



Antecedents and outcomes of interpersonal influences and the role of acculturation: The case of young British-Muslims [☆]



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ABSTRACT

Prior research considers antecedents and outcomes of interpersonal influence without consideration of acculturation. Data collected from 222 young British-Muslims using focus groups, in-depth interviews and questionnaires identifies significant antecedents and outcomes concluding that self-congruity, clothing conformity, need for uniqueness and modesty are major contributors to susceptibility to interpersonal influence. Acculturation moderates the effects of self congruity and susceptibility to interpersonal influence. The paper discusses implications for clothing retailers suggesting that self-congruity, conformity and modesty require closer attention to develop effective promotion and product strategies. The study is first of its kind within the UK ethnic minorities market.

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1. Introduction

The research investigates antecedents and outcomes of interpersonal influence and moderating role of acculturation of young British-Muslims (aged 18 to 30) when shopping for clothing. Interpersonal influence impacts development of attitudes, norms, values, aspirations and purchase behavior (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989). Interpersonal influence is effective in complex purchase decisions, with visible brands and in situations where group influence is strong (Lascu, Bearden, & Rose, 1995; Netemeyer, Bearden, & Teel, 1992).

Prior research considers consumers' susceptibility to interpersonal influence (CSII) as a general trait that exists in varying degrees in individuals (Bearden et al., 1989) and provides useful insights. Many factors affect CSII including a tendency to conform and cultural orientation (Clark & Goldsmith, 2005; Mourali, Laroche, & Pons, 2005). However, a number of shortcomings can be identified.

First, prior research ignores the importance of a specific sub-cultural context in which CSII may become salient. Ethnic minority subcultures exist in a number of Western countries (Jamal, 2003). British-Muslims represent 2.9% of the total UK population (Lewis, 2007). Between 2001 and 2008, their numbers grew by 400,000 making it the fastest growing faith community (Travis, 2008). Mosques, community networks and

Islamic organizations promoting Islamic way of life exist across major cities. Small to medium size enterprises market ethnic products (including clothing) taking an active interest in identity creation and reinforcement (Jamal, 2005).

The first generation shows commitment to a collective self and a need to conform to own cultural traditions (Jamal, 1998, 2003). The second and third generations (born and raised in the UK) feel the full force of clash of cultures both at home and outside (Ansari, 2002). A mixed pattern of consumer acculturation exists with some assimilating, others integrating and a minority either separating or marginalizing themselves (e.g., Penalzoza, 1994).

Islam in the UK, embedded in and informed by global Islamic movements and geo-political issues (Ansari, 2002; Hussain, 2007), impacts consumption patterns of young British-Muslims, henceforth, YBM. YBM experience a heightened sense of religious, cultural and ethnic identities (e.g., Jacobson, 1997) given issues relevant to the 'stigma' attached to being a Muslim in the Western world (Sandikci & Ger, 2010).

Ahmed (2009) provides support by arguing that YBM feel a strong sense of patriotism but feel let down by negative media portrayals that do not do justice to their aspirations. They feel pressured from a society that increasingly stereotypes them (Ahmed, 2009) as simply fundamentalists. The resultant stigma propels many to think about themselves in reaction to being rejected and constructed as the "Other" (e.g., Ansari, 2002, p.13). They search for comforting stability and boundaries and a freedom from anxieties (e.g., Sandikci & Ger, 2010). Culture swapping, negotiation of multiple identities and what Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard (2005) describe as 'oscillating pendulum' become a norm (e.g., Jamal, 1998). However, no research investigates CSII in the context of a subculture like YBM.

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Second, few examine the moderating role of acculturation. YBM face three sets of agents of acculturation: the first aligned with their respective country of origin, the second with the mainstream British culture (e.g., Penaloza, 1994) and the third aligned with their entrenched British-Muslim consumer subculture in the UK (e.g., Wamwara-Mbugua, Cornwell, & Boller, 2008). YBM negotiate identities through a cultural dialog involving social networks established back home and in the UK. However, little is known about the role of acculturation in shaping YBM's tendency to be influenced by others.

Third, limited research explores CSII when shopping for clothing, a socially-conspicuous product category. YBM's clothing is a subject of much debate in recent years (Ruby, 2006). State policies of some European countries (e.g., recent French ban on wearing veil in public) may increase the stigmatization associated with publicly wearing of Islamic dress (Charlton, 2012). State policies, laws and attitudes of local society towards immigrants impact acculturation experiences (Bourhis, Moise, Perraeault, & Senecal, 1997). Despite its relevance and significance, interest on CSII when shopping for clothing still remains scant among consumer researchers.

