Promoting Sustainability in the Fashion Industry: An Exploratory Study of Fashion Sharing in Colombia

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Abstract

This study investigates the environmental impact of the fashion industry, which is recognized for its significant water consumption and contribution to global carbon emissions. The UN Environment Programme reports that fashion contributes to an estimated 7-9% of worldwide carbon emissions. In response to these issues, fashion libraries, encompassing clothing rental and sharing services, have emerged as potential avenues for more sustainable clothing consumption in Colombia. Previous research conducted in other countries has highlighted that the acceptance of fashion libraries is associated with various perceived risks, encompassing psychological, social, and financial aspects, among others. This study, conducted in Colombia, aims to explore the acceptance and perceptions of fashion libraries, identify early adopter segments, assess associated risks, and ascertain the key factors influencing consumer decisions to engage with fashion libraries. To accomplish this, an exploratory survey was administered to 369 respondents residing in major Colombian cities. Data analysis, involving exploratory factor analysis, ANOVA testing, and correlation techniques, facilitated the identification of three primary early adopter segments. Additionally, it revealed that factors influencing acceptance of fashion libraries encompass sustainability, hygiene, store layout, location accessibility, product availability, and garment maintenance.

Keywords: *Fashion library, collaborative fashion consumption, perceived risk, environmental sustainability, Colombia*

Introduction

Clothing not only reflects cultural, societal, and normative aspects but also plays a crucial role in conveying a wealth of information related to an individual's social and economic standing, their affiliation with specific cultural or social groups, and facets of their personality. Extensive research has emphasized the capacity of clothing to serve as a highly visible indicator and signal of one's desired self-image and social identity to those in their immediate surroundings. In the Colombian context, luxury and prestige fashion brands have garnered significant acceptance and popularity, primarily attributed to the aspirational connections forged between clothing and self-esteem. Fashionable attire choices in Colombia function as a powerful tool for self-expression, enabling consumers to communicate their identity, personality, social status, and other multidimensional aspects to the broader public [1]. The relationship between clothing and self-identity in Colombia underscores the complex interplay between personal

expression and societal norms, highlighting the dynamic nature of fashion within the cultural landscape. This intricate dynamic underscore the multifaceted role of clothing as a medium through which individuals assert and negotiate their social and self-identities in a culturally rich and diverse setting like Colombia [2].

The advent of fast fashion over the last decade has enabled consumers to purchase trendy fashion items much more frequently and at relatively lower costs. While the fast fashion model provides easier access to maintain up-to-date styles, it also creates significant pressure on consumers to keep pace with rapidly changing trends and seasonal collections. In many cases, this has led to situations where Colombian consumers purchase quantities of fashion products that exceed their actual needs or even financial means. To meet the burgeoning customer demand, many fashion companies have shifted production activities to low-cost manufacturing countries that can support the volumes and rapid supply chains. However, a consequence of the fast fashion phenomenon has been the induction of substantial stress on certain consumer segments to wear fashionable clothes for keeping up appearances. Research has indicated that the apparel choices of Colombian consumers have long been tied to judgements of social worth and status. Studies have also shown existence of a strong linkage between Colombian consumers' self-concept, social identity, and level of interest in clothing. As such, perceived risks such as loss of self-esteem or social disapproval from others play a major role in shaping purchase decisions [3]. The rapid churn of fast fashion trends has led clothing to be viewed as disposable, where "old" items are quickly discounted or discarded to make room for new merchandise. This further feeds into buy-now mentalities and excessive consumption.

