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The relationship between fashion and style orientation and well-being

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abstract

The present paper unfolds the conceptual distinction between style and fashion orientation – two trait-like orientations of clothing consumption. We relate both concepts with subjective well-being and assume a higher subjective well-being for consumers with a higher style orientation than a higher fashion orientation. These assumptions were tested using survey data from four countries - Germany, Poland, Sweden, and the United States - with approximately 1,000 respondents per country. Employing structural equation modelling, we found that style orientation was stronger related to subjective well-being than fashion orientation.

We further found that materialism mediated the relationship between fashion and style orientation and subjective well-being and that fashion orientation was statistically significantly stronger related to materialism than style orientation. When including materialism as a mediator, fashion orientation was also positively related to subjective well-being. While materialism and fashion orientation partly overlap, fashion orientation is still conceptually distinct from both style orientation and materialism. This could be, for example, by following the latest fashion trends through alternative means of consumption such as renting or lending.

This paper contributes to the current literature by further developing the two concepts, style and fashion orientation, and by testing their relationship to materialism and subjective well-being.

introduction

People have a need to wear clothing. The most obvious function of clothing is physical in the sense that clothing helps protect the human body against variations in weather. The need for clothing may also be psychological as clothing can function as a form of non–verbal communication to others that sends important social signals. The clothes a person wears and how it is worn may provide a signal to others about his or her identity, tastes and individuality (Schaefer & Crane, 2005). While some consumers disregard this psychological aspect of clothing, many others attach a high degree of importance to decisions relating to what clothes to purchase and wear. The present paper is focusing only on consumers with an interest and involvement in clothing and clothing consumption. This interest and involvement in clothing, however, can take many forms and translate into different consumption patterns, which may have psychological implications. In an effort to understand and carve out these psychological implications, we propose a trait-like distinction between clothing consumers. Specifically, we distinguish between clothing consumers with a fashion orientation and consumers with a style orientation. Fashion-oriented consumers emphasize the material and possession component of clothing acquisition and view clothing as means to achieve social positioning, and status, whereas style-oriented consumers see clothing as a way to express individuality. The two clothing orientations therefore differ in the extent to which they focus on outer and inner notions of self.

The present study explores this novel conceptual distinction between clothing consumers with a fashion and style orientation by investigating differences in the endorsement of materialism and how the two clothing orientations relate to subjective well-being. We find, through a four-country consumer survey, clear support for the conceptual distinction between a style and fashion orientation. Moreover, we find that fashion-oriented consumers report a higher endorsement of materialism and lower levels of subjective well-being than style-oriented consumers. Interestingly, the difference in subjective well-being between the two clothing orientations is mediated by materialism.

conceptual background

fashion and style orientation

Previous research has identified two distinct trait-like orientations of clothing consumers that result in different approaches to clothing acquisition: a style orientation and a fashion orientation (Cho, Gupta & Kim, 2015; Gwozdz, Gupta & Gentry, 2017). Though style and fashion is often used synonymously, they have divergent meanings (Bly, Gwozdz & Reisch, 2015; Gregory, 1948). In relation to clothing, style is any distinctive mode of tailoring, whereas fashion is the style prevailing at any given time (Gwozdz, Gupta & Gentry, 2017). A style evolves slowly and is reflective of a person's identity and way of life. Fashion, by contrast, is temporary, ever-changing and resonating newness. Solomon and Rabolt (2004), for example, suggest that fashion is 'a style of dress that is accepted by a large group of people at any given time'. Fashion can be regarded as symbolic resources that share some level of mutual social understanding, but exist in a state of transience. Fashion is therefore less reflective of a person's inner self and more oriented towards the outer self that is portrayed to others.

The difference in meaning also extends to differences in clothing consumption between style- and fashion-oriented consumers. Consumers with a style orientation often acquire clothing that reflects their individualized style and whose design is perceived as classic while at the same time speaks about oneself (Cho, Gupta & Kim, 2015).

A style orientation is, thus, about expressing individuality in a way to reflect the relatively stable and consistent aspects of one's personal taste, interests and characteristics (Tai, 2005). Some of the key consumption characteristics of a style-oriented consumer are longevity, authenticity and uniqueness (Bly, Gwozdz & Reisch, 2015). Longevity refers to the preference for clothing items that are more timeless and can be utilized for a long time. Authenticity relates to ensuring that the acquired clothes reflects one's identity and uniqueness the distinctiveness and personalized style of the clothing. Style-oriented consumers consequently tend to select clothing items that can be kept for years with little impact of changes in fashion trends. This also means that style-oriented consumers are less likely to shop frequently than fashion-oriented consumers (Cho-Che & Kang 1996).

