral data (Goodman, Cryder, & Cheema, 2013). In addition, Amazon MTurk users usually vary in religion, ethnicity, education, and income compared to student samples (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Thus, gathering data via MTurk increases the generalizability of the findings. Following the suggestions from previous studies, data collected was restricted to U.S.

participants to ensure language comprehension with a history of approval rate equal to or above 85%.

With respect to ensuring the quality of quantitative research, considering reliability and validity is necessary. *Reliability* refers to the consistency and repeatability of research measures (Creswell, 2007; Yilmaz, 2013). These largely focused on reducing error in the measurement process (Crocker & Algina, 1986). In addition, studies that collect data on constructs measured by a specific instrument, even one that has been widely used in previous research, produce evidence regarding the validity of the research (Crocker & Algina, 1986). Therefore, this research assessed both validity and reliability by developing and validating an instrument focused on reducing measurement error and by providing evidence of the tests' validity for making specific inferences about the respondents.

PILOT STUDY

Hypothesis development

Material versus experiential framing

While material purchases typically involve tangible objects purchased with the intention of ownership or possession for a certain amount of time, experiential purchases are often intangible and purchased with the intention of gaining life experiences. The experience recommendation theory suggests that people are happier with experiential purchases compared to material purchases (Guevarra & Howell, 2015; Howell & Hill, 2009; Kumar & Gilovich, 2016; Nicolao et al., 2009). For example, Van Boven and Gilovich (2015) surveyed 92 undergraduate students and found that experiential purchases led to greater happiness than material purchases. These researchers also generated consistent results via a nationwide cross-sectional survey of 1,279 Americans in 2000. Carter and Gilovich (2010) conducted eight studies using various methods (e.g., recall, choice set, prize, and scenario) in samples comprised of college students. They found that experiential purchases led to higher satisfaction than material purchases due to the comparative nature of material goods. In addition, Kumar and Gilovich (2013) tested whether consumers tended to talk more about experiential purchases than material purchases. With 96 American participants, they found that experiential purchases were more likely to be talked than material purchases. Therefore, experiential purchases offered consumers greater happiness and WOM intentions than did material purchases.

Rosenzweig and Gilovich (2012) examined whether the very same purchase produced different views. These researchers chose a 3D television, which can be perceived using either an experiential or a material lens, as their stimulus. Using data

from 62 Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) users, Rosenzweig and Gilovich (2012) found that when a 3D television was framed as an experiential good, participants exhibited higher levels of predicted enjoyment and satisfaction.

One of the psychological mechanisms behind the superiority of experiential purchases relative to material purchases is the close connection between experiential purchases and a person's sense of self. Experiential purchases tend to contribute more to a person's identity than do material purchases (Carter & Gilovich, 2010; Nicolao et al., 2009). That is, experiences derived from experiential purchases often live on "in here," such as in our memories or narratives (Carter & Gilovich, 2010). Material possessions also contribute to the sense of self for many people, but these possessions often remain "out there" or fade away with time, and eventually, tend to separate from the self. Thus, experiential purchases contribute more to the constitution of the self than do material purchases (Gilovich et al., 2015; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003).

A number of empirical studies have tested the closer connection between a certain purchase and the sense of self by framing the same purchase using material and experiential terms. For example, Carter and Gilovich (2012) argued that the same purchase could be seen as more connected to the self if perceived as an experiential purchase, rather than material. Using data from 202 MTurk users, they found that participants in the experiential frame condition, as compared to the material frame condition, indicated that a 3D TV was more a part of their true self. They subsequently reported greater happiness as well, confirming the effect of the experience recommendation theory.

Therefore, as compared to material framing, experiential framing is hypothesized to lead to greater happiness, more WOM communication, and closer associations with the self. The first two hypotheses, which are based on the above discussion, are presented below.

H1. Relative to material framing, experiential framing with respect to access-based fashion product consumption positively affects consumer responses (a. purchase-related happiness, b) WOM intentions).

H2. Relative to material framing, experiential framing with respect to access-based fashion product consumption positively affects the perceived closeness of those products to the self.

Methods

This pilot study employed a single factor (material vs. experiential framing) between-subjects experimental design. Participants were given brief definitions of online fashion rental services and experiential and material consumption and were directed to a self-administered questionnaire available on the Qualtrics survey platform. A brief explanation before the consent section helped participants to understand the concept of online clothing rental services; it read,

Online clothing rental services allow you to rent a product when you pay a rental fee. The examples of online clothing rental stores include but are not limited to Rent the Runway, Le Tote, and Gwynnie Bee. If you bought a product online and returned it after your trial, that does not count as an online clothing rental.

Research participants were limited to American female millennials; this group is the primary target audience of access-based fashion services. Thus, candidates were asked to answer three screening questions prior to the beginning of the survey. These questions assessed whether they 1) were female millennials (women born between 1981 and 1996), 2) were currently living in the US, and 3) had had an experience with online clothing rental services within the last 24 months. If candidates answered “no” to any of these questions, they were not eligible to complete the rest of the questionnaire. This study was available only to participants with IP addresses from the US and an approval rate greater than or equal to 85%. Attention check questions were embedded in the survey. These asked participants to take actions such as choosing “strongly agree” to ensure that they were carefully reading and answering each question.

In the next section, participants were asked to write the name and URL of the online clothing rental website they had used; this served to identify whether they had actually utilized an online fashion rental service. Then, participants were randomly assigned to a material or experiential framing condition. For the material framing condition, participants were asked to think about the item they had rented and to focus on its material features. For the experiential consumption condition, participants were asked to consider their experience with the rented item and to focus on the experiential features of it. The manipulation method was adopted and modified from previous studies to suit the goals of my study. Bastos and Brucks (2017) used barbeque grills as a stimulus; the researchers encouraged participants to frame their grill as either an object or an experience by asking them to think and write about either the material properties (“Please describe that object”) or the experiential properties (“Please describe the experience of

using it”). Carter and Gilovich (2012) similarly asked their participants to imagine that they had just purchased a new 3D TV and to think about the material elements (e.g., “How it would go with your other possessions?”) or experiential elements (e.g., “How it would fit with other activities?”). The exact instructions given to the participants during the present study are presented below.

The material framing condition:

Please write about the item you rented from the online store, including its material features (e.g., how well the item matched your other clothes or accessories, and how you perceived the fabric, fit, quality, and design of the rented item).

Please use the text box below and give as much detail as possible.

The experiential framing condition:

Please write about your experience with the item you rented from the online store, including its experiential features (e.g., how you felt when you were wearing the rented item, where you went, and who you spent time with while wearing the rented item).

Please use the text box below and give as much detail as possible.

Next, before presenting the material-experiential continuum question, the survey provided definitions of material and experiential purchases, following Van Boven and Gilovich (2003, p.1194):

1) Material purchases are those made with the primary intention of acquiring a material good. An example is a tangible object that is kept in one's possession.

2) Experiential purchases are those made with the primary intention of acquiring or participating in a life experience. Examples are an event or series of events that one lives through.

The framing manipulation was checked with the material-experiential continuum (“when you think about the item you rented, which type of consumption do you think it represents?”) by a 7-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 = “primarily material” and 7 = “primarily experiential.” The participants’ WOM intentions were measured using four items (“I would say positive things about the item to other people”; “I would talk about the item to other people”; “I would recommend the item to other people”; “I would share my experience with the item with other people” $\alpha = .912$, Harrison-Walker, 2001). Next, purchase-related happiness was measured by two items (“When you think about the item you rented, how happy does it make you today?” “How much does the item contribute to your happiness today?”; $\alpha = .827$, Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). The closeness to the self was measured using three items (“The item would reflect who I am as a person,” “The item would be close to my sense of self,” “The item would be close to my sense of self”; $\alpha = .936$, Bastos & Brucks, 2017). WOM intentions, purchase-related happiness, and the closeness to the self were measured via a 7-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 = “strongly disagree” and 7 = “strongly agree.” (see the Appendix A for details).