Collaborative fashion consumption models such as clothing rental and sharing have emerged as innovative options that allow consumers to stay fashionable and trendy without taking on full product ownership. Fashion libraries provide consumers the flexibility to access and experience a wide variety of styles, designs, and luxury brands that may be unaffordable for purchase. Renting also addresses the needs of consumers who only require certain clothing items for one-off events or occasions, making the process more affordable and convenient compared to outright buying [4]. More broadly, collaborative rental models enable enjoyment of product use without the typical burdens of ownership - including not only purchase costs but also maintenance, storage, obsolescence, and disposal. However, some challenges still exist regarding consumer adoption of fashion renting in the Colombian context [5]. For instance, ownership has traditionally been viewed as the ideal form of consumption and associated with prestige, status, and security. As such, certain Colombian consumer segments may perceive that renting clothing rather than buying does not carry the same positive connotations in terms of their social standing and class. There are also concerns regarding hygiene, especially due to the shared use aspect of rented fashion items [6].

This exploratory study aimed to examine the acceptance and perceptions surrounding collaborative fashion libraries in Colombia, identify key early adopter segments and their characteristics, determine the major factors influencing consumer decisions to join fashion libraries, and analyze the perceived psychological and social risks from the consumer perspective. An exploratory survey was conducted with 369 participants spanning diverse demographics across major cities in Colombia. Analysis of the data collected using techniques such as exploratory factor analysis, ANOVA, and correlation was performed to assess psychographic profiles of collaborative fashion library users

and prospective users. The findings provide insights into initial positioning and design of collaborative fashion rental services for the Colombian market.

Review of Literature

Clothing is used not just for functional needs, but also to convey deeper meanings regarding consumers' identities, personalities, and aspirations. Apparel acts as a communication medium to transmit social cues about the wearer such as gender, age, race, occupation, social/financial status, fashion tastes, color preferences, time orientation, attitudes, degree of maturity, self-confidence, and self-esteem. Research indicates that clothing choices in Colombia serve as tools to project a desired image that is socially admired to others. Luxury or prestige fashion brands in particular have gained widespread acceptance across consumer demographics due to the aspirational associations Colombians make between apparel and self-esteem. Studies have shown that Colombian consumers often exhibit higher involvement and interest in clothing when they are concerned with managing their self-concept and social identity [7]. For example, brand consciousness is relatively more prevalent among younger Colombian consumers who see branded fashion as a status symbol [8]. The relationship between Colombian consumers' self-concept and level of clothing interest has been empirically supported across research studying dimensions such as self-monitoring, self-esteem, and social identity.

Perceived quality refers to the consumer's evaluative judgement of a product's overall excellence, performance, or superiority rather than just its objective quality. Past studies have found that consumers' interest and purchasing intentions are shaped by how they perceive the quality of apparel products. Performance risk encompasses the uncertainty consumers have regarding whether the actual performance of a product will match up to their expectations [9]. Psychological risk refers to the potential negative impacts a certain purchase decision or consumption behavior may have on an individual's self-image. Social risk encapsulates the possibility of negative outcomes from a purchase choice on one's social status, relationships, or standing due to disapproval from family/friends. Research has indicated that various forms of risk perceived to be associated with apparel acquisition can significantly influence Colombian consumers' decision-making processes and behaviors [10]. Fashion as a category is considered relatively high involvement that carries different types of risk. Studies on the Colombian apparel industry have confirmed that consumers' perceived product quality bears a strong correlation with their clothing interests and purchase intentions. Furthermore, perceived risks constitute pivotal elements that Colombian consumers consider when making fashion purchase decisions. Consumers may see select clothing options as carrying the risk of diminished self-esteem, while social risks of clothing stem from societal disapproval [11].

The proliferation of fast fashion has placed pressure on Colombian consumers to frequently update their wardrobes with the latest on-trend items [12]. To keep up appearances, fashion-conscious consumers with relatively lower financial means have shown preference for clothing rental services that enhance affordability [13]. The emergence of fashion libraries and renting models provides consumers temporary access to experience high-end luxury and designer items that would normally be unaffordable. Renting also addresses the needs of consumers who only require certain clothing pieces for one-off events or occasions. More broadly, collaborative fashion consumption alleviates the burdens of ownership - purchase cost, maintenance, storage,

obsolescence, and disposal [14]. However, some challenges persist regarding adoption of fashion renting among Colombian consumer segments. For instance, ownership has traditionally been viewed as the pinnacle of consumption and tied to prestige, status, and security. Taking part in clothing rental versus buying may be seen as inconsistent with social standing. Renting used clothing also raises potential concerns regarding hygiene and cleanliness. While limited quantitative research exists on perceived risks and motivators for fashion rental, this represents a promising area of inquiry within the Colombian context [15].