A fashion-oriented consumer refers to a person with a high interest in and awareness of up-to-date trends and the latest fashion (Shim & Gehrt, 1996, Walsh et al., 2001). These consumers are more likely than style-oriented consumers to read about fashion and trends relating to clothing, which also translates into the more frequent purchase of new fashion items (Beaudoin, Moore & Goldsmith, 2000; Darley & Johnson, 1993; Goldsmith, Heitmeyer & Freiden, 1991). By purchasing new fashion items, fashion-oriented consumers are able to satisfy their need for keeping themselves current. The transient nature of fashion and fashionable clothing styles means that the acquired clothing quickly becomes obsolete, thereby warranting further consumption.

A recent study by Gwozdz, Gupta and Gentry (2017) found that fashion-oriented consumers reported a higher shopping frequency than style-oriented consumers. The authors also found that fashion-oriented consumers acquired more of their clothing from 1st markets (e.g., high street stores) and less from 2nd markets (e.g., secondhand stores) compared to style-oriented consumers. In contrast, style-oriented consumers reported engaging in more environmentally friendly clothing consumption and were also more likely to consider the environmental impact of clothing consumption. This corroborates and extends previous findings from Cho, Gupta and Kim (2015). While these results are intriguing, and provide indicative support for distinguishing between style and fashion-oriented clothing consumers, only limited studies have investigated this conceptual distinction.

the link to materialism

Belk (1988) noted that clothing is acquired as a "second skin" in which others may see us. Similarly, O'Cass (2000) argued that fashion clothing tells others how much status an individual has, and what the individual is like (e.g., professional, sexy, casual). The clothes a person wears, thus, have an important function in the generation of first impressions and provide immediate, yet superficial, insights into a person's identity and personality. While both style- and fashion-oriented consumers use clothing as a means of communicating to others, the underlying messages being communicated may fundamentally differ. Style-oriented consumers mainly seek to communicate their individualized style functioning as a mirror of their inner notions of self. Fashion-oriented consumers, by contrast, aim to communicate newness as well as social positioning and status. The acquisition of material possessions is therefore expected to be more important for fashion-oriented consumers as it can help strengthen the portrayal of their outer self. This notion was supported in a recent study where a fashion orientation was found to be more strongly related to materialism than a style orientation (Gwozdz, Gupta & Gentry, 2017). Materialism is defined here as individual differences in people's long-term endorsement of values, goals, and associated beliefs that center on the importance of acquiring money and possessions that convey status (Dittmar et al., 2014). The strong association between fashion-oriented consumers and materialistic values is not surprising given the typical characterization of a materialistic person. For example, Dittmar (2005) sketches a materialistic person as one believing that the acquisition of material goods is central to self–definition and happiness as well as a prime indicator of success. Hence, the endorsement of materialistic values reflects a commitment to identity construction through material goods (Dittmar,

2005). Materialistic consumers tend to rely heavily on external cues, favoring those possessions that are worn or consumed in public places. This suggests that consumers with strong materialistic tendencies use clothing as an external cue for impression management (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Materialism has also been identified as an important predictor for time spent shopping (Fitzmaurice & Comegys, 2006) and is related to status consumption (Heaney et al., 2005; Eastman et al., 1997). This characterization of materialistic consumers resonates well with fashion-oriented consumers who through purchasing novel and fashionable items seek to communicate success and achieve social status in the pursuit of happiness. It similarly aligns with the findings of Gwozdz, Gupta and Gentry (2017) that fashion-oriented consumers purchase more products overall and more often from 1st markets than style-oriented consumers.

Despite the theoretical similarities and the expected stronger link between materialism and fashion-oriented consumers as compared to style-oriented consumers, only limited empirical research has been conducted on the association. We therefore find it important to replicate the finding by Gwozdz, Gupta and Gentry (2017). Hence, we make the following prediction:

H1. Materialism is more prevalent in fashion-oriented consumers than style-oriented consumers.

