



# Teen attitudes toward luxury fashion brands from a social identity perspective: A cross-cultural study of French and U.S. teenagers



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## ABSTRACT

The global teen market has significant spending power and is an important factor in the world economy. However, little is known about the social motivations underlying attitudes toward luxury fashion brands during adolescence. This research investigates the social mechanisms underlying teenage attitudes toward luxury fashion brands in a cross-cultural context. In a study of 570 French and American adolescents, this research shows that both need for uniqueness and susceptibility to influence relate positively to attitudes toward luxury brands, and that fashion innovativeness mediates these relations. This research also shows that culture moderates these relations. Specifically, the mediated relations between need for uniqueness and luxury brand attitudes are stronger for American adolescents than for French adolescents. In contrast, the mediated relations between susceptibility to influence and luxury brand attitudes are stronger for French adolescents than for American adolescents. The results have implications for strategies luxury retailers develop for appealing to adolescents in different cultures.

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## 1. Introduction

Teens are a very important market, both because of their current consumer spending power and their future spending as adults. U.S. teenagers alone earn over \$80 billion in income, spent over \$220 billion in 2012, and spend an average of \$100 per week on clothing, their biggest single expenditure (Parker, Hermans, & Schaefer, 2008). European teens generally spend less (e.g., \$60 per week on clothing in France), but still represent a sizable market (Moses, 2000). These findings may explain why companies design luxury fashion specifically for teens (e.g., Louboutin high tops for \$700; Burberry bags for \$300–400). Despite the apparent significance of this market, attitudes toward luxury fashion brands during adolescence remains under-represented in cross-cultural consumer research.

Given the emergence of a global teen market, it is important to understand adolescent attitudes toward luxury fashion brands from a cross-cultural perspective. Global teens are thought to be similar in terms of their consumption habits, in particular with respect to fashion (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). This presumed uniformity of teens, however, may be inaccurate. Recent research suggests that adolescent

consumers adapt global consumption practices and meanings to fit local contexts (Gentina, Butori, Rose, & Bakir, 2014). Although the vast majority of research on attitudes toward luxury brands among young people has focused on the U.S. (Beaudoin, Lachance, & Robitaille, 2003), research in other cultures is emerging, including Brazil (Gil, Kwon, Good, & Johnson, 2012), Australia (Phau & Leng, 2008), and China (Zhan & He, 2012). Research has described the individual and social mechanisms underlying attitudes toward luxury brands (Zhan & He, 2012) but has not explored how these mechanisms combine in a cross-cultural context. Thus, much remains unknown about cultural differences in teenage attitudes toward luxury fashion brands and the motivations that underlie these differences. Insights into the motives that affect teens' attitudes toward luxury fashion brands can provide retailers with information they can use to reach this attractive segment more effectively.

The research presented here evaluates two social identity mechanisms underlying teenage attitudes toward luxury fashion brands in a cross-cultural context: the individual mechanism (through the need for uniqueness) and the social mechanism (through susceptibility to peer influence). More specifically, it examines the identity processes that determine teenage attitudes toward luxury fashion brands in two cultures with distinctive historical, cultural, and social settings: the U.S. and France. To specify and clarify the social identity motives underlying attitudes toward luxury brands, we focus on clothing, an area particularly relevant to teens. Because adolescence is a crucial period in the

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identity development process, clothing symbolizes teens' connections with their ideal peer groups, as well as the singularity and subjectivity of individual tastes (Muzinich, Pecotich, & Putrevu, 2003).

This research shows that cultural differences play a key role in shaping the way teenagers develop attitudes toward luxury brands. In particular, the research shows that both need for uniqueness and susceptibility to influence positively relate to attitudes toward luxury brands, and that fashion innovativeness mediates these relations. However, the research also shows that the nature of these relations differs by culture, such that the mediated relations between need for uniqueness and luxury brand attitudes are stronger for American than for French adolescents. In contrast, the mediated relations between susceptibility to influence are stronger for French than for American adolescents. These findings extend existing research on attitudes toward luxury brands during adolescence to include cultural differences, and provide guidelines for marketing strategies to appeal to teens.