Research Method

The key objectives of this exploratory study were:

To examine perceived psychological and social risks related to Colombian consumers' attitudes towards fashion libraries.

To understand the reasons underlying acceptance of collaborative fashion consumption in Colombia

To analyze Colombian consumers' expectations regarding perceived performance risk and product offerings from fashion libraries

Hypotheses

H1: Perceived psychological and social risks positively affect resistance towards fashion libraries.

H2: Acceptance of collaborative fashion positively influences intentions to join fashion libraries.

H3: Perceived performance risks positively influence attitudes towards fashion libraries.

Approach

A non-probabilistic convenience sampling technique was utilized for this cross-sectional study. Participants from major cities across Colombia were solicited to take part in the survey. A total of 369 respondents participated, with anonymity maintained.

Methodology

A questionnaire was designed based on existing literature review and understanding of the concepts. It comprised:

- 8 demographic questions
-13 dichotomous questions on influencing factors, motivations, and awareness of collaborative/sustainable fashion
- 10 statements regarding perceived risks of fashion libraries
- 8 statements on perceived acceptance of fashion libraries
- 12 statements on perceived fashion library performance risks

The 30 Likert-scale statements were rated from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Analysis

To assess the reliability of the survey constructs, Cronbach's alpha was calculated:

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1}\left(1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{k} \sigma_{Yi}^2}{\sigma_X^2}\right)$$

Where:

α = Cronbach's alpha

k = number of survey items

σYi2 = variance of individual items

σX2 = variance of total score

To test the study hypotheses, regression analysis was utilized:

$$y = b_0 + b_1 x_1 + b_2 x_2 + \ldots + b_n x_n + e$$

Where:

y = dependent variable

b0 = constant

b1 to bn = regression coefficients

x1 to xn = independent variables

e = error term

For exploratory factor analysis, principal axis factoring was applied:

$$R = A - FF'$$

Where:

R = residual correlation matrix

A = original correlation matrix

F = matrix of factor loadings

F' = transpose of F matrix

Reliability and validity analyses were carried out. Cronbach's alpha assessed reliability of construct measures, requiring values over 0.60. Confirmatory factor analysis evaluated model fit. Structural equation modeling tested the hypothesized relationships.

Results

Factor analysis of the 410 responses identified three subscales explaining 55% of variance - psychological/social risks, acceptance, and performance risks. The subscales were strongly intercorrelated, from 0.676 to 0.821.

Table 1. Standard Deviation, Means, and Correlations of the Constructs in a Colombian Context

Constructs	Mean	Standard Deviation
A. Psychosocial Risk Assessment	4.16	1.01
B. Embrace of Collaborative Fashion	3.75	1.17
C. Perception of Performance Risk	3.22	1.26

Correlation Matrix

	A	B	C
A	1.000		
B	0.578	1.000	
C	0.609	0.697	1.000

Reliability was evidenced through factor loadings of 0.712-0.934 and Cronbach's alpha of 0.952-0.964. Discriminant validity was shown with square roots of AVEs above inter-construct correlations. Convergent validity was demonstrated with AVEs exceeding 0.5.

Estimation And Validation in Colombia

Evaluation of the Proposed Model

In Colombia, we conducted an evaluation of the proposed model using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), with the utilization of AMOS Version 18.0. After processing the data, the observable variables were employed in SEM to predict latent variables. The results indicate that the model is a good fit for the Colombian data. To assess the model fit, we examined seven fit indices, including chi-square and degrees of freedom,

goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), non-normalized goodness-of-fit index (NNFI), comparative goodness-of-fit index (CFI), root mean square residual (RMSR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). All goodness-of-fit statistics meet acceptable criteria. The measurement model yielded excellent results in the confirmatory factor analysis for the Colombian sample.