clothing orientation, materialism, and subjective well-being

Previous studies have carved out the differences in acquisition behavior between fashion-oriented and style-oriented consumers (Cho, Gupta & Kim, 2015; Gwozdz, Gupta & Gentry, 2017). Given the expected, and previously observed, difference in the endorsement of materialistic values between fashion-oriented and style-oriented consumers, we also expect to observe differences in subjective well-being. This expectation arises from the plentiful literature on materialism and subjective well-being, where materialism has consistently been found to have a detrimental effect on people's subjective well-being (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002; Christopher et al., 2007; Kashdan & Breen, 2007; Dittmar et al., 2014; Kasser, 2016). In line with most research on the topic, we consider subjective well-being as relating to how people feel and think about their lives (Diener, 1984). It is important to note in this context that subjective well-being is a composite measure comprising both cognitive (i.e. cognitive well-being) and affective components (i.e. affective well-being). Cognitive well-being refers to domain-specific and global evaluations of life, whereas affective well-being refers to the frequency and intensity of positive and negative emotions and mood (Luhmann et al., 2012). A recent meta-analysis by Dittmar and colleagues (2014) found that materialism had a negative effect on both cognitive and affective well-being (as well as most other indicators of well-being). Why is this the case? First, materialistic consumers are more likely than non-materialistic consumers to believe that acquiring products will bring pleasure, improve the impression one makes on others, and facilitate relationships with others (Richins, 2011). This makes them want what they do not already have, which undermines well-being (Larsen & McKibban, 2008). Second, because materialistic consumers are oriented toward money, expensive products, and image they often pay attention to advertisement messages, thus increasing the likelihood that they are exposed to messages suggesting that they, or their current possessions, are insufficient (Kasser & Kanner, 2004; Dittmar et al., 2014). This exposure can result in upward social comparison causing negative self-evaluations (Collins, 1996) as well as an increased discrepancy between current and ideal selves (Halliwell & Dittmar, 2006; Higgins, 1987). Negative self-evaluations and large self-discrepancies may similarly persist among fashion-oriented consumers resulting from ongoing comparisons between their current clothing items and the most recent looks and trends. The same consequences are less likely to emerge amongst style-oriented consumers as they use new clothing purchases to further strengthen their individualized style, which is more inwardly focused.

Though style and fashion is often used synonymously, they have divergent meanings. In relation to clothing, style is any distinctive mode of tailoring, whereas fashion is the style prevailing at any given time. A style evolves slowly and is reflective of a person's identity and way of life. Fashion, by contrast, is temporary, ever-changing and resonating newness.

Another negative aspect of materialism is its association with dysfunctional consumer behaviors including compulsive consumption (Dittmar, 2005). Compulsive consumption may also be a risk for certain fashion-oriented consumers who, through their strong interest in acquiring knowledge about the latest fashions, are continuously seeking to acquire the newest and trendiest clothing items to improve their status and image. For example, Park and Burns (2005) found that a strong interest in fashion were positively linked to compulsive consumption. While not a direct indication of compulsive consumption, Gwozdz, Gupta and Gentry (2017) also found a higher shopping frequency among fashion-oriented consumers as compared to style-oriented consumers, which might suggest a higher likelihood of developing unhealthy consumption patterns for this group of consumers.

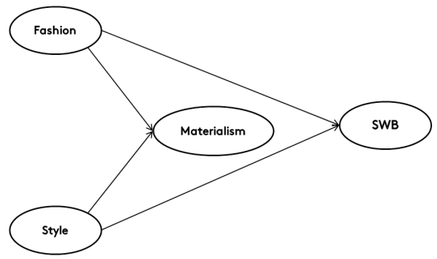
Though compulsive consumption and overconsumption (Alexander & Ussher, 2012) might have a detrimental effect on well-being, more moderate clothing consumption patterns may actually contribute positively to well-being. Shopping for clothing can, for example, elicit pleasure, hedonic enjoyment and satisfy self-expressive needs (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006; Ekici et al., 2014). Shopping has also been associated with excitement and delight (Oliver, Rust, & Varki, 1997; Wakefield and Baker, 1998), and enjoyment (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Shopping activities have been described as a form of "recreation" (Backstrom, 2006; Guiry, Magi, & Lutz, 2006), entertainment (Moss, 2007), or related to enthusiasm that creates emotional arousal and joy (Jin & Sternquist, 2004; Pooler, 2003). The extent to which people derive positive affect from clothes shopping activities may, however, differ between consumers with a style and fashion orientation. While both style- and fashion-oriented consumers may gain pleasure from the sense of desire and wanting prior to a purchase as well as the expected joy and excitement being elicited from the process of acquiring and the actual acquisition of a clothing item, we expect the two consumer groups to differ in their emotional experiences after the purchase. Here we would expect, in line with findings by Richins (2013) on materialistic consumers, that fashion-oriented consumers exhibit a faster demise in the pleasure associated with the purchase than style-oriented consumers. This reasoning builds on the finding that materialists often show hedonic elevation prior to a purchase as they expect the desired product to elicit significant and meaningful life changes (Richins, 2013). The hedonic elevation evoked by the desire object is, however, often followed by hedonic decline after the acquisition of the object due to its inability to meet the anticipated life changes (Richins, 2013). The same pattern is not observed amongst low-materialistic individuals, who generally exhibit no decrease in pleasurable feelings after purchase. We similarly assume that style-oriented, unlike fashion-oriented, consumers are less likely to exhibit a decrease in the pleasurable feelings associated with a clothing purchase due to their preference for identity-linked clothing items that express longevity, authenticity, and uniqueness.

In sum, the expected difference between consumers with a style and fashion orientation in the endorsement of materialism leads us to predict that style-oriented consumers exhibit higher subjective well-being than fashion-oriented consumers. We do not have any prediction on the direction of the relationship between style and fashion orientation and subjective well-being. With this in mind, we formulate the following hypotheses:

H2. Consumers with a style orientation exhibit higher levels of subjective well-being than fashion-oriented consumers.