## 2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

### 2.1. The development of teens' social and personal identities

Forming a strong, coherent sense of identity is the primary task associated with transitioning from adolescence to adulthood (Erikson, 1968). This search for identity evolves as teens break away from parental influence. Personal identity takes the form of independent thinking and actions that develop during adolescence. Personal identity is distinct from social identity, but also related individuation balances social affiliation as teens become adults, in part by becoming independent thinkers, and in part by meshing with peer groups (Brewer, 1991). To assess how social identity plays a role in the development of fashion innovativeness and in the adoption of attitudes toward luxury brands, we focus on teens, who due to the many changes in their lives, have emerging selves that are heavily influenced by peers. We also focus on luxury fashion brands because it is intimately tied to an individual's social and personal identity (Shrum et al., 2013; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004; Wilcox, Kim, & Sen, 2009).

One key feature of our model is that because some cultures focus more on interdependence and cooperation (e.g., France), whereas others focus more on independence and competition (e.g., the U.S.), susceptibility to peer influence should be greater in some cultures (the former), whereas need for uniqueness should be greater in others (the latter; Gentina et al., 2014). We expect susceptibility to peer influence to contribute more to the development of fashion innovativeness and positive attitudes toward luxury fashion brands in France, but need for uniqueness to contribute more to the development of fashion innovativeness and positive attitudes toward luxury fashion brands in the U.S.

### 2.2. Need for uniqueness, susceptibility to influence, and attitudes toward luxury fashion brands

We use consumer need for uniqueness to operationalize the need for individuation, which refers to the tendency to use consumption to convey an individual identity that distinguishes oneself from others (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001). People high in need for uniqueness express their uniqueness publicly with observable behaviors that establish their differences (Workman & Kidd, 2000). Luxury goods accomplish this signaling objective because a luxury brand's scarcity enables people to express their uniqueness (Bian & Forsythe, 2012). The need to construct personal identity, separate from parents, is particularly important among teens, who use luxury fashion brands to establish a unique personal identity (Gil et al., 2012). Here, we are interested in the extent to which teen fashion innovativeness mediates the relation between need for uniqueness and attitudes toward luxury fashion brands.

Consumer behavior literature proposes several different conceptualizations of consumer innovativeness. Im, Bayus and Mason (2003, p. 62) define consumer innovativeness as "the predisposition to buy new and

different products and brands rather than remain with previous choices and consumption patterns." Rogers (1995, p. 22) defines innovativeness as "the degree to which an individual is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than other members of his/her social system." According to Goldsmith and Hofacker (1991), consumer innovativeness does not reflect only buying behavior, but also the tendency to learn about and adopt innovations within specific domains of interest (Midgley & Dowling, 1978). We refer to Goldsmith and Hofacker's (1991) definition of innovativeness as domain-specific, which means that consumers tend to be innovators for a specific product or product category.

Fashion is particularly important in the diffusion of innovation, and the frequent introduction of new styles makes the fashion market a highly desirable area for diffusion studies focusing on innovativeness (Goldsmith, D'Hauteville, & Flynn, 1998; Jordaán & Simpson, 2006). Given the evidence that innovativeness is domain-specific, we focus on fashion as the domain of interest for this study. Because adolescence is a time when individuals are particularly concerned with their appearance (they need to incorporate the changes that their bodies undergo into their self-views; Piacentini, 2010), this research examines innovativeness in the context of fashion.

Research indicates that innovators have certain important characteristics. For example, innovators score higher on need for uniqueness than do imitators (Workman & Kidd, 2000). People with high need for uniqueness are predisposed to initiate new behaviors that are different from the norms of the group, and are more likely to adopt new products. Thus, we expect the willingness to publicly individuate oneself to be a critical trait of innovativeness during adolescence. By innovating, teens with high need for uniqueness signal a sense of their personal identity and are more likely to be admired. Innovative teens may place more importance on luxury brands which are perceived as rarer than non-luxury brands (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Thus, they should be more likely to develop positive attitudes toward luxury fashion brands.

Thus, the study here predicts and tests H1.

**H1.** Fashion innovativeness mediates the relation between need for uniqueness and attitudes toward luxury fashion brands.