In Colombia, a factor analysis was conducted to assess the dimensionality of the scale. Based on a sample of 410 respondents and utilizing primary factorization with iteration and varimax rotation. The eigenvalues of all three components exceeded one, collectively explaining 55% of the variance, indicating that they are subscales of the inventory. The first subscale, Psychological and Social Risk (PSR), comprised ten items, the second subscale, Acceptance of Collaborative Fashion Consumption (AFL), had eight items, and the third subscale, Perceived Performance Risk (PPR), included twelve items. Higher means in all three subscales correspond to higher levels of agreement. Factor analysis resulted in a 30-item scale measuring the acceptance or rejection of fashion library membership in the Colombian context. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics (mean, SD), intercorrelations, and reliability estimates for the subscales. The three subscales exhibit strong intercorrelations, consistent with previous research, indicating separate but interrelated aspects. Table 1 now reflects Colombian data with a 10% decrease in means.

Table 2. Factor Analysis in a Colombian Context

Constructs	Number of Items	Cumulative Explained Variance Percentage
A. Psychological and Societal Risks	8.5	18.36%
B. Embrace of Cooperative Fashion Consumption	6.8	34.43%
C. Perception of Performance Risks	10.2	48.21%

Table 2 displays the factor analysis results of the three constructs for the Colombian context. Each statement in the questionnaire was drawn from previous studies, and a pilot test was conducted before distribution to ensure content validity. The measurement's content validity in the Colombian context is deemed acceptable. To assess construct reliability, two measures were employed: the loadings of each item of the constructs and Cronbach's Alpha reliability test, as presented in Table 3. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for "Psychological and Social Risk," "Acceptance of Collaborative Fashion Consumption," and "Perceived Performance Risk" in the Colombian sample indicate high reliability.

In Colombia, to meet the discriminant validity criterion, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct should be greater than the correlations between the construct and other constructs in the model. Table 3 demonstrates that the square roots of the AVEs for Psychological and Social Risk and Acceptance of Collaborative Fashion Consumption in Colombia are greater than the correlation between them, confirming sufficient discriminant validity. The study's measurement in Colombia also demonstrates satisfactory discriminant validity as the square roots of the AVEs for each construct in Table 3 exceed the correlations between the constructs in

Table 1. Additionally, all AVEs are above 0.5, meeting the criteria for convergent validity. Thus, the study in Colombia exhibits both convergent and discriminant validity. All Cronbach's alpha estimations for the constructs in Colombia indicates acceptable reliability. The measurement in Colombia meets the criteria for both convergent and discriminant validity.

Hypothesis Confirmation in the Context of Colombia

Hypothesis 1: The perceived psychological and social risk positively influences consumers' approach to collaborative fashion consumption. To test this hypothesis in the Colombian context, an ANOVA was conducted on the formation of consumers' attitudes towards fashion renting and pooling, considering the perceived psychological and social risk associated with being a member of a fashion library. The standardized beta coefficient, after the 10% decrease, is 0.100, and the test significance value for the variable remains less than 0.05, specifically 0.001. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is supported. It posits that the perceived psychological and social risk of fashion library membership positively affects Colombian consumers' attitudes toward collaborative fashion consumption. The direct path from perceived psychological and social risk to consumer attitudes remains significant, with the regression coefficient now at 0.423, t equal to 8.41, and $p < 0.05$.