As possible covariates, the outcome valence of participants’ clothing rental experiences and the difficulty of retrieving the rental experience were measured. It is important to note that covariates should be taken into consideration when analyzing the dependent variables (Shaughnessy et al., 1994). Previous studies have indicated that the outcome valence influences the effect of a given purchase type on consumer responses

(Irwin et al., 2008; Nicolao et al., 2009). Additionally, consumers usually adopt a “rosy view” of their purchase experience, since memories are likely to become embellished over time (Carter & Gilovich, 2012, p. 1306). As the pilot study asked the participants to recall their experiences of online clothing rental services, these two variables could cause confounding biases.

Following Nicolao et al. (2009), the outcome valence of the clothing rental experience was measured via a 7-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 = “it did not turn out well, and you did not enjoy it” and 7 = “it turned out well, and you did enjoy the purchase.” The difficulty of retrieval was measured using two items (i.e., “How difficult was it to think about the details of it?” and “How difficult was it to retrieve the details of it?” $\alpha = .867$). These were modified items from Lammers and Happell (2003), and the response options ranged from “not at all” (1) to “very much” (7). Next, to identify the participants’ online clothing rental behavior, the questionnaire measured their monthly expenditures on online clothing shopping and online clothing rental, frequency of online clothing rental, and familiarity with online clothing rental services. Demographic questions collected further details such as the participants’ age, income, and ethnicity.

Results

Sample characteristics

A total of 148 Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) participants completed the study in exchange for financial compensation ($M_{\text{age}} = 28.72$, $SD = 4.37$). Forty-two participants (30.4%) either failed to recall the name of the online clothing rental store they had used or provided an inappropriate website (i.e., one belonging to a company that

does not provide clothing rental services, such as Amazon, Walmart, Stitch Fix, or Forever 21). They were thus excluded from the analysis, leaving a final sample of 105 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 28.32$, $SD = 3.77$).

Almost one-third of participants reported renting clothes online seldom (32.1%), at least once a year (32.1%), or once a month (23.6%). A majority of the participants spent under \$50 (42.5%) or \$50–\$100 (39.6%) a month on online clothes rental. Half of the participants (49%) were extremely familiar (17.9%) or very familiar (31.1%) with online clothing rental services, and 36.8% were moderately familiar with such services. In terms of household income, 26.4% of participants fell between \$60,000 and \$79,999, 24.7% were between \$40,000 and \$59,999, and 24.7% were between \$20,000 and \$39,999. Most of them were White/Caucasian (74.5%) while 9.4% were Asian, and 8.5% were African-American.

Data analysis

When participants were asked to choose an online clothing rental website they had used within the past 24 months, 46.7% chose Rent the Runway. An ANOVA test was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the manipulation on the material-experiential continuum (1 = “primarily material” and 7 = “primarily experiential”). The material framing condition ($n = 50$) was rated 3.78 on average ($SD = 2.23$), and the experiential framing condition ($n = 55$) was rated 4.78 ($SD = 1.79$), indicating that the manipulation was successful ($F(1, 104) = 6.51$, $p < .01$). Exploratory factor analysis was conducted with principal component analysis and varimax rotation to identify the number of factors. The results of this analysis, including means, standard deviations, factor loadings, and

Cronbach's alphas, are presented in the Appendix B. Confirmative factor analysis was conducted to evaluate the adequacy of the factor structure. The fit indices were satisfactory (GFI=.920, CFI=.976, RMSEA=.089, $\chi^2=43.634$, $df=24$, $p=.008$, $\chi^2/df=1.818$)(Hu & Bentler, 1999)

To investigate the mean differences between the groups, Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted. MANCOVA is an extension of ANCOVA ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) and includes more than one dependent variable (Schumacker, 2015). Before conducting a MANCOVA test, the multicollinearity of the variables was determined by the correlation analysis. According to the results of the correlation analysis (See Table 3), there were moderate to large correlations among purchase-related happiness, WOM intentions, and the closeness to the self (ranged from .60 and .72). Since the correlation coefficients are less than .80, there was no multicollinearity problem (Suki, 1970). The correlations between the two covariates (i.e., outcome valence and difficulty of retrieving) and at least one of the dependent variables were significant. That is, the correlations between outcome valence and three dependent variables were small to moderate (ranged from -.23 to -.49), and the correlation between difficulty of retrieving and WOM intentions was small (-.24).

Table 3. *Correlation of variables (the pilot study)*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Purchase- related happiness	1				
2. WOM intentions	.598**	1			
3. The closeness to the self	.702**	.722**	1		
4. Outcome valence	-.368**	-.485**	-.229*	1	
5. Difficulty of retrieving	-.098	-.240*	-.036	.665**	1

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

A dichotomous variable was created for conducting a MANCOVA test (framing: material = 1, experiential = 2). The MANCOVA results further indicated significant differences between the two conditions (Wilks' Lambda = .917, $F(3,99) = 2.989$, $p < .05$), with the difficulty of retrieving and the outcome valence as covariates. The material framing condition was associated with greater happiness and WOM intentions. In terms of consumer purchase-related happiness, the material framing condition resulted in greater happiness ($M = 5.41$, $SD = 1.13$) than did the experiential framing condition ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.46$), $F(3,101) = 7.444$, $p < .01$. The material framing condition ($M = 6.02$, $SD = .87$) was likewise linked to slightly higher WOM intentions than experiential framing ($M = 5.66$, $SD = 1.30$), $F(3,101) = 3.306$, $p = .07$. Lastly, material framing ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.15$) increased feelings of closeness between the self and the product/service than experiential framing ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 1.59$), $F(3,101) = 7.822$, $p < .01$. (See Table 4) Therefore, the first set of hypotheses predicting the positive effects of experiential framing, as compared to material framing, were not supported.

Table 4. ANCOVA results (the pilot study)

Dependent variable	Mean Square	F-value	p	Partial η^2
Purchase-related happiness	10.639	7.444	.008	.069
WOM intentions	3.147	3.306	.072	.032
The closeness to the self	14.258	7.822	.006	.072

Discussion

The purpose of the pilot study was to investigate whether the experience recommendation theory holds true in the context of access-based fashion consumption. I predicted that experiential framing would more positively affect consumer responses than

material framing. However, contrary to my expectations, the material frame was associated with greater levels of purchase-related happiness and WOM intentions than the experiential frame. In addition, in the material frame condition, participants perceived the rented fashion products as close to the self than they did in the experiential frame condition. I believe that the differences between my pilot study and previous research—the focus on rented (as opposed to owned) fashion products (as opposed to functional products)—may explain these unexpected results.

First, the distinctive nature of access-based consumption might affect the results of the pilot study. Access-based consumption provides users with limited, temporary control over an object's use. Previous studies indicate that experiential purchases often last longer than material purchases (which eventually rust or wear out) and cause slow hedonic adaptation (e.g., the change of affective intensity toward the baseline of happiness; Nicolao et al., 2009). In the case of fashion, in particular, boredom or changes in style happen before an object becomes worn out or tattered. Renting fashion items prevent consumers from boredom or waning interest in particular objects. Moreover, the material features of rented products may increase feelings of ownership and subsequently generate favorable consumer responses. Psychological ownership, which refers to feelings of “mine,” is based on the close relationship between possessions and the self, and generates positive consumer evaluations or behavioral intentions.