Although teens seek to individuate, they are also motivated to comply with the expectations of their friends by behaving in ways that allow them to balance their needs for individuation and their needs for social affiliation (Gentina, Butori, & Heath, 2013). Susceptibility to influence has two dimensions: susceptibility to informative influence and susceptibility to normative influence. Susceptibility to informative influence is the tendency to observe peers and seek information from them (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989). In order to be credible, innovators must gain a certain level of expertise in their field of influence. Thus, they need to actively search for information (Clark & Goldsmith, 2006). Fashion innovators are high on information-seeking of developments in fashion apparel (Muzinich et al., 2003). Information can be gathered from different sources, but during adolescence, peers constitute an important influence, increasing with age as parental influence fades (Gentina et al., 2013). Because friends provide moral support for consumption decisions, a primary motivation of consumption with friends is the need for assistance. Friends also help reduce perceptions of risk and uncertainty by providing information that helps teens make wiser purchase decisions. Thus, we predict that teen fashion innovators are more likely to seek information from their friends, which in turn encourages them to develop positive attitudes toward luxury fashion brands in order to express their levels of expertise and credibility.

Thus, the study here predicts and tests H2a.

**H2a.** Fashion innovativeness mediates the relation between susceptibility to informative influence and attitudes toward luxury fashion brands.

Another type of influence is normative influence, which is the desire to conform to the expectations of others (Bearden et al., 1989). This tendency is contrary to the nature of consumer innovativeness, which is

the extent to which decision making is independent (Midgley & Dowling, 1978), and studies have found a negative relation between susceptibility to normative influence and consumer innovativeness (Clark & Goldsmith, 2006). However, these studies focus on adults, not teens. Because teens depend on peers, we expect a positive relation between susceptibility to normative influence and fashion innovativeness. Endorsing norms and values of friends helps teens develop strong social identities. Thus, high susceptibility to normative influence contributes to the development of desirable identities, enabling teens to be confident about publicly expressing their fashion innovativeness. Consistent with this reasoning, recent research shows positive relations between the need for social belonging, susceptibility to normative influence, and opinion leadership during adolescence (Gentina et al., 2013; Xie & Singh, 2007). In other words, it is difficult for teenagers to be opinion leaders if their opinions derive from the opinions of others, and if they do not have a central strategic position within the peer group. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect a positive relationship between the susceptibility to normative influence and fashion innovativeness during adolescence. Consequently, innovator teens may place more importance on brands that signal high status to their peer group and develop positive attitudes toward luxury fashion brands to achieve recognition from others.

Thus, the study here predicts and tests H2b.

**H2b.** Fashion innovativeness mediates the relation between susceptibility to normative influence and attitudes toward luxury fashion brands.

### 2.3. Cross-cultural differences underlying attitudes toward luxury fashion brands

Although identity formation is a universal psychological need that characterizes adolescence, the way identities are shaped varies across cultures (Kim, Yang, & Lee, 2009). Socialization is an inherently cultural process. Parental socialization practices contribute decisively to the formation of teens' personal and social identities. Cultures, as well as parents, differ dramatically in whether they emphasize group identification versus individual assertiveness (Rose, 1999). For example, American parents emphasize individual initiative and autonomy, which may strengthen teens' need for uniqueness. In contrast, French parents are protective and seek to maintain a dependent adult-child relationship. Americans are more likely to be motivated by their own preferences, needs, and rights, give priority to their personal goals, and emphasize their uniqueness, whereas the French promote interdependent selves and encourage close relationships (Gentina et al., 2014).

Because of these differences, France and the U.S. provide a useful context for exploring cultural differences in social mechanisms underlying attitudes toward luxury fashion brands. Consumer innovativeness involves initiating new behaviors, independently of others (Goldsmith & Hofacker, 1991). Consumer innovativeness is higher in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures (Midgley & Dowling, 1978; Steenkamp, Ter Hofstede, & Wedel, 1999). People from individualistic cultures have more positive attitudes toward brands that set them apart as individuals, whereas people from collectivistic cultures have more positive attitudes toward brands that demonstrate their connection to others (Aaker & Schmitt, 2001).

Thus, the study includes and tests H3.

**H3.** Culture moderates the strength of the indirect relation by which need for uniqueness impacts attitudes toward luxury fashion brands through fashion innovativeness, such that the mediated relation is stronger for U.S. teens than for French teens.