H3. Materialism mediates the relationship between fashion as well as style orientation and subjective well-being.

Figure 1. The model



data and method

the sample

The data stems from a large scale online survey that was carried out in four countries, namely, Germany, Poland, Sweden and the United States. The survey was developed to collect information on clothing consumption behavior and related social-psychological factors for consumers aged 18-65 years. Before the data was collected between October 2016 and January 2017 by the market research company Qualtrics, we developed the survey and pilot tested it. The original English version was translated by ISO17100 certified translators into the three remaining languages and then proofread by native speakers. The resulting sample consisted of 4,617 respondents with 1,174 from Germany, 1,116 from Poland, 1,182 from Sweden and 1,145 from the United States. More information about the full survey can be found in Gwozdz, Nielsen & Müller (2017).

measurements

To measure fashion orientation, we draw on items from Sproles and Kendall (1986), who developed an instrument for measuring the fashion consciousness of consumers (all items are shown in Table 1). The answer scales range from 1 'strongly disagree' to 7 'strongly agree'. We use the original seven-item scale; carrying out a confirmatory factor analysis, we deleted one item due to its low factor loading.

Style orientation is measured by two dimensions from the style confidence scale developed by Armstrong et al. (2017) including longevity and authenticity. Moreover, we draw on scales developed by Tai (2005) and Tiggemann and Lacey (2009) to measure uniqueness as a third dimension of style orientation. Specifically, we use one item from Tai (2005) and two items from Tiggemann and Lacey's (2009) scale on the individuality function of clothing (see Gwozdz, Gupta & Gentry, 2017). The answer scales range from 1 'strongly disagree' to 7 'strongly agree'. The items per style orientation dimension are presented in Table 1.

Subjective well-being is measured by affective as well as cognitive well-being. For affective well-being, we use the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) developed by Diener et al. (2010). The measurement consists of 12 short items assessing positive and negative experiences. The overall question is: "Please think about what you have been doing and experiencing during the past four weeks. Then report how much you experienced each of the following feelings" followed by the items and an answer scale ranging from 1 'very rarely or never' to 5 'very often or always'. The positive and the negative affect items are treated as two individual measurements of affective well-being.

Cognitive well-being is measured by the Satisfaction with Life Scale developed by Diener et al. (1985). The measurement consists of five items addressing the cognitive aspects of well-being. The answer scales ranges from 1 'strongly disagree' to 7 'strongly agree'. All three well-being measures are presented in Table 1.

To measure materialistic values, we employed Richins and Dawson's (1992) materialism scale. Like Gwozdz, Gupta and Gentry (2017), we also used a short scale consisting of only the positively phrased items and neglecting the reversed items. Wong, Rindfleisch, and Burrroughs (2003) noted that the Richins and Dawson materialism scale has worked well psychometrically in the United States, but encounters problems in cross-cultural contexts due to the use of mixed (positively-worded versus negatively-worded) Likert statements. Thus we used ten out of the original 18 items. The answer scale ranges from 1 'strongly disagree' to 7 'strongly agree'.

Control variables are sex, age, country and income. Income is measured in 11 comparative categories (more information see Gwozdz, Nielsen, and Müller, 2017).

the measurement model

In a first step, we validated the measurements for our data set across the four countries. Exploratory factor analyses (extraction: principal component, rotation: varimax) were carried for each of the measurements. The next step was a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of all measurements in one analysis using IBM® SPSS® Amos 24.0. All latent variables were allowed to correlate. The correlation matrix of the latent variables used in the analyses is presented in the Appendix (Appendix A2).

Respondents with missing values in one of the various items included in the model had to be deleted because AMOS is not able to handle missing data. This results in a sample of 4,079 respondents where 1,068 are from Germany, 978 from Poland, 1,040 from Sweden and 993 from the United States.

The measurements of style orientation and materialism were multi-dimensional and hence, modelled in as a second-order CFA. For style orientation that means that the dimension uniqueness was measured through its three items (like longevity and authenticity) and style orientation is then measured by the latent variables uniqueness, longevity and authenticity. The same is true for materialism where the individual dimensions centrality, success and happiness and measured by its items and then serve as factors of materialistic values. The first-order and second-order CFA results are presented in Table 1 including the factor loadings per item as well as Cronbach's Alpha, the composite reliability (CR) and the average variance (AVE) explained per measurement. All factor loadings are satisfactory as are the overall criteria for the individual measurements. CR – the measurements reliability – meets the threshold of 0.7 for all latent variables (Hair et al., 2010). AVE – the convergent validity – meets the threshold 0.5 for all but one latent variable (style longevity).