A second reason for the discrepancy between the pilot study's results and hypotheses may be the distinctive nature of fashion products. Van Boven (2005) indicated that terminal possessions such as jewelry or clothing, which tend to be ends in themselves, may cause different effects related to happiness than instrumental possession

such as tools, electronic devices, or kitchen appliances that are intended to facilitate an experience for the owner. Previous researchers used a barbecue grill or 3D television as the stimulus in their studies (Bastos & Brucks, 2017; Carter & Gilovich, 2012), possessions that are less effective in connecting to the important part of the self or increasing consumer happiness than terminal possessions—except when they are associated with shared experiences with people who are significant to the consumer. Mogilner and Aaker (2009) found that the reverse of the experience recommendation theory holds true for prestige products such as jewelry or expensive clothing. The hedonic and social aspects of fashion products (based on their material features) generate more favorable consumer responses than their experiential features.

To test the assumptions described above, I conducted the main study. The main test looked at the mechanisms behind material framing's (as compared to experiential framing) positive effect on purchase-related happiness and WOM intentions. The main study also examined the potential boundary condition of consumer materialism.

MAIN STUDY

Hypothesis development

The Mediating role of psychological ownership

To understand the characteristics of access-based fashion consumption, highlighting the differences between ownership and access is necessary. Following Furby (1991), owning an object offers exclusive rights and permanent control over that item with no restrictions on use. On the contrary, access-based consumption involves paying money to obtain temporary access to objects and entails non-exclusive rights and limited and temporal control of its use with certain restrictions.

Since renting allows consumers temporary access to a product, it may prevent them from feeling boredom or waning interest in the product. Carter and Gilovich (2012) indicated that possessions primarily remain physically outside us, as compared to experiences, which exist inside us in the form of memories and narratives. Material possessions eventually get older and wear away with time, but memories last forever (Carter & Gilovich, 2012). Consumers tend to become bored with fashion products even before they wear out, especially given continual changes in trends and styles (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007); and the products are easily separated from the important part of the self once the owner loses their appeal.

Material possessions also create hedonic adaptation. For example, buying a luxury purse may increase an individual's happiness above his or her personal happiness set point for a while, but in time, that individual's affective state will return to his or her initial baseline level of happiness (Easterlin, 2003). However, hedonic adaptation is less

likely to occur with rented products. Thus, the superiority of experimental consumption over material consumption is not guaranteed with rented products.

According to the literature on product symbolism, for high-status goods such as luxury clothing, mere possession rather than actual usage can affect an owner's sense of self and position in a social group (Mogilner & Aaker, 2009; Richins & Dawson, 1992). Although every product has symbolic meanings that define the relationship between the item and self (Levy, 1959), this is especially true for symbolic and self-expressive objects such as clothes (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006). Therefore, for rented products, material features may affect the perceived closeness between the product and the self more than experiential features. The center of psychological ownership is the psychological construct of self and its cognitive relations with one's possessions (Pierce et al., 2001; van den Bos, Cunningham, Conway, & Turk, 2010). Psychological ownership can be intensified as a result of an enhanced relationship between the self and one's possessions. When one's possessions are closely connected to the self, that individual can experience psychological ownership in the absence of actual ownership (Baxter, Aurisicchio, & Childs, 2015; McCracken, 1989).

Psychological ownership generates positive consumer evaluations (e.g., liking, experiencing satisfaction, and valuing the objects) or behavioral intentions (e.g., purchase intentions, willingness to pay more, and WOM intentions (Asatryan & Oh, 2008; Baxter et al., 2015; Fuchs, Prandelli, & Schreier, 2010; Shu & Peck, 2011)). For example, Peck and Shu (2009) examined whether psychological ownership mediates the relationship between the act of merely touching an object and consumers' affective reactions toward the object. Based on 401 responses from American university students, the study

illustrated that directly touching an object intensified the feeling of ownership and increased the individuals' affective reactions toward the object. In addition, Asatryan and Oh (2008) tested a structural model of psychological ownership in the context of hospitality research. Their analysis collected 1,045 responses from a university's faculty and staff members and found that feelings of psychological ownership of a target restaurant were positively related to behavioral constructs (e.g., relationship intentions, WOM communication, competitive resistance, and willingness to pay). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that feelings of ownership for rented fashion products mediate the relationship between framing and consumer responses.

H3. Psychological ownership mediates the effect of framing with respect to access-based fashion consumption on consumer responses (a. purchase-related happiness, b. WOM intentions).

The mediating role of perceived value

Fashion products are often considered a type of product for which mere possession more than actual usage makes consumers feel like "themselves" (Mogilner & Aaker, 2009; O'Cass, 2004). Following Richins and Dawson (1992), there are two forms of possession for the purpose of consumption: instrumental possession and terminal possession. In instrumental possession, consumption is aimed at discovering and furthering personal values or goals, while in terminal possession, consumption occurs only for the goal of possession. Research on terminal and instrumental possession is effective for understanding the symbolic meaning of fashion products.

According to Csikszentmihalyi and Halton (1981), the same purchase can be perceived as either terminal or instrumental possession. In terms of instrumental possession, if a person views his or her car as a means of traveling or vacationing, its value is related to the experiences and activities the owner has while using the car. However, if that person instead views the car as a status symbol or an object to be appreciated for its design or beauty, its value is related to the car based on its material features.

On the contrary, Van Boven (2005) indicated that some types of products—such as clothes or fashion accessories—are considered terminal possessions despite their potential to help the owner achieve status recognition (Fournier & Richins, 1991). Although the meaning of a fashion product surpasses its tangible attributes such as perceived quality and price (Kwon, Trail, & James, 2007), fashion products are often considered terminal possessions as being evaluated based on “utility, appearance, financial worth and ability to convey status, success and prestige” (O’Cass, 2001, p. 48). If a product performs well in these areas, it will successfully contribute to the construction and display of self-identity and social status (Solomon & Douglas, 1987). Indeed, a study conducted by Mogilner and Aaker (2009) found that prestige clothing goods elicit positive consumer responses based on the material frame rather the experiential frame. The researchers explained that for prestige possessions, consumers perceived value from merely owning the product rather the experience of using the products (Mogilner & Aaker, 2009).

These product attributes lead to positive outcomes like hedonic or social payoffs, such as enjoyment and enhanced prestige and group esteem (Mishra, Dash, & Malhotra,

2015). Perceived values derived from those product attributes, such as the quality of the materials, distinguishable style, the aura of heritage, and craftsmanship (Amatulli, De Angelis, Korschun, & Romani, 2018). Thus, to better understand the true meaning of a product, it is necessary to investigate the roles of hedonic (aesthetic) value and social (status-enhancing) value (Bell, Holbrook, & Solomon, 1991). Hedonic value is defined as “the pleasure derived from seeing the product without consideration for utility” (Mishra et al., 2015, p.30), and social value is defined as “the perception of a referent group about the social and symbolic benefits derived from owning and using a product” (Mishra et al., 2015, p.32). Researchers have discussed a variety of hedonic and social aspects of fashion products (Bell et al., 1991; Hirschman, 1986). Hedonic value is considered as an intrinsic benefit involving the appreciation of an experience for its own sake rather than as a means to other ends or practicality (Holbrook & Zirlin, 1985). On the other hand, social value is deemed as an extrinsic benefit that serves as a means to a specific end, such as making a favorable impression on others or signaling an important social category to which one belongs (Bell et al., 1991). The perceived value derived from products generates positive consumer evaluations and behavioral intentions (Bell et al., 1991; Prendergast & Wong, 2003; Okonkwo, 2007; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). For example, Ajitha and Sivakumar (2017) collected data from 372 female luxury cosmetic users and found that hedonic and status values were strong antecedents of brand attitudes. Therefore, it is hypothesized that hedonic and social values mediate the relationship between framing and positive consumer responses.