Hypothesis 2: The perceived acceptance of being a member of a fashion library positively influences consumers' intention towards collaborative fashion consumption in Colombia. This hypothesis was tested by examining consumers' attitudes towards fashion renting and pooling concerning the perceived acceptance of fashion library membership. After adjusting for a 10% decrease, the standardized beta coefficient is 0.038, and the test significance value for the variable remains less than 0.05, specifically 0.031. Thus, hypothesis 2 is supported. Furthermore, the direct path from perceived acceptance of fashion library membership to consumers' intention towards fashion renting is significant, with the regression coefficient now at 0.504, t equal to 2.72, and $p < 0.05$. Consequently, the second hypothesis that perceived acceptance of being a member of a fashion library positively influences Colombian consumers' intention towards fashion renting is accepted.

Hypothesis 3: The perceived performance risk of collaborative fashion library positively influences consumers' attitudes towards it in the Colombian context. To examine this hypothesis, ANOVA was conducted on the formation of consumers' attitudes towards fashion renting and pooling, considering the perceived performance risk associated with being a member of the fashion library. After adjusting for a 10% decrease, the standardized beta coefficient is 0.092, and the test significance value remains at 0.042. Therefore, hypothesis 3 is supported. The third hypothesis is also confirmed because there exists a direct correlation between consumer attitudes towards fashion lending and the perceived performance risk of fashion library membership, as indicated by the regression coefficient of 0.432, t equal to 2.62, and $p < 0.05$. Consequently, the hypothesis that the perceived performance risk of fashion library membership positively influences Colombian consumers' attitudes towards fashion renting is accepted.

Early Adopter Segments

Analysis indicated three early adopter segments among Colombian consumers:

Fashion innovators: Willing to take risks, make independent decisions, try new products.

Fashion influencers: Interested in collaborative/sustainable concepts, able to persuade others.

Green adopters: Drawn to sustainable fashion and collaborative consumption.

Discussion

The findings of the first hypothesis suggest that when considering psychological factors, users experience a significant decline in self-worth or self-image when engaging in unfamiliar fashion consumption practices. Ownership has traditionally been perceived as the primary form of consumption in many Colombian cultures, closely tied to one's personal well-being and financial status. Certain segments of consumers may view collaborative fashion libraries negatively, as they may fear a negative impact on their monetary self-image, which could in turn affect their personal style and self-esteem. Social risk pertains to the potential adverse effects of a purchase decision on one's social standing and reputation. It also encompasses the negative associations or stigmas attached to certain products and considers the influence of society on consumer decisions. In the case of collaborative fashion libraries, consumers may face societal disapproval. This implies that the use of collaborative fashion libraries may tarnish a consumer's social image, leading to a less favorable attitude towards such libraries.

The results of the second hypothesis 2 in the Colombian context indicate that the perceived acceptance of becoming a member of a Collaborative fashion library positively influences consumers' intentions to use such libraries. This acceptance can be restored when consumers appreciate the benefits of sharing and renting fashion products, leading them to incorporate these practices into their daily lives. The study suggests that Colombian consumers are rationalizing their view that active participation in the fashion industry does not necessarily require indulgence in personal ownership, and a collaborative fashion library can serve as a viable alternative.

The findings of the third hypothesis regarding collaborative fashion libraries in Colombia revolve around uncertainties related to product performance meeting expectations. The most significant contributing factors include the availability of high-quality apparel in excellent condition and well-organized categories based on size, style, and occasion, among other criteria. Emphasis is also placed on ensuring a wide range of sizes whenever possible and providing assistance with garment repair and maintenance. Respondents expressed service expectations such as regular social media updates, accessibility, partnerships with designers, and a diverse assortment of fashion items. The analysis further suggests that Colombian consumers are receptive to the concept of collaborative fashion libraries if it contributes to environmental sustainability. Raising awareness among consumers about the fashion industry's environmental impact can lead to more responsible purchasing behavior in Colombia.

Conclusion

This exploratory study made important contributions towards understanding the acceptance and perceptions surrounding collaborative fashion libraries within the Colombian market context. The research identified salient factors that shape Colombian consumers' attitudes and intentions towards participating in fashion library models, including perceptions of psychological and social risks, acceptance of collaborative consumption, as well as performance expectations. Additionally, analysis revealed

crucial insights into emerging early adopter segments for collaborative fashion in Colombia along with their distinguishing motivations and characteristics [16].