The manner in which consumers consider others' view of themselves is influenced by consumers' cultural characteristics. For example, people from more collectivistic cultures are more likely to be susceptible to normative influence than those from individualistic cultures (Lee & Kacen, 2008), and thus use luxury brands in order to be more socially

acceptable to others (Yim, Sauer, Williams, Lee, & Macrury, 2014). Because France is a more interdependent culture, French teens should see themselves as integral parts of collectives, such as family and friends (Hofstede, 2001). French teens are more likely to feel pressure to conform and to seek information from their friends than are their U.S. counterparts (Gentina et al., 2014).

Thus, the study predicts and tests H4a and H4b.

**H4a.** Culture moderates the strength of the indirect relation by which susceptibility to informative influence impacts attitudes toward luxury fashion brands through fashion innovativeness, such that the mediated relation is stronger for French teens than for U.S. teens.

**H4b.** Culture moderates the strength of the indirect relation by which susceptibility to normative influence impacts attitudes toward luxury fashion brands through fashion innovativeness, such that the mediated relation is stronger for French teens than for U.S. teens.

## 3. Method

A total of 297 French and 273 U.S. teens participated in the study. The survey was administered in participants' native language during school hours by a research assistant working in cooperation with school authorities. Sampling equivalence was achieved by holding age and sex constant across samples. The mean age was 14.7 years for French and 14.5 for U.S. teens (range 14–17 years). The French and U.S. samples had 51.8% and 50.9% teenage girls, respectively. There were no significant differences in gender ( $\chi^2(1) = 0.03, p = 0.87$ ) or age ( $t = 1.87, p = 0.16$ ) across cultures, indicating sampling equivalence.

Sampling occurred in two phases. The first phase validated the measurement scales, and the second phase provided the sample for testing the proposed model. The first sample consisted of 160 teens (90 from France, 70 from the U.S.). The second sample consisted of 410 teens (207 from France, 203 from the U.S.).

Bearden et al.'s (1989) 12-item scale was used to measure susceptibility to interpersonal influence from friends. Need for uniqueness was measured using the avoidance of similarity dimension of the Tian et al.'s (2001) need for uniqueness scale. This scale dimension measures people's tendency to avoid buying and consuming commonly used brands in order to preserve their differentiation. Attitudes toward luxury brands were measured with Dubois and Laurent's (1994) scale. Finally, the domain-specific Goldsmith and Hofacker (1991) scale was used to measure fashion innovativeness. Researchers translated the original English survey questionnaires to French, using translation and back-translation procedures to ensure the idiomatic equivalence.

Structural equation modeling (AMOS) was used to test both the measurement and structural models. Conditional indirect effects (moderated mediation effects) were incorporated to explicate how culture moderates the strength of the indirect relation between the three predictor variables (need for uniqueness, susceptibility to normative influence, and susceptibility to informative influence) and attitudes toward luxury brands through fashion innovativeness. To test both the predicted mediation and the moderated mediation relations, we used Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes's (2007) procedure (model 8 [3]) and computed bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals. Using Hayes (2013) SPSS macro, we computed regression equations and estimated the mediator and moderator variable models, using culture (France vs. U.S.) as the moderator and fashion innovativeness as the mediator, enabling us to estimate conditional indirect effects by bootstrapping methods.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Construct validity of measurement

First, we conducted exploratory factor analyses on all indicators for the concepts for each group (French teens = 90, U.S. teens = 70).

Five factors emerged. The first factor explained 35.60% of the variance (which was significantly less than 50%). The remaining four factors accounted for 12.87%, 7.68%, 7.61%, and 7.28% of the variance, respectively, for both samples. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the scales ranged from 0.80 to 0.88.

Next, we ran a standard multi-group confirmatory factor analytic model (model 1) simultaneously across the two samples (French teens = 207; U.S. teens = 203). We used the following criteria to assess fit indicators (Vandenberg & Lance, 2000): 1) Chi-square and degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df < 5$ ); 2) Goodness of Fit Index ( $GFI > 0.90$ ); 3) Tucker-