H4. Hedonic value mediates the effect of framing with respect to access-based fashion consumption on consumer responses (a. purchase-related happiness, b. WOM intentions).

H5. Social value mediates the effect of framing with respect to access-based fashion consumption on consumer responses (a. purchase-related happiness, b. WOM intentions).

The moderating role of consumer materialism

Materialists consider acquiring material possessions a means of orienting their behavior and view material possessions as evidence of success (Karabati & Cemalcilar, 2010). For them, material possessions are substantial sources of satisfaction and well-being, and so they emphasize material acquisitions as their primary goal (Richins, 2013). Therefore, materialists prioritize material possessions over other means of orienting their behavior, such as relationships or life experiences (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002; Walker, Kumar, & Gilovich, 2016). For example, Nicolao et al. (2009) found that materialism moderated the effects of experiential purchases on consumer satisfaction. Using undergraduate student samples (n=190), their study demonstrated that less materialistic consumers were more satisfied with their experiences than their material possessions. For more materialistic consumers, there was no difference between experiences and material possessions in inducing satisfaction. This notion is well supported by Fredrickson's (2004) broaden and build theory, which posits that low materialism leads to experiential purchasing and increased experiential purchasing leads to enhanced well-being (Belk, 1985; Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Tatzel, 2014). Carter and

Gilovich (2012) further explored those less materialistic consumers who reported that their possessions were less central to their lives. They found that these less materialistic consumers perceived experiences as physically close to their selves than material possessions. Therefore, it is expected that material framing, as compared to experiential framing, produces less positive effects in low materialists than in high materialists. However, high materialists perceive a weaker relationship between the self and experiences, meaning that the effect of experiential framing on consumer responses may likewise be less intense. The sixth hypothesis below reflects these ideas.

H6. For highly materialistic consumers, the effect of material framing with respect to accessed-based fashion product consumption is stronger than for those less materialistic consumers on consumer responses (a. purchase-related happiness and b. WOM intentions).

Therefore, the main study investigated the mediating roles of psychological ownership, hedonic value, and social value on the relationship between framing and consumer responses. In addition, the study also tested the moderating role of consumer materialism on the relationship between framing and consumer responses. Figure 4 outlines the research model.

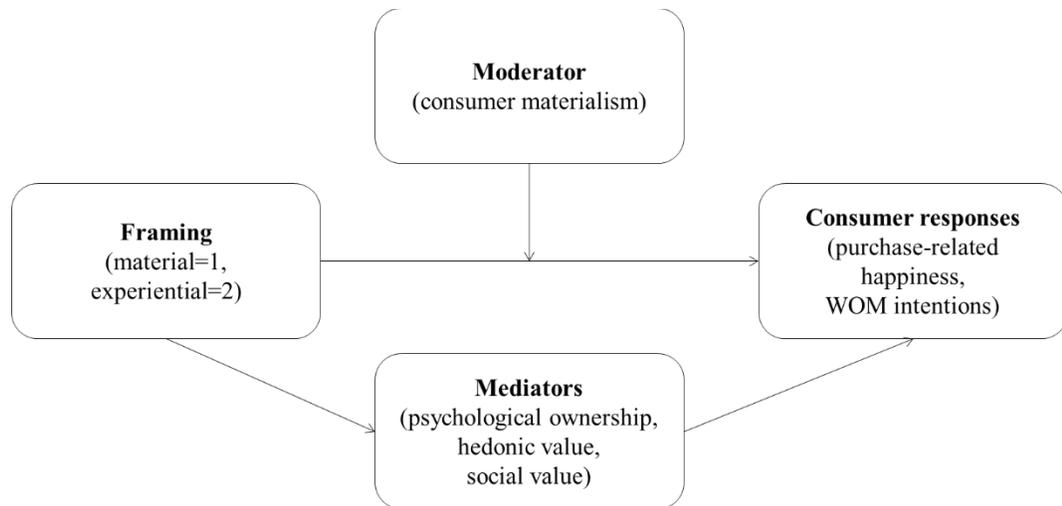


Figure 4. The proposed model

Methods

The main study employed a single factor (material vs. experiential framing) between-subjects experimental design. The procedure was the same as that used for the pilot study, and data were again collected from American female millennials. The pilot study collected data from actual access-based fashion service users, but the main study used the scenario method and asked participants to imagine that they were using such a service for a specific occasion. By doing so, the main study further validated the results of the pilot study and answered additional theoretical questions. Three screening questions asking about age, gender, and current residence were employed, and candidates were asked if they had participated in a similar study in the last six months. Candidates who had participated in the pilot study were excluded to avoid any possible bias. Participants who agreed to take part in the main study and who passed the screening questions were randomly assigned to the material or experiential framing condition. Participants were asked to imagine that they were attending a friend’s wedding and had

decided to rent a dress from an online clothing rental store. For the material framing condition, participants were asked to describe the material elements of the dress, while for the experiential framing condition, participants were asked to describe the nature of the experience of wearing the dress. The manipulation method was modified based on the pilot study. The exact instructions given to the participants are presented below.

The material framing condition:

From among several options the online clothing rental store provided, you chose a specific style that you liked. You have just received the dress at home. Now, imagine that you are opening the package and taking a close look at the dress.

Please describe some details of "the dress." For example, you can think about the quality and design of the item, how the item fits with your other accessories and clothes, and how you feel while possessing the dress for a while.

The experiential framing condition:

From among several options the online clothing rental store provided, you chose a specific style that you liked. Now, imagine that you are wearing the dress at the wedding.

Please describe some details of "the experience of wearing the dress." For example, you can think about the time/occasion, whom you meet, how the item fits with the activities, and how you feel while wearing the dress.

Next, the same questionnaire used in the pilot study was given to the participants in the main study; these included the material-experiential continuum question and items regarding WOM intentions ($\alpha = .862$) and purchase-related happiness ($\alpha = .821$). In addition, following Peck and Shu (2009), psychological ownership was measured via

four items (e.g., I would feel like the item is my item”, $\alpha = .949$). Hedonic value was measured by two items (e.g., “The item would be pleasant,” $\alpha = .832$, Dhar & Wertebroch, 2000) and social value was measured by six items (e.g., “The item would send a positive social signal,” $\alpha = .904$, Sweeney et al., 1997). To assess the psychological closeness between the self and the fashion product, a modified version of the Inclusion of Other in the Self scale was used (Aron et al., 1991), which is a different method from the pilot study. This single-item pictorial measure consisting two Venn diagrams that presents two circles representing different levels of overlap between the self, and the fashion product is useful to measure a more accurate description of how close they felt to the self-fashion products (Øverup & Neighbors, 2016). According to Richins (2006), consumer materialism was measured by six items (e.g., My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.” $\alpha = .812$) (see the Appendix B for details). Data on participants' online clothing rental behavior and demographic characteristics were collected as in the pilot study. Unlike the pilot study, the main study did not include the outcome valence and the difficulty of retrieving as covariates, since the main study used a scenario method that does not expect to create a confounding bias.