The overall model fit is excellent with ^{2}=17,161.73; df=4,395; p≤.001; ^{2}/df=3.91; CFI=.944; TLI=.940; RMSEA=.02.

Table 1. The measurement model

	Factor loading	P-value	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance explained
Endogenous variables					
Fashion orientation			**.95**	**.97**	**.76**
Fashionable, attractive clothing is very important to me.	.831	***			
Keeping up with the latest fashion is important to me.	.892	***			
I spend considerable time and effort to learn about the latest fashion.	.831	***			
I keep my wardrobe up-to-date with the changing fashions.	.899	***			
I usually have one or more outfits of the very new fashion.	.871	***			
I consciously choose something that reflects the current fashion.	.895	***			
Style orientation (2nd order)			**.63**	**.70**	**.50**
Style longevity	.592	***			
Style authenticity	.894	***			
Style uniqueness	.583	***			
Style longevity (1st order)			**.76**	**.82**	**.44**
I prefer to purchase clothing I know I can utilize for a long time	.554	***			
I typically purchase clothing I know will fit my personal style for a long time	.779	***			
When purchasing clothing, I like to know it will work with my personal style	.786	***			
I prefer to purchase clothing that is more timeless	.459	***			
Style authenticity (1st order)			**.88**	**.93**	**.81**
My clothing style matches the real me	.715	***			
What I wear reflects my inner self	.878	***			
Who I am is clear in my clothing style	.782	***			
My inner self shows in what I wear	.855	***			
Style uniqueness (1st order)			**.91**	**.95**	**.87**
I prefer clothes that are unique/rare	.934	***			
I prefer clothes that have a distinctive mode of tailoring	.791	***			
I tend to select clothes that are rare	.898	***			
Exogenous variables					
Cognitive well-being			**.90**	**.94**	**.66**
In most ways my life is close to my ideal	.881	***			
The conditions of my life are excellent	.821	***			
I am satisfied with my life	.867	***			
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life	.777	***			
If I could live my life over. I would change almost nothing	.688	***			
Positive affect			**.91**	**.95**	**.62**
Positive	.843	***			
Good	.699	***			
Pleasant	.782	***			
Happy	.845	***			
Joyful	.801	***			
Contented	.743	***			
Negative affect			**.87**	**.92**	**.53**
Negative	.803	***			
Bad	.781	***			
Unpleasant	.726	***			
Sad	.776	***			
Afraid	.613	***			
Angry	.643	***			
Mediator					
Materialism (2nd order)			**.91**	**.94**	**.86**
Centrality	.974	***			
Success	.934	***			
Happiness	.665	***			
Materialism centrality (1st order)			**.66**	**.75**	**.62**
I enjoy spending money on things that aren't practical.	.493	***			
Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.	.650	***			
I like a lot of luxury in my life.	.721	***			
Materialism success (1st order)			**.82**	**.89**	**.73**
I admire people who own expensive possessions (such as homes, cars and clothes).	.768	***			
Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.	.701	***			
The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.	.647	***			
I like to own things that impress people.	.790	***			
Materialism happiness (1st order)			**.84**	**.90**	**.64**
My life would be better if I owned certain things that I don't currently have.	.754	***			
I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things (possessions).	.872	***			
It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.	.760				

Model fit: ⅀17,161.73; df=4,395; p≤.001; ⅀df=3.91; CFI=.944; TLI=.940; RMSEA=.02

Another way to satisfy the need of keeping up to date with the latest fashion trends, without the notion of materialism, could be via access to new, trendy clothing items without owning more material goods – for example, renting, lending, leasing or swapping clothing items. Here, the need to keep up with the latest fashion trends can still be fulfilled including the communication of the outer self to others, which keeps it distinct from a style orientation. As a result, even if materialism is taken out of fashion orientation, the two trait-like orientations of clothing consumption are conceptually distinct.

the structural model

In total, we estimate two structural models: first, a simple one without the mediation of materialism to assess the direct relationship between fashion and style orientation and well-being (Model 1). We estimate this in one model including all three well-being measures (cognitive as well as positive and negative affect) at once as dependent, endogenous variables. In a second step, we add the mediation of materialism between style and fashion orientation and well-being (Model 2, see also Figure 1). Again, we include all three subjective well-being measures as dependent variables in one model. For both models, we imputed the factor scores for the SEM from the CFA described above.

All control variables including sex, age and income are related to subjective well-being and materialism. Additionally, we employed a multi-group comparison by country to account for the nested data structure, i.e., respondents are nested within country. The control variables are included in both models in the same way. Again, we used IBM® SPSS® Amos 24.0 to run the analyses using the maximum likelihood estimator.