**Table 1**  
Results of the four-factor CFA model (Study 2, n2-French = 207).

Construct	Item	Completely standardized factor loading	t	Reliability (Jöreskog $\rho$ )	Convergent validity (Rhô VC)	Discriminant validity									
						SNI	SII	NFU	Attitude toward luxury fashion brands	Fashion innovativeness					
Fashion innovativeness	y1	0.78	<sup>a</sup>	0.88	0.56										
	y2	0.77	13.45												
	y3	0.70	13.82												
	y4	0.83	13.82												
	y5	0.73	13.86												
	y6	0.69	14.69												
Attitude toward luxury fashion brands	y7	0.76	<sup>a</sup>	0.81	0.52				X	0.51 <sup>b</sup> (0.72) <sup>c</sup>					
	y8	0.81	11.35												
	y9	0.51	5.68												
	y10	0.79	11.16												
NFU	x1	0.79	<sup>a</sup>	0.84	0.64			X	0.01 (0.10)	0.03 (0.19)					
	x2	0.76	10.85												
	x3	0.85	11.47												
SII	x4	0.84	<sup>a</sup>	0.85	0.59		X	0.00 (-0.07)	0.14 (0.38)	0.20 (0.45)					
	x5	0.69	12.70												
	x6	0.66	10.27												
	x7	0.87	14.62												
SNI	x8	0.68	<sup>a</sup>	0.84	0.58	X	0.33 (0.58)	0.03 (-0.19)	0.29 (0.54)	0.16 (0.41)					
	x9	0.76	9.67												
	x10	0.75	9.48												
	x11	0.85	10.42												

Goodness-of-fit indices for confirmatory factor analysis

X <sup>2</sup> (ddl)	GFI	NFI	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR	$\chi^2/ddl$
627.97 (98)	0.90	0.90	0.04	0.94	0.93	0.05	1.74

Results of the four-factor CFA model (Study 2, n2-American = 203)

Construct	Item	Completely standardized factor loading	t	Reliability (Jöreskog $\rho$ )	Convergent validity (Rhô VC)	Discriminant validity									
						SNI	SII	NFU	Attitude toward luxury fashion brands	Fashion innovativeness					
Fashion innovativeness	y1	0.84	<sup>a</sup>	0.91	0.63										
	y2	0.87	15.98												
	y3	0.55	8.44												
	y4	0.88	16.27												
	y5	0.80	14.06												
	y6	0.81	14.31												
Attitude toward luxury fashion brands	y7	0.82	<sup>a</sup>	0.86	0.62				X	0.49 <sup>b</sup> (0.70) <sup>c</sup>					
	y8	0.86	13.85												
	y9	0.80	13.85												
	y10	0.67	12.62												
NFU	x1	0.64	<sup>a</sup>	0.87	0.70			X	0.32 (0.57)	0.37 (0.62)					
	x2	0.92	10.70												
	x3	0.92	10.71												
SII	x4	0.85	<sup>a</sup>	0.83	0.56		X	0.01 (0.14)	0.02 (0.16)	0.05 (0.23)					
	x5	0.81	13.58												
	x6	0.65	12.84												
	x7	0.69	11.62												
SNI	x8	0.53	<sup>a</sup>	0.82	0.57	X	0.21 (0.46)	0.03 (0.07)	0.00 (0.28)	0.02 (0.17)					
	x9	0.82	7.56												
	x10	0.78	7.42												
	x11	0.85	7.68												

Goodness-of-fit indices for confirmatory factor analysis

X <sup>2</sup> (ddl)	GFI	NFI	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR	$\chi^2/ddl$
627.97 (98)	0.90	0.90	0.04	0.94	0.93	0.05	1.74

Note. SNI = susceptibility to normative influence; SII = susceptibility to informative influence.

<sup>a</sup> Used to provide the scale for the related construct.

<sup>b</sup> Shared variance among trait factors.

<sup>c</sup> Correlations among trait factors.

Lewis Index ( $TLI > 0.90$ ); 4) comparative fit index ( $CFI > 0.90$ ); 5) root mean square error of approximation ( $RMSEA < 0.10$ ); 6) Standardized RMR ( $SRMR < 0.10$ ); and 7) Normed Fit Index ( $NFI > 0.90$ ). The five-factor model fit the data reasonably well ( $\chi^2 = 627.97$ ,  $df = 359$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.04$ ,  $GFI = 0.90$ ,  $CFI = 0.94$ ,  $TLI = 0.93$ ;  $NFI = 0.90$ ;  $SRMR = 0.05$ ; adjusted  $\chi^2 = 1.74$ ). The composite reliability (Jöreskog  $\rho_{vc}$ ) exceeded 0.81, and convergent validity ( $\rho_{vc}$  greater than 0.50) received support. To assess discriminant validity, we verified that each latent construct extracted more variance from its indicators ( $\rho_{vc}$ ) than it shared with all other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 1 presents the results of the confirmatory factor analyses of the four scales for both French and U.S. samples.