Results

Sample characteristics

A total of 150 MTurk participants completed the study in exchange for financial compensation ($M_{\text{age}}=29.41$, $SD=5.41$). Nine participants who were not eligible for this study were excluded from the analysis, leaving a final sample of 141 participants ($M_{\text{age}}=29.4$, $SD=4.53$). Among the participants, 41.1% were slightly familiar with the

online clothing rental services, and 23.4% were moderately familiar with such services. In terms of their household income, 27% of participants fell between \$40,000 and \$59,999, 22.7% were between \$20,000 and \$39,999, and 19.9% were between \$60,000 and \$79,999. Almost 72% spent less than \$50 and 12.4% spent between \$51 and \$100 a month on online clothes rental. In addition, 36.9% spent less than \$50 and 26.2% spent between \$51 and \$100 a month on online clothes buying. Most of them were White/Caucasian (68.1%) while 14.1% were African American.

Data analysis

The effectiveness of the manipulation was checked by the material-experiential continuum (1 = “primarily material” and 7 = “primarily experiential”). The material framing condition (n = 68) was rated 3.35 on average (SD = 2.15), and the experiential framing condition (n = 73) was rated 4.25 (SD = 1.94, $F(1, 140) = 6.748, p < .001$, indicating that the manipulation was successful. As for the results of the exploratory factor analysis with principal component analysis and varimax rotation, multiple items exhibited high levels of reliability (see the Appendix B for details). Next, confirmative factor analysis was conducted to evaluate the adequacy of the factor structure. The fit indices were acceptable (GFI=.946, CFI=.874, RMSEA=.060, $\chi^2=399.674, df=214, p=.000, \chi^2/df=1.868$) (Hu & Bentler, 1999)

The main test employed MANOVA (Multivariate analysis of variance). MANOVA is an extension of ANOVA (analysis of variance) and allows researchers to test multiple dependent variables at the same time (Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, 2008). According to correlation analysis, there were moderate to large correlations among

purchase-related happiness, WOM intentions, psychological ownership, hedonic value and social value (ranged from .26 and .66). Therefore, no multicollinearity problem was detected between these variables (Suki, 1970) (See Table 5).

Table 5. *Correlation of variables (the main study)*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Purchase- related happiness	1					
2. WOM intentions	.610**	1				
3. psychological ownership	.444**	.247**	1			
4. Hedonic value	.656**	.576**	.261**	1		
5. Social value	.467**	.505**	.408**	.476**	1	
6. The closeness to the self	.374**	.305**	.521**	.322**	.449**	1

** $p < .01$

Again, a dichotomous variable was created for conducting a MANOVA test (material = 1, experiential = 2). The MANOVA results indicated a significant main effect of framing (Wilks' Lambda = .896, $F(6,134) = 2.597$, $p < .05$). In terms of consumer purchase-related happiness, the material framing condition resulted in greater happiness ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.07$) than did the experiential framing condition ($M = 5$, $SD = 1.37$), $F(1, 139) = 8.341$, $p < .01$. The material framing condition ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 1.09$) led to higher WOM intentions than did the experiential framing condition ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 20$), $F(1, 139) = 4.015$, $p < .05$. In the material framing condition ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.95$) the rented fashion product was more closely associated with the self than in the experiential framing condition ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.69$), $F(1, 139) = 6.947$, $p < .01$, confirming the consistent results with the pilot study.

The material framing condition ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 1.73$) increased psychological ownership more than did the experiential framing condition ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.87$),

$F(1,139) = 6.651, p < .05$. The material framing condition was associated with statistically greater hedonic value ($M = 5.89, SD = .88, F(1, 139) = 11.259, p < .001$, and social value ($M = 5.14, SD = .98, F(1, 139) = 6.470, p < .05$) than was the experiential framing condition (hedonic value: $M = 5.21, SD = 1.41$, social value: $M = 4.63, SD = 1.34$). (See Table 6).

Table 6. ANOVA results (the main study)

Dependent variable	Mean Square	F-value	p	Partial η^2
Purchase-related happiness	12.799	8.341	.004	.057
WOM intentions	5.282	4.015	.047	.028
Psychological ownership	21.315	6.561	.011	.045
Hedonic value	15.829	11.259	.001	.075
Social value	9.060	6.470	.012	.044
The closeness to the self	23.929	6.947	.009	.048

Next, to test the mediation hypotheses (H3–H5), mediation analysis was conducted. This study employed Hayes’ (2012) PROCESS macro (Model 4) for SPSS, which includes 95% bias-corrected and bootstrapped confidence intervals using 5,000 bootstrap samples. The mediation analysis included framing (material = 1, experiential = 2) as an independent variable and psychological ownership, hedonic value, and social value as positive mediators. The testing model included all three mediators because the effect of each mediator may change in the presence of other mediators (MacKinnon et al., 2012).

The total effect of framing on purchase-related happiness ($b = -.60, t = -2.89, p < .01$) and WOM intentions ($b = -.39, t = -2.00, p < .05$) were significant. When the

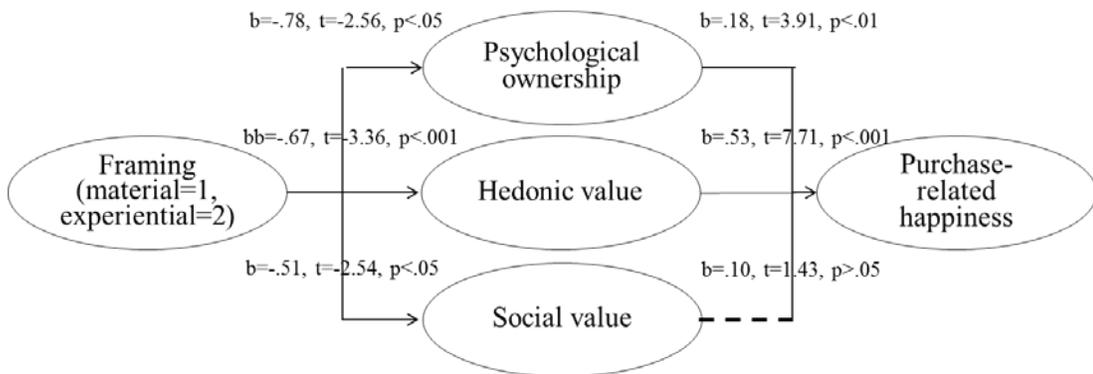
mediators (i.e., psychological ownership, hedonic value, and social value) were included in the model, the direct effects became insignificant (happiness: $b = -.04$, $t = -.23$, $p > .05$; WOM intentions: $b = -.04$, $t = -.25$, $p > .05$), indicating the possibility that at least one of these three variables has a mediating effect. Further, the indirect effects were examined to estimate the impact of the primary independent variable (i.e., framing) on dependent variables (i.e., purchase-related happiness, WOM intentions) through each mediating variable. According to Hayes' (2012) guidelines, the indirect effect is statistically significant at the .05 level if the confidence interval (95%) for the estimate does not include zero, implying a mediation effect. The indirect effect of framing through the mediating role of psychological ownership was significant for purchase-related happiness ($b = -.11$, with 95% CI = $-.25$ to $-.03$), but was not significant for WOM intentions ($b = -.01$, with 95% CI = $-.10$ to $.06$). The indirect effect of framing through the hedonic value was significant on purchase-related happiness ($b = -.29$ with 95% CI = $-.51$ to $-.11$) and WOM intentions ($b = -.28$ with 95% CI = $-.48$ to $-.11$). The indirect effect of framing through the social value was not significant on purchase-related happiness ($b = -.04$ with 95% CI = $-.16$ to $.01$) but was significant on WOM intentions ($b = -.14$ with 95% CI = $-.35$ to $-.03$). Thus, all hypotheses were supported except H3b (the mediating effect of psychological ownership on the relationship between framing and WOM intentions) and H5a (the mediating effect of social value on the relationship between framing and purchase-related happiness). Table 7 shows the significant indirect effects of psychological ownership and hedonic value on the relationship between framing and purchase-related happiness, and the significant indirect effects of hedonic value and

social value on the relationship between framing and WOM-intentions. Figure 5 and Figure 6 also illustrate the results of the mediation analyses.