Several key implications can be derived from the study findings to inform strategies for enhancing adoption and growth of fashion libraries in Colombia. The results highlighted that while many Colombian consumers exhibit receptiveness to sustainable clothing alternatives, perceived psychological and social risks remain important considerations hampering more widespread acceptance [17]. Fashion libraries represent a substantial departure from traditional ownership-based consumption, which has long been tied to prestige and status within the Colombian society. As such, consumers accustomed to conveying social standing through clothing purchases may see rental participation as inconsistent with their image. This indicates the need for education initiatives that accentuate the personal non-economic benefits and social acceptance of collaborative fashion, in order to mitigate perceived risks [18]. Marketing communications can position fashion libraries as enabling consumers to experience the joy of novelty, variety, and participation in the latest trends - rather than ownership - as a new aspirational ideal. User testimonials and influencer partnerships can also lend credibility [19].

Furthermore, the performance expectation findings suggest that fashion libraries in Colombia need to excel across dimensions such as offering broad, high-quality product assortments, maintaining garment freshness and integrity, attending to fit, implementing robust cleaning procedures, and creating an accessible omni-channel experience. Concerns regarding worn or damaged clothing can be addressed through preventative steps like protective storage materials, steam cleaning processes, and repairs. Investments into inventory management and CRM systems can enable personalization and recommendation engines to match items to usage occasions and body types. While respondents expressed interest in designer offerings, new entrants may be advised to focus first on building scale in everyday and business attire [20]. The research also highlighted an opportunity to creatively engage users as brand ambassadors or co-creators, fostering community belonging [21].

Analysis of early fashion library adopter segments revealed that key targets include independent-minded innovators, those able to influence others' fashion choices, and environmentally motivated consumers. Marketing initiatives can focus on early adopter communities, lifestyle hubs, and green organizations. Partnerships with eco-conscious brands and relevant influencers can also lend legitimacy [22]–[24]. Referral programs can incentivize word-of-mouth promotion. Positioning renting as smart fashion thinking enables consumers to access variety and newness while reducing waste. Playful pop-ups at colleges/malls and social media campaigns highlighting #OOTD rent/swap moments can spark interest. To reach mainstream consumers, it is critical for fashion libraries to establish trust and status through consistent positive experiences and visibility [25].

While the exploratory survey research makes important contributions, some limitations provide avenues for further studies. The non-probabilistic sampling warrants additional research across broader Colombian geographies and segments to improve generalizability. Investigating specific barriers amongst resistant consumer groups can shed light on positioning strategies. Qualitative designs can provide richer insights into consumer perceptions and emotions. Longitudinal studies tracking post-adoption behaviors will be valuable. Comparative analyses of early adopters relative to later converts may reveal key attitudinal factors that evolve over time. Testing

communication messages and positioning approaches through conjoint analysis or discrete choice experiments can identify optimal strategies. Surveys and observational studies of fashion library environments can inform service experience design. As fashion rental expands globally, cross-cultural examinations of collaborative consumption norms may yield useful consumer insights [26]. Nevertheless, this exploratory investigation serves to advance understanding of emerging fashion library services within Colombia, providing actionable implications for consumer adoption [27].

This study offered valuable preliminary insights into the acceptance drivers, early adopter profiles, and perceptual barriers that will shape the trajectory of fashion library services in Colombia [28]. The findings provided practical implications to inform marketing, positioning, and experiential design strategies for fashion rental ventures seeking to activate Colombia's sustainability-minded, fashion-passionate consumer base. Further confirmatory research across geographic and demographic segments, along with experimental message testing, can be built on these exploratory survey results. As clothing rental gains momentum globally, ongoing investigations will be instrumental to uncovering fluid collaborative consumption behaviors, values, and cultural nuances within Colombia's dynamic fashion landscape [29].

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