Finally, we, set all the factor loadings to be the same across cultures (model 2) in a constrained multi-group analysis ( $\chi^2 = 682.25$ ,  $df = 374$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.04$ ,  $GFI = 0.89$ ,  $CFI = 0.94$ ,  $TLI = 0.93$ ;  $NFI = 0.89$ ;  $SRMR = 0.06$ ; adjusted  $\chi^2 = 1.82$ ). We obtain non-significant differences between models 1 and 2 ( $\Delta CFI/\Delta RMSEA < 0.01$ ), indicating metric invariance for all scales across culture.

## 4.2. Hypotheses testing

### 4.2.1. General model (H1, H2a, H2b)

We tested the baseline model in Fig. 1 on the total sample of 410 French and U.S. teens using maximum likelihood estimation and the observed covariance matrix. This model assesses the expected structural relationships for the total sample, with no moderator. The conceptual model also fit the data reasonably well ( $\chi^2 = 409.25$ ,  $df = 181$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.06$ ;  $GFI = 0.91$ ;  $CFI = 0.95$ ;  $TLI = 0.95$ ;  $NFI = 0.92$ ;  $SRMR = 0.05$ ; adjusted  $\chi^2 = 2.26$ ).

As expected, susceptibility to normative influence related significantly and positively to attitudes toward luxury fashion brands ( $\gamma_1 = 0.26$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In addition, the direct relation between susceptibility to normative influence and attitudes toward luxury brands ( $\gamma_1 = 0.26$ ) was

stronger than the indirect path through fashion innovativeness ( $\beta_1 \times \beta_4 = 0.31 \times 0.47 = 0.15$ ). Thus, the indirect effect represents 36% ( $0.15/0.40$ ) of the total effect (Preacher et al., 2007).

To estimate the standard error of the fashion innovativeness mediator in the relation between SNI and attitudes toward luxury brands, we computed bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals (Preacher et al., 2007). The indirect effect was significant, and the 95% confidence interval did not include zero (lower bound = 0.05; upper bound = 0.23,  $p < 0.001$ ), which indicates that fashion innovativeness is a partial mediator of the relation between susceptibility to normative influence and attitudes toward luxury brands, supporting H2b.

Our data revealed insignificant direct relations between both need for uniqueness and susceptibility to informative influence, and attitudes toward luxury fashion brands ( $\gamma_2 = 0.12$ ,  $p = 0.06$  for need for uniqueness;  $\gamma_3 = 0.03$ ,  $p = 0.53$  for susceptibility to informative influence). Bootstrapping results indicated that the 95% confidence interval around the indirect effects did not contain 0 for the mediated relations between need for uniqueness, fashion innovativeness, and attitudes toward luxury brands ( $\beta_2 \times \beta_4 = 0.61 \times 0.47 = 0.29$  [0.21; 0.40]), and between susceptibility to informative influence, fashion innovativeness, and attitudes toward luxury brands ( $\beta_3 \times \beta_4 = 0.25 \times 0.47 = 0.12$  [0.05; 0.09]), supporting H1 and H2a. The results indicate full mediation.

### 4.2.2. Test of moderated mediation (H3, H4a, H4b)

We tested H3, H4a, and H4b using moderated mediation models in which culture moderated indirect effects (Preacher et al., 2007). A bootstrap analysis with 5000 resamples showed significant conditional indirect effects of need for uniqueness (95% bias corrected, confidence interval [0.41; 0.66]), susceptibility to normative influence (95% bias corrected, confidence interval [−0.23; −0.11]), and susceptibility to informative influence (95% bias corrected, confidence interval [0.12; 0.28]) on attitudes toward luxury brands. Table 2 shows the results of these analyses.