Table 7. Indirect effects of three mediators (the main study)

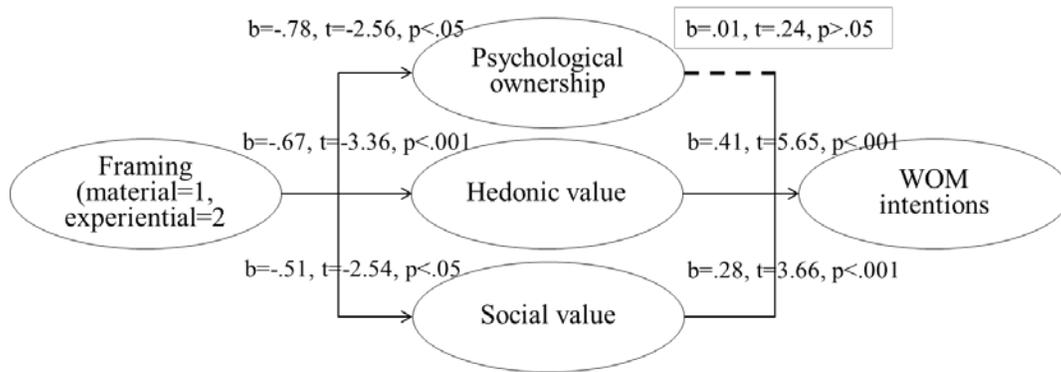
Dependent variable	Mediator	Hypothesis	Estimate	Boot SE	95% BC CI
Purchase-related happiness WOM intentions	Psychological ownership	H3a	-.11	.06	-.25, -.03
	Hedonic value	H4a	-.29	.10	-.51, -.11
	Social value	H5a	-.04	.04	-.16, .01
	Psychological ownership	H3b	-.01	.04	-.10, .06
	Hedonic value	H4b	-.28	.09	-.48, -.11
	Social value	H5b	-.14	.08	-.35, -.03

Note. Indirect effect = unstandardized coefficient; bootstrap confidence interval (CI) and standard error (SE) were bias corrected with 5000 samples



Direct effect: $b = -.03, t = -.23, p > .05$, Indirect effects: psychological ownership: $b = -.11 (-.25, -.03)$, hedonic value: $b = -.29 (-.51, -.11)$, social value: $b = -.04 (-.16, .01)$

Figure 5. Direct and indirect effects on purchase-related happiness (the main study)



Direct effect: $b=-.04, t=-.16, p>.05$, Indirect effects: psychological ownership: $b=-.01 (-.10, .06)$, hedonic value: $b=-.28 (-.48, -.11)$, social value: $b=-.14 (-.35, -.03)$

Figure 6. Direct and indirect effects on WOM intentions (the main study)

Lastly, to test the moderating role of consumer materialism (H6), moderation analysis using Hayes' (2012) PROCESS macro (Model 1) for SPSS, which includes 95% bias-corrected and bootstrapped confidence intervals using 5,000 bootstrap samples, was conducted. Spotlight analysis is a statistical technique from regression analysis to analyze the effect of one variable at a particular level of another variable (Krishna, 2016). For this, a dummy variable was created using one standard deviation above and below the materialism mean (low materialists = 1, high materialists = 2). The result indicated that there was no significant interaction effect of framing and consumer materialism on purchase-related happiness ($F(1,137) = .63, p > .05, R_2 = .0038$) and WOM intentions ($F(1,137) = .59, p > .05, R_2 = .0039$). Therefore, H6 was not supported.

Discussion

The main study replicated the pilot study, using a different sample frame and experimental manipulation method to validate the results of the pilot study and address the theoretical questions it raised. Unlike the pilot study—which gathered data from users

of access-based fashion services and asked them to recall their experiences with rented fashion products—the main study used the scenario method and participants were not limited to actual consumers. The goal of the main study was to test the framing effect for potential consumers.

The main study demonstrated the superiority of material framing over experiential framing in access-based fashion consumption. The material features of rented fashion products increased consumer purchase-related happiness, WOM intentions, psychological ownership, hedonic value, and social value. Mediation analyses underscored the fact that the influence of framing on purchase-related happiness was positively mediated by psychological ownership and hedonic value. The influence of framing on WOM intentions was positively mediated by hedonic value and social value.

Surprisingly, social value was not a significant mediator of the relationship between framing and purchase-related happiness. Psychological ownership also did not mediate the relationship between framing and WOM intentions. Social value is related to extrinsic benefits and serves as a means to a specific end (Bell et al., 1991). Although material features such as high quality and extraordinary design are likely to be associated with social value, it may be necessary to connect specific goals like signaling a social image or public self to these material features to increase consumer happiness. However, the lack of association between social value and purchase-related happiness may be due to the relatively small sample size of the main study, especially since the upper bound of the confidence interval for the estimate of social value was close to zero. Indeed, a small sample size could increase the probability of a *type II error* due to low statistical power (Christley, 2010).

Psychological ownership was found to exhibit an insignificant effect on the relationship between framing and WOM intentions, which might be due to the stigma attached to a perceived association with materialistic behavior. That is, the material features of rented fashion products provide consumers with a greater sense of ownership, although they do not guarantee that consumers will recommend the rented products due to concerns about being negatively evaluated by others as being materialistic (Van Boven et al., 2010).

Consumer materialism was not a significant moderator in predicting the effects of material framing on favorable consumer responses. Carter and Gilovich (2012) pointed out that the difference between high and low materialists is the fact that low materialists perceive experiences to be physically close to the self, while high materialists perceive material possessions to be physically close to the self. Although previous research presented the differences between high and low materialists in terms of their perception of happiness from experiential purchases (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002; Walker et al., 2016), these differences do not necessarily exist in the context of fashion rental. Even less materialistic people felt happier and had higher WOM intentions when they focused on the material features of rented fashion products rather than the experiential features.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Summary of findings

This research grew out of the question of how access-based consumption of fashion products should be positioned in consumers' minds to increase favorable responses. One theory applicable to access-based consumption is the experience recommendation theory (Guevarra & Howell, 2015; Howell & Hill, 2009; Kumar & Gilovich, 2016; Nicolao et al., 2009). This theory indicates that experiential purchases are more effective than material purchases in generating favorable consumer responses. Over the last decade, this theory has guided researchers interested in the relationship between purchase types (i.e., material vs. experiential) and consumer happiness. Previous studies focusing on the different effects of these two purchase types have confirmed consistent results. For example, individuals gain more happiness from life experiences or experiential purchases than from material possessions.

However, the distinction between material and experiential purchases has not been always clear. Recent research on consumer happiness has focused not on a certain type of purchase but on the purchase attributes that can shape a person's consumption approach and subsequently increase that individual's happiness. While acknowledging the superiority of experience over material possessions, previous researchers have attempted to test whether the same purchase can be perceived as either material or experiential. By using stimuli such as barbeque grills or 3D TVs, previous research has consistently reported that experiential purchases have more positive effects than material purchases, as the experience recommendation theory suggests.