All results are presented in Table 2 and Table 3, where the direct effects represent the direct associations between two latent variables such as style orientation and subjective well-being and the indirect effects reflect the relationships between style and fashion orientation and subjective well-being mediated by materialism. The total effects are then the sum of the direct and the indirect effects. The overall goodness of fit measures, which are excellent for Model 1 and Model 2 (Hair et al., 2010), are also presented in Table 2 and Table 3.

results

the relationship between style and fashion orientation and materialism

For the sample of 4,079 consumers, we find a mean style orientation of 4.57 (SD=1.08), mean fashion orientation of 2.76 (SD=1.64) and a mean materialism of 3.18 (SD=1.32) – all on an answer scale ranging from 1 to 7. The Pearson correlation between style orientation and materialism is 0.33 ($p<.001$) and between fashion orientation and materialism is 0.58 ($p<.001$). The stronger correlation in the sample indicates a stronger relationship between fashion orientation and materialism.

Testing whether materialism is more related to a fashion orientation than to a style orientation (H1), we use selected results of the SEM model (Model 2) and compare the direct, standardized path coefficients for style and fashion orientation on materialism. We find that both style and fashion orientation are positively related to materialism, but that the coefficient for fashion orientation on materialism with y=0.586 is significantly larger than the one for style orientation with y=0.132 (no 95%-CIs overlap, see also Table 2 – direct effects). Hence, H1 is supported.

Table 2. Style and fashion orientation on materialism (part of SEM Model 2)

	DV	Style	sig. difference (95%-CI intervals)	Fashion
Direct effect	materialism	.132***	<	.586***
		[.104;.157]		[.562;.611]
Model fit:	χ^2=52.83; df=15; p≤.001; χ^2/df=3.52; CFI=.999; TLI=.984; RMSEA=.02			

the relationship between style and fashion orientation and subjective well-being

To measure the relationship between style and fashion orientation and subjective well-being, we carry out two steps: first, we measure a simple SEM model where style and fashion orientation are only directly related to subjective well-being. As we assume the relationship between style and fashion orientation and subjective well-being not being as straightforward, we include a mediation by materialism in a second step (Model 2). The standardized coefficients for style and fashion orientation on the three subjective well-being measures as well as the bootstrapped 95%-Confidence Intervals (CI) for both models are presented in Table 3.

In Model 1, the standardized coefficients for the relationship between style orientation and the subjective well-being measures are for cognitive well-being: y=0.191, for positive affect: y=0254 and for negative affect: y=-0.079 (all p<.001). The directions of the relationships are also as predicted, i.e., style orientation is related to a higher subjective well-being. While style orientation is statistically significantly associated with all three well-being measures, we find no relationship between fashion orientation and subjective well-being. Hence, we find support for H2 with style-oriented consumers exhibiting higher levels of subjective well-being than fashion-oriented consumers.

Table 3. Results of the mediation analysis

	DV	Style	sig. difference (95%-CI intervals)	Fashion
Model 1: simple model				
Direct effects	cognitive WB	.191***	>	.024
		[.149;.231]		[-.017;.064]
	positive affect	.254***	>	.016
		[.215;.293]		[-.025;.054]
	negative affect	-.079***	=	-.010
		[-.121;-.036]		[-.054;.031]
Model fit:	⅀17.49; df=10; p=.064; ⅀df=1.749; CFI=.999; TLI=.995; RMSEA=.01			
Model 2: model with materialism as mediator				
Direct effects	cognitive WB	.245***	=	.267***
		[.209;.282]		[.228;.310]
	positive affect	.297***	>	.211***
		[.264;.332]		[.173;.259]
	negative affect	-.132***	<	-.249***
		[-.167;-.097]		[-.293;-.207]
Indirect effects (mediation through materialism)	cognitive WB	-.052***	<	-.230***
		[-.065;-.041]		[-.258;-.206]
	positive affect	-.042***	<	-.185***
		[-.053;-.033]		[-.211;-.163]
	negative affect	.052***	<	.231***
		[.041;.066]		[.205;.256]
Total effects = direct + indirect	cognitive WB	.193***	>	.037
		[.155;.228]		[-.004;.073]
	positive affect	.256***	>	.026
		[.220;.291]		[-.010;.066]
	negative affect	-.080***	>	-.018
		[-.117;.-.043]		[-.060;.019]
Model fit: ⅀52.83; df=15; p≤.001; ⅀df=3.52; CFI=.999; TLI=.984; RMSEA=.02				

Note: *** p≤.001; imputed latent variables from CFA, standardized coefficients, bootstrapped standard errors n=1,000, bootstrapped 95%-Confidence Intervals in parentheses, controls: age, income, sex, multi-group comparison by country to account for data structure

how materialism mediates the relationship between style and fashion orientation and subjective well-being

Testing whether materialism is a mediator for both style and fashion orientation on well-being, we used the bootstrapping method (n=1,000) as recommended by Hayes (2013). As the indirect effects from both style and fashion orientation through materialism on well-being are statistical significant (with the bootstrapped standard errors), we accept that a mediation for both style and fashion orientation, exists.