Fourth, subcultures like British-Muslims (Jamal, 2003) tend to purchase goods that symbolize status. However, no prior research investigates the role of CSII in status consumption among YBM.

The paper fills these gaps offering several points of contribution to research on YBM. The next section develops a conceptual framework and reviews relevant literature identifying determinants, outcomes and moderators of CSII when shopping for clothing. The model yields a number of research hypotheses. The Method section describes the data collection procedure along with measures adopted followed by a presentation of results. The final section discusses findings and assesses implications for scholars and brand managers.

2. Literature review

2.1. Social influence and consumer behavior

Prior research investigates impact of others on a range of consumer behavior (e.g., Bearden & Etzel, 1982) and finds them influencing decisions, attitudes and behaviors. Consumer decision making models incorporating subjective norms reflect and support this conclusion. CSII is multidimensional and consists of informational, utilitarian and value expressive dimensions (Bearden et al., 1989). The informational dimension reflects a person's tendency to accept information from others as evidence about reality. One's attempt to comply with the expectations of others to achieve rewards or avoid punishments

(Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975) reflects the utilitarian dimension. The value expressive dimension reflects a person's desires to enhance or support their self concept/image in the eyes of others (Bearden & Etzel, 1982).

2.2. Antecedents and outcomes of CSII in clothing context

2.2.1. Conceptual framework

Fig. 1 presents the conceptual framework suggesting that self-congruity, uniqueness, conformity and modesty relate to CSII which in turn relate to status consumption. Fig. 1 also presents the moderating role of acculturation.

2.2.2. Self congruity

Brand/retail stores have personal image attributes which reflect the stereotype of generalized users (Sirgy et al., 1997). Psychological comparison between self-images and those of the stereotypical users of a brand/retail store generates a subjective experience referred to as self-congruity. Self-congruity influences behavior through certain motives such as needs for self consistency and self-esteem (Sirgy, Grewal, & Mangleburg, 2000). A person may use clothing for overcoming self-related emotions, creating a feeling of togetherness (or difference from others in a group) and for controlling environment (Moody, Kinderman, & Sinha, 2010). YBM regularly face identity questions triggering a need for achieving a balance between blending in and being different from others. The emotional significance and value attached with in-group and out-group comparisons become part of the self-identification process (e.g., Tajfel, 1981).

Qualitative analysis shows participants are conscious of their own images and those of others in a shopping context. One female participant (single, aged 20) comments: "I tend to shop in the town in shops like Peacock, Primark, H&M and Zara. I tend to stick to more or less same shops as I know who is shopping what there". YBM actively compare and contrast their self images with those of others implying susceptibility to be influenced by others. Hence, the first hypothesis:

H1. Self-congruity relates positively to CSII.

2.2.3. Clothing conformity

Clothing conformity refers to an acceptance of or adherence to a clothing norm (Horn & Gurel, 1981). Clothing provides a mechanism for connecting with reference groups and plays a symbolic role when meeting others and seeking relationships (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004).

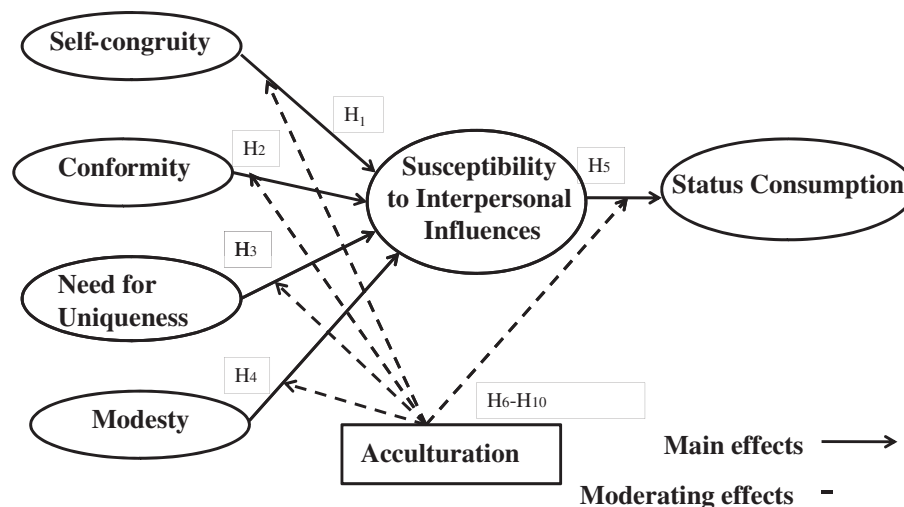


Fig. 1. A conceptual framework of susceptibility to interpersonal influences.

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