As predicted, need for uniqueness related positively to attitudes toward luxury fashion brands through fashion innovativeness, and this relation was stronger for U.S. teens (effect = 0.62; [0.50; 0.72]) than for French teens (effect = 0.09; [0.10; 0.18]). The interactions indicate that culture moderated both parts of the model: need for uniqueness X culture  $\rightarrow$  innovativeness ( $b = 0.97$ ,  $t = 11.59$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and need for uniqueness X culture  $\rightarrow$  attitudes toward luxury brands ( $b = -0.20$ ,  $t = -2.10$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), supporting H3. The indirect effects of susceptibility to normative influence and susceptibility to informative influence on attitudes toward luxury brands via fashion innovativeness differed depending on culture, supporting H4a and H4b. Both normative influence and informative influence related significantly and positively to attitudes toward luxury brands, through fashion innovativeness, and these effects were significant for French, but not for U.S. teens (U.S., normative influence [−0.05; 0.12]; informative influence [−0.01; 0.20]); French, normative influence [0.08; 0.22]; informative influence [0.03; 0.15]). The interactions indicate that culture moderated only the first part of the model: informative influence/normative influence X culture  $\rightarrow$  innovativeness ( $p < 0.05$ ), but not the second part: informative influence/normative influence X culture  $\rightarrow$  attitudes toward luxury brands ( $p > 0.05$ ), supporting H4a and H4b. Table 3 summarizes the results of the hypothesis tests.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Theoretical implications

Although the topic of fashion innovativeness is important to consumer researchers, little empirical research has addressed fashion innovativeness during adolescence. Research on adolescent consumers is important because they are different from consumers in other age groups, both in the value they attach to their peer groups (assimilation) and their need to emerge as unique individuals (individuation). The



Fig. 1. Hypothesized mediated model and moderated mediation model.

**Table 2**  
Results of mediation and moderated mediation analyses.

W (Culture)	Mediator (M) (Fashion innovativeness)		Dependent variable (Y) (Attitude toward luxury brands)	
	B	t	B	t
UNIQUENESS (X) × Culture (W)	0.97	11.58**	−0.20	−2.09*
SNI (X) × Culture (W)	−0.25	−2.24*	0.02	0.29
SII (X) × Culture (W)	−0.25	−2.50*	0.03	0.42
Indirect conditional effect depending on national culture: need for uniqueness → innovativeness → attitude toward luxury brands (H3)				
Culture	Effect	Confidence interval		
		Low level	Upper level	
France	0.09	0.09	0.18	
U.S.	0.61	0.49	0.72	
Moderated mediation index	0.52	0.40	0.65	
Indirect conditional effect depending on national culture: susceptibility to normative influence → innovativeness → attitude toward luxury brands (H4a)				
Culture	Effect	Confidence interval		
		Low level	Upper level	
France	0.14	0.08	0.21	
U.S.	0.03	−0.04	0.11	
Moderated mediation index	−0.11	−0.22	−0.10	
Indirect conditional effect depending on national culture: susceptibility to informational influence → innovativeness → attitude toward luxury brands (H4b)				
Culture	Effect	Confidence interval		
		Low level	Upper level	
France	0.12	0.02	0.15	
U.S.	0.09	−0.01	0.19	
Moderated mediation index	0.17	0.11	0.23	

\* p inferior to 0.05.  
\*\* p inferior to 0.01.

findings presented here highlight that susceptibility to others' opinions is critical for teen fashion innovators, who apparently need to cultivate credibility by exerting their influence. Indeed, our findings show a positive relation between susceptibility to both normative and informational influence and fashion innovativeness, which is contrary to extant research with adults (cf. Clark & Goldsmith, 2006; Midgley & Dowling, 1978). These findings suggest that adolescents have a strong need to affiliate to others, to seek information from their peer group, to comply with the expectations of their friends, and to consistently demonstrate preferences that distinguish them from other groups (Gentina et al., 2013). Thus, adolescent fashion innovators exhibit both a need for assimilation typical of adolescent years and a tendency to deviate from norms. By behaving and dressing in accordance with personal standards, adolescents demonstrate the robustness of their personal identities, which increases the likelihood that others admire them (Gentina et al., 2013). Such assimilation interacts with the more

commonly assumed individuation to empower consumer influence, which then predicts attitude toward luxury fashion brands.

Marketing research on luxury brands has focused on individual processes (Dubois & Paternault, 1995), often ignoring social influence processes. For instance, the luxury market relies on the scarcity principle, which postulates that brand desirability decreases as the brand becomes more popular, because prestige is attributable to ownership exclusivity. Research suggests that need for uniqueness is a key variable for this principle, at least for western adult consumers (Drolet, 2002; Dubois & Paternault, 1995; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). However, more research should investigate the degree to which assimilation (susceptibility to peer influence) and individuation (need for uniqueness) motives exist across different cultural contexts (Zhan & He, 2012), as well as how they combine to drive fashion innovativeness during adolescence.