While the indirect effects from style and fashion orientation on subjective well-being are all statistically significant and are in the same direction, the path from fashion orientation over materialism to subjective well-being is much stronger than the one from style orientation over materialism to subjective well-being. One example is the relatively small indirect effect from style to cognitive well-being with y=-0.052 (p<.001) compared to an indirect effect of y=-0.230 (p<.001) from fashion orientation to subjective well-being with no overlap in the 95%-CIs (see Table 3).

This mediation now changes the remaining direct effects between style and fashion orientation and subjective well-being. Fashion orientation is now also positively related to subjective well-being with standardized coefficients of y=0.267 on cognitive well-being, y=0.211 for positive affect and y=-0.249 for negative affect (all p<.001). While style still has a stronger relationship to positive and negative affect, the association is equal with fashion orientation on cognitive well-being (see overlapping 95%-CIs in Table 3). Compared to Model 1, the direct effects of fashion orientation on subjective well-being in Model 2 are positive and statistically significant. The total effects (direct + indirect effects) of Model 2 resemble then again pretty much the direct effects in Model 1.

This means that a fashion orientation is similarly strongly related to subjective well-being as a style orientation when controlling for materialism. Put in other words, a strongly fashion-oriented consumer with low materialistic values exhibits a similar well-being as a strongly style-oriented consumer, whereas a materialistic, fashion-oriented consumer exhibits a lower well-being compared to a style-oriented consumer. Note that there is no causality implied as we cannot measure any causal relationship with the used cross-sectional data.

Discussion

First of all, we can replicate the strong negative relationship between materialism and subjective well-being that many other studies already found (e.g., Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002; Christopher et al., 2007; Kashdan & Breen, 2007; Dittmar et al., 2014; Kasser, 2014). This strong relationship is true for both cognitive and affective well-being. Explanations include that people who have high materialistic values believe that acquiring products comes with pleasure and signals success to others (Richins, 2011), but also makes them want things they do not already have which finally undermines well-being (Larsen & McKibban, 2008).

As fashion orientation is defined as aiming to represent the outer self and enhance social positioning through following the latest fashion trends and hence shares some characteristics with materialism, we assumed that the relationship between fashion orientation and subjective well-being is mediated by materialism. As expected, we find that the indirect effect from fashion orientation mediated by materialism on subjective well-being (cognitive and affective) is also negative. One explanation could be that fashion-oriented

and materialistic consumers are oriented towards their image and because of that pay more attention towards advertisement messages increasing the exposure to messages suggesting the latest trends and that current possessions are insufficient (Kasser & Kanner, 2004; Dittmar et al., 2014). The negative relationship towards subjective well-being could stem from comparisons to suggested images by advertisement and the current image as well by the upward comparisons with other consumers (Collins, 1996; Halliwell & Dittmar, 2006). There could also be a comparison of the current wardrobe and the most recent trends. However, the positive direct relationship between fashion orientation and subjective well-being when controlling for materialism speaks against the latter argument. It could mean that following the latest trends to present a chosen outer self to others can be positively associated with subjective well-being as long as the materialistic aspect is taken out. This would mean if clothing consumption is not about acquiring possessions and conveying status through possessions and that possessions determine happiness (Richins, 2011; Dittmar et al., 2014).

Next to materialism, clothing consumption has also been related to hedonic enjoyment, pleasure and the satisfaction of self-expressive needs (Micheaelidou & Dibb, 2006; Ekici et al., 2014) or with excitement and delight (Oliver, Rust, & Varki, 1997; Wakefield and Baler, 1998) or a form of entertainment and recreation (Backstrom, 2006; Guiry, Magi, & Lutz, 2006; Moss, 2007). While both fashion and style-oriented consumers might gain pleasure from wanting and desire prior to the acquisition of clothing, fashion-oriented consumers would experience a lower subjective well-being after the acquisition due to newly emerging trends that have to be followed (Richins, 2013). This would be different for style-oriented consumers who are interested in longevity, authenticity and uniqueness to express their inner self (Bly, Gwozdz, & Reisch, 2015). Hence, the positive relationship of style orientation with subjective well-being does not come to a surprise.

Contribution

Our contribution to the literature is the conceptual distinction of style and fashion orientation. Building upon previous work from Cho, Gupta and Kim (2015) and Gwozdz, Gupta and Gentry (2017), we further unfold the definitions of the two trait-like orientations of clothing consumption. While both orientations embrace an involvement with and interest in clothing, they are distinct in how this interest in clothing consumption is realized and in which need it fulfils. While style-oriented consumers aim to reflect their inner self through the mode of clothing consumption, fashion-oriented consumers center around the presentation of the outer self towards others. Fashion-oriented consumers achieve to communicate about their outer self and, finally, to create and push their social positioning and status through following the latest fashion trends. Following the latest fashion trends is different from the clothing consumption of style-oriented consumers who consume less and different (see also Gwozdz, Gupta & Gentry, 2017). A style orientation is characterized by longevity uniqueness, and authenticity (Bly, Gwozdz & Reisch, 2015) – all three characteristics cannot be met by following the latest trends which rather represents short life of trends that come in bulks and help to achieve the aim of presenting an outer self and a social status that does not necessarily have to mirror the inner self.