I believe that ambiguity exists in access-based consumption. It may be true that with respect to access-based fashion consumption, positive consumer responses may vary depending on the consumer's approach on whether the rented fashion products represent material or experiential consumption. Two studies, including a pilot study, were conducted to assess 1) whether the experience recommendation theory holds true in the context of access-based consumption (the pilot study), 2) what mechanisms are behind this effect (the main study: psychological ownership, hedonic value, and social value), and 3) whether consumer materialism moderates the relationship between framing and consumer responses. Table 8 shows the results of hypothesis testing.

Table 8. *Summary of the current project*

Purpose	Related hypotheses	Results
The pilot study: To assess the main effect of the experience recommendation theory	H1. Relative to material framing, experiential framing with respect to access-based fashion product consumption positively affects a) purchase-related happiness and b) WOM intentions.	Not supported
	H2. Relative to material framing, experiential framing with respect to access-based fashion product consumption positively affects the perceived closeness of those products to the self.	Not supported
The main study: To test the mechanisms (i.e., psychological ownership, hedonic value, social value) and a boundary condition of consumer materialism	H3. Psychological ownership positively mediates the effect of materially framed accessed-based fashion product consumption on a) purchase-related happiness and b) WOM intentions.	H3a: supported H3b: not supported
	H4. Hedonic value positively mediates the effect of materially framing rented fashion products on a) purchase-related happiness and b) WOM intentions.	Supported

H5. Social value positively mediates the effect of materially framing rented fashion products on a) purchase-related happiness and b) WOM intentions.	H5a: not supported H5b: supported
H6. For highly materialistic consumers, the effect of material framing with respect to accessed-based fashion product consumption is stronger than for those less materialistic consumers on a) purchase-related happiness and b) WOM intentions.	Not supported

First, the pilot study examined whether experiential framing increased favorable consumer responses compared to material framing in the context of access-based fashion consumption. However, material framing, which highlighted the material features of rented fashion products, was more effective in generating positive consumer responses than experiential framing, which emphasized the experiential features of the product. In addition, when the material features were highlighted, rented fashion products were perceived as closer to the self and more connected to the self than when the experiential features were stressed. The results ran contrary to the experience recommendation theory and my hypotheses.

Therefore, the main study was designed to attempt to explain these unexpected results by suggesting potential mediators (i.e., psychological ownership, hedonic value, and social value) and a moderator (i.e., consumer materialism). It was assumed that the unforeseen results may have been related to the distinctive nature of access-based consumption and distinctive nature of fashion products. Both are important characteristics of access-based fashion consumption and may explain the divergent results.

In addition to replicating the pilot study, the main study validated and further examined the potential mediating roles of psychological ownership, hedonic value, and social value, as well as the moderating role of consumer materialism. The main study demonstrated that material (rather than experiential) framing was associated with greater happiness and higher WOM intentions. Feelings of ownership and pleasure derived from framing increased purchase-related happiness (O’Cass, 2004). In a similar manner, social and hedonic benefits derived from framing produced higher WOM intentions. Van Boven (2005) indicated that jewelry and clothing tend to be terminal possessions, despite their potential to help their owners achieve status recognition (Fournier & Richins, 1991) while emphasizing the importance of the material features of the products. Therefore, it is important to consider terminal values based on material features such as high quality and extraordinary design in order to ensure the hedonic consequences derived from a material focus on prestige products (O’Cass, 2001).

The results did not support the hypotheses that 1) social value mediates the relationship between framing and happiness, 2) psychological ownership mediates the relationship between framing and WOM intentions, and 3) consumer materialism moderates the relationship between framing and consumer responses. Although the material features of the rented fashion products (e.g., extraordinary design, high quality) were strongly associated with psychological ownership and social value, they did not guarantee favorable consumer responses. Given that social value is related to extrinsic benefits and serves as a means to a specific end (Bell et al., 1991), it may be necessary to consider specific goals and occasions (e.g., showing a social image or public self while wearing the rented fashion products) for enhancing the role of social value. In addition,

following the findings of Van Boven et al. (2010), telling about material possessions can be less appealing due to the unfavorable impression of materialistic people. That is people who tend to display their material possessions are often perceived as materialists and suffer social costs; materialists are perceived as selfish with money and possessions or unsatisfying and shallow (Fournier & Richins, 1991; Ger & Belk, 1999). Lastly, consumer materialism likewise did not moderate the effect of material framing, indicating that low materialists also felt happier and exhibited higher WOM intentions when they focused on the material features of the rented fashion products. Although previous research presented the differences between high and low materialists in terms of their perception of happiness from experiential purchases (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002; Walker et al., 2016), these differences do not necessarily exist in the context of fashion rental.

Contributions of research

This research has several significant theoretical and practical implications. Recently, access-based consumption has been a huge trend that provides consumers with options without the burden of ownership. This new, alternative service area has attracted growing attention from academia and industry. However, studies on access-based consumption have been rather exploratory or descriptive, and have not provided sufficiently empirical insights. Focusing on understanding dynamic psychological factors and value, this research suggests a causal mode explaining consumers' positive responses regarding access-based fashion consumption and provides practical implications to design a proper marketing approach to this new, alternative means of consumption.

First, this research tested the applicability of the experience recommendation theory in the context of access-based consumption. The theory has been found useful in the past decade in investigating types of purchases and their impacts on consumer happiness. However, it has not yet been applied to the non-ownership-based or fashion consumption context. This research focused on the ambiguous nature of access-based fashion consumption and tested whether a certain frame is superior over another. In doing so, this research contributes to advancing the theory itself and offers additional insights not considered by the original theory.

Second, this research suggested underlying mechanisms explaining the effect of material and experiential framing on consumer responses based on the psychological ownership and product symbolism literature. Recently, consumer researchers have investigated feelings of ownership in a wide context beyond the traditional boundary of ownership, such as virtual possessions or sharing, and found that when one's possessions are closely connected to oneself, the person experiences psychological ownership. The feeling of "mine" is intensified by the relationship between access-based fashion products and the self; this feeling also explains the associations and meanings of rented products for consumers. In addition, this research suggests perceived value derived from accessing products based on their symbolism. This research extends the theory of the extended self (Belk, 1988), which has been applied to understanding the relationship between tangible possessions and the self (Kunchambo, Lee, & Brace-Govan, 2017). Thus, this study suggests a new research area and provides an in-depth insight into the psychological processes and value in terms of access-based consumption.

Third, this research investigated the boundary condition of these mechanisms by testing the moderating role of consumer materialism. This research contributes to the materialism literature by testing consumer materialism in the context of access-based consumption. Contrary to my expectations, the effects of consumer approaches to access-based fashion consumption were not moderated by materialism. Consumer materialism may be less likely to influence consumer responses in cases of temporary access than in cases of ownership.

Fourth, this research provided several implications for access-based fashion service providers regarding how to deal with the ambiguity of such a service to generate better consumer responses. This research did not focus on whether fashion rental is material or experiential consumption but focused on whether it can be perceived as material or experiential and produces different consumer responses. I believe that such an approach is more effective than merely arguing whether a purchase is material or experiential and provides better understanding than ignoring the ambiguous boundary between experiential and material consumption, which evokes different psychological processes and hedonic consequences.