The research presented here adopts an integrative perspective and examines cultural differences in how two variables associated with

**Table 3**  
Hypotheses test results.

Research hypotheses	Mediator	Results
H1: Fashion innovativeness mediates the relation between need for uniqueness and attitudes toward luxury fashion brands	Full mediation	Supported
H2a: Fashion innovativeness mediates the relation between susceptibility to informational influence and attitudes toward luxury fashion brands	Full mediation	Supported
H2b: Fashion innovativeness mediates the relation between susceptibility to normative influence and attitudes toward luxury fashion brands	Partial mediation	Supported
H3: Culture moderates the strength of the indirect relation by which need for uniqueness impacts attitudes toward luxury fashion brands through fashion innovativeness, such that the mediated relation is stronger among U.S. teens than among French teens	Moderated mediation	Supported
H4a: Culture moderates the strength of the indirect relation by which SII impacts attitudes toward luxury fashion brands through fashion innovativeness, such that the mediated relation is stronger among French teens than among U.S. teens	Moderated mediation	Supported
H4b: Culture moderates the strength of the indirect relation by which susceptibility to normative influence impacts attitudes toward luxury fashion brands through fashion innovativeness, such that the mediated relation is stronger among French teens than among U.S. teens	Moderated mediation	Supported

the needs for assimilation and individuation—susceptibility to peer influence and need for uniqueness—influence attitudes toward fashion luxury brands through fashion innovativeness during adolescence. Individuation affects teen fashion innovativeness in a more individualistic country (U.S.), whereas social affiliation affects teen fashion innovativeness in a more interdependent country (France), which in turn leads to more positive attitudes toward luxury brands. To conclude, our finding of a moderated mediation effect of culture shows that fashion innovativeness is an identity process that is enacted at the individual level as well as at a cultural level.

### 5.2. Practical implications

Questions about how positive attitudes toward luxury fashion brands develop in adolescence are important to both consumer researchers and fashion retailers. Fashion retailers should take into account the fact that the development of attitudes toward luxury brands can arise from very different personal and social profiles, depending on culture. For example, French luxury retailers can convey feelings of social acceptance and deliver a social experience by offering more spacious changing rooms with effects that generate an enjoyable, fun experience with the brand. In contrast, in the U.S., retailers should make efforts to satisfy teens' need for uniqueness, such as emphasizing exclusivity.

The present research also suggests that marketers hoping to leverage a two-stage communication model that begins by influencing teen fashion innovators should carefully consider how fashion innovator profiles differ across cultures and tailor their messages accordingly. French fashion innovators, for example, should respond more favorably to messages that depict social ties and the sharing influence, whereas U.S. innovators should respond more favorably to messages that depict differentiation from others. Therefore, luxury brands in France should highlight the social meanings of their products and communicate how their products can contribute to connect teens with desirable peer groups. In contrast, luxury brands in the U.S. should communicate self-expression and uniqueness by showing how luxury products contribute to constructing a distinctive image, or by incorporating customization into product design so that teen consumers develop their individuality.

### 5.3. Limitations and future research

This research focused on a limited set of variables related to social influence and distinctiveness. Other personality characteristics such as self-identity value (Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2009), conspicuousness value (Gil et al., 2012), and independent vs. interdependent self-construal (Alvandi, Fazli, & Najafi, 2013) may provide additional information on the constructs underlying fashion innovativeness and luxury brand attitudes. The present research also focused on luxury brand attitudes; additional research may include purchase intentions (Zhan & He, 2012).

This research also focused only on fashion and a single product (clothing). Although clothing is particularly relevant to the study of teenagers because of the value teens attach to appearance, additional research should assess other product categories to improve the generalizability of the findings. Finally, this research focused on two specific cultures, France and the U.S., both Western countries. Future research should replicate this study in more collectivistic cultures such as China or Japan, and emerging economies such as Brazil and India. Despite these limitations, this research provides an important first step in examining social mechanisms underlying teen attitudes toward luxury fashion brands across two cultures.

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