The distinction between both concepts can also be shown by the stronger relationship between fashion orientation and materialism compared to the relatively weak positive relationship between style orientation and materialism. The strong link between fashion orientation and materialism also supports the importance of external cues for fashion orientation as compared to style orientation. The question now is whether fashion orientation is still an independent concept and not just another description of materialism. If fashion orientation is about acquiring new clothing items (e.g., Beaudoin, Moore & Goldsmith, 2000) and through that satisfying the need of keeping up-to-date with latest fashion trends (e.g., Walsh et al., 2001), then there is more than one way to achieve these aims. One way is to purchase new clothing items and once these are obsolete, because a new trend emerges, purchase new clothing and through these purchases accumulating material goods in the form of clothing items. In other words, realizing this need through materialistic behavior through the acquisition of possessions (Dittmar, 2014). Another way to satisfy the need of keeping up to date with the latest fashion trends, without the notion of materialism, could be via access to new, trendy clothing items without owning more material goods – for example, renting, lending, leasing or swapping clothing items. Here, the need to keep up with the latest fashion trends can still be fulfilled including the communication of the outer self to others, which keeps it distinct from a style orientation. As a result, even if materialism is taken out of fashion orientation, the two trait-like orientations of clothing consumption are conceptually distinct.

Limitations and future research

While we further strengthened the description of fashion orientation as well as establishing a strong link with materialism, the concept of fashion orientation needs to be further explored. Above, we present an idea of how fashion orientation could still be distinct from style orientation when taking materialism out, but whether the idea of access versus ownership in relation to fashion orientation works has to be tested. The concept style orientation would also benefit from further developments both theoretically and empirically. The measurements of style and fashion orientation need further validation, which is particularly true for style orientation. Although Armstrong et al. (2017) are working on the validation of their scale, no other tested instrument is yet available. The major reason for the lack of tested instruments is the newness of the distinction between fashion and style orientation. The fashion orientation scale might also need to be scrutinized depending on the development of the concept. Currently, the scale – presented fully in the section "The measurement model" – allows for traditional purchases of clothing items and alternative forms of acquisition of clothing such as renting or lending as it focuses on the aim to know of and have access to the latest fashion trends.

Whether fashion-oriented consumers using these alternative forms of clothing acquisition are equally satisfied with their life as style-oriented consumers is a question that has to be further explored – just like the question of causality. As we cannot make any assumptions about whether style orientation leads to more subjective well-being or more satisfied consumers become more style-oriented, this would be interesting to follow up upon with longitudinal studies. If, for example, a higher style orientation increases consumers' subjective well-being, this could be used as an argument to motivate consumers to exercise a slower, more authentic and unique clothing consumption.

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Appendix A1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Endogenous Variables					
Style orientation	4,079	4.573	1.076	1	7
Fashion orientation	4,079	2.763	1.644	1	7
Exogenous variables					
Cognitive well-being	4,079	4.279	1.481	1	7
Negative affect	4,079	14.768	4.641	6	30
Positive affect	4,079	21.236	4.486	6	30
Mediator					
Materialism	4,079	3.181	1.324	1	7
Controls					
Income (11 categories)	4,079	4.687	3.145	1	11
Female (dummy)	4,079	.566	.496	0	1
Germany	4,079	.262	.440	0	1
Poland	4,079	.240	.427	0	1
Sweden	4,079	.255	.436	0	1
United States	4,079	.243	.429	0	1

Appendix A2. Correlation between latent variables

	style orientation	fashion orientation	materialism	cognitive well-being	negative affect	positive affect
Style orientation	1					
Fashion orientation	.618*	1				
Materialism	.498*	.686*	1			
Cognitive well-being	.225*	.177*	-.073*	1		
Negative affect	-.058*	-.044*	.186*	-.618*	1	
Positive affect	.275*	.197*	-.013	.787*	-.729*	1

Note: *** p<.001; latent variable are imputed scores based on the CFA described in the measurement model.

Mistra Future Fashion is a research program that focuses on how to turn today's fashion industry and consumer habits toward sustainable fashion and behavior. Guided by the principles of the circular economy model, the program operates cross disciplinary and involves 50+ partners from the fashion ecosystem. Its unique system perspective combines new methods for design, production, use and recycling with relevant aspects such as new business models, policies, consumer science, life-cycle-assessments, system analysis, chemistry, engineering etc.

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