Subsequently, this research gives insights to policymakers and consumer advocates to identify and strengthen consumer happiness. Subsequently, this research offers insights to allow policymakers and consumer advocates to identify and strengthen consumer happiness. Consumers can take advantage of the ambiguity of access-based fashion consumption to increase their happiness. For example, setting a consumer focus on material features would increase consumer happiness due to increased feelings of ownership. However, it is worth noting that the material consumption approach is

different from the materialistic approach. Although there is an overlapping area between the material and materialistic approaches, focusing on the material features is not just for materialistic purposes. The material approach is primarily for possessing a product; however, the materialistic approach mainly focuses on signaling some sort of wealth or status, or impressing others that are obviously materialistic. After all, consumer research is shifting its agenda to improve consumers' subjective well-being in terms of things we do, choices we make, and ways we think to increase happiness in the wide context of consumption (Mogilner & Norton, 2015).

Limitations and future research directions

Although this research provides meaningful theoretical and practical implications, it has limitations that future research may address. This research focuses on the ambiguous perceptual boundaries regarding access-based fashion consumption. However, the causal model suggested and tested in this research applies to a specific context. Thus, the findings may have limited generalizability to other types of access-based consumption and other targets or contexts in which these services are used. Future research can investigate different categories of the rented product or rental contexts, including product characteristics (e.g., hedonic vs. utilitarian), product forms (e.g., digital vs. physical), and rental period (e.g., short-term vs. long-term).

In addition, this research uses a convenience sampling method for data collection that surveys female millennials with an online survey platform. The pilot study collects data from consumers who have had experience with access-based fashion consumption, while the main study collects data from a wider range of general consumers who may or

may not have had this kind of experience. For the pilot study, among survey participants who claimed that they had experience with such a service, almost 30 percent of the participants failed to provide corresponding names of their service provider. In the main study, although almost every participant was familiar with such services, few participants had experience with them. Access-based fashion services are widely available in the U.S. for consumers who wish to rent clothing instead of buying it for various occasions, such as proms, parties or weddings. However, this service sector is nascent, and many people have never attempted to use such a service. Future researchers may consider collecting data directly from access-based service users based on their satisfaction derived from experience with a fashion rental service. The differences between heavy vs. light users or one-time renters vs. monthly subscribers are also worth investigating.

Next, my research used various experimental research designs that employ either a recall or a scenario method. Using multiple manipulation methods contributes to the robustness of research findings (Lim & Chung, 2014). However, regarding the main study, material features of access-based consumption might be easier to imagine than experiential features for the consumers, who have never had access-based consumption, which could influence the results. Future studies may need to consider different manipulation methods to test consumption perspectives.

Lastly, this research measured purchase-related happiness one time after each condition has been manipulated in the questionnaire. Previous research using longitudinal data has shown that experiential purchases lead to greater enduring happiness than do material purchases, a view congruent with the theory of hedonic adaptation (Nicolao et al., 2009). Future research may need to investigate different levels of hedonic adaptation

using longitudinal data. Such studies will provide a more accurate assessment of access-based consumption and the material vs. experiential qualities that determine greater enduring happiness.

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Appendix A. Measurement items

Purchase-related happiness (1="not at all" to 7="very much")

- PH1. When you think about the item, how happy does it make you?
- PH2. How much does the item contribute to your happiness?

WOM intentions (1="strongly disagree" to 7="strongly agree")

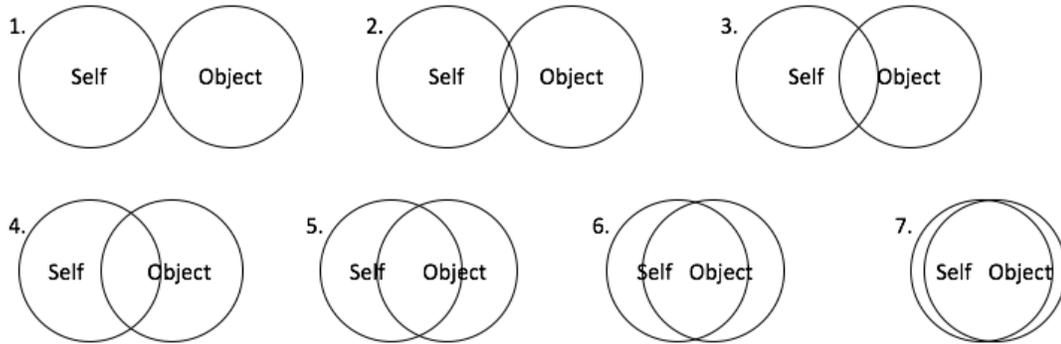
- W1. I would say positive things about the item to other people.
- W2. I would talk about the item to other people.
- W3. I would recommend the item to other people.
- W4. I would share my experience with the item with other people.

The closeness to the self (1="strongly disagree" to 7="strongly agree")

- C1. The item would reflect who I am as a person.
- C2. The item would be close to my sense of self.
- C3. The item would be closely associated with my identity.

The closeness to the self (single-item pictorial measure)

- Please choose the picture below that best describes your relationship with the item you imagined to rent. (self=you, object=the item)



Psychological ownership (1="strongly disagree" to 7="strongly agree")

- P1. I would feel like I own the item.
- P2. I would feel like the item is my item.
- P3. I would feel a very high degree of personal ownership for the item.
- P4. I would feel that the item is mine.

Hedonic value (1="strongly disagree" to 7="strongly agree")

- H1. The item would be pleasant.
- H2. The item would be fun.

Social value (1="strongly disagree" to 7="strongly agree")

- S1. The item would help me feel accepted in front of others.
- S2. The item would improve the way I am perceived by others.
- S3. The item would make a good impression on other people.
- S4. The item would gain me social approval.
- S5. The item would send a positive social signal.
- S6. The item would allow me to fit in with my friends.

Consumer materialism (1="strongly disagree" to 7="strongly agree")

- M1. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.
- M2. The things that I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.
- M3. Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.
- M4. I like a lot of luxury in my life.
- M5. My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.
- M6. I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.

Appendix B. Exploratory factor analyses

	Pilot Study				Main Study			
	M	SD	Factor loadings	α	M	SD	Factor loadings	α
PH1	5.37	1.456	.926	.827	5.59	1.342	.921	.821
PH2	4.45	1.787	.926		4.99	1.417	.921	
W1	5.93	1.219	.888	.912	5.45	1.322	.807	.862
W2	5.74	1.308	.938		5.29	1.412	.823	
W3	5.78	1.359	.934		5.34	1.325	.890	
W4	5.88	1.166	.793		5.34	1.453	.846	
C1	4.75	1.534	.917	.936	-	-	-	-
C2	4.69	1.559	.944		-	-	-	-
C3	4.64	1.475	.967		-	-	-	-
P1	-	-	-	-	4.53	1.959	.943	.949
P2	-	-	-	-	4.58	1.961	.930	
P3	-	-	-	-	4.33	1.919	.929	
P4	-	-	-	-	4.88	2.052	.925	
H1	-	-	-	-	5.64	1.244	.927	.832
H2	-	-	-	-	5.45	1.406	.927	
S1	-	-	-	-	4.78	1.526	.840	.904
S2	-	-	-	-	4.83	1.394	.834	
S3	-	-	-	-	5.30	1.297	.793	
S4	-	-	-	-	4.71	1.514	.861	

S5	-	-	-	-	4.95	1.475	.845	
S6	-	-	-	-	4.70	1.576	.770	
M1	-	-	-	-	4.28	1.649	.681	.812
M2	-	-	-	-	4.28	1.531	.746	
M3	-	-	-	-	4.84	1.447	.791	
M4	-	-	-	-	4.22	1.608	.715	
M5	-	-	-	-	4.43	1.578	.728	
M6	-	-	-	-	4.79	1.673	.696	
