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Empirical Study of Chinese Consumers Perception-Attitude-Behavior in Clothes Rental Platform

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perception-attitude-behavior

Abstract

This paper aims to stretch the technology acceptance model (TAM) approach by investigating a clothes rental network. One of the understudied geographies of the world economy is the large-scale international trade in clothes, which are consumed by Chinese consumers. An online (www.sojump.com) survey was conducted by including 303 Chinese respondents. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the proposed hypothesis. The results indicated that external influence has a significant impact on the perceived ease of rental. Furthermore, consumers' perceived ease of rental influences the attitude towards renting, and perceived ease of rental plays a complete mediating role between them. However, external influence has no significant impact on perceived usefulness, and consumers' perceived usefulness has no impact on rental intention. In addition, attitude towards renting works as an indispensable mediation between perception and behavior. This study highlights the role of perception, attitude, behavior on clothes rental, and provides guidance and suggestions for clothes rental platform.

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I. Introduction

Public attention paid to sustainability in clothing has risen considerably nowadays, and sustainable clothing offers a possible solution to environmental problems (Jacobs, Petersen, Horisch, & Battenfeld, 2018; Y. Park, 2018; Son, 2016). Therefore, the increasing popularity and growth of second-hand consumption have provided additional business opportunities for the e-commerce companies (Padmavathy, Swapana, & Paul, 2019). Instead of purchasing new dresses and accessories on every whim, however, Chinese consumers are choosing to embrace the latest development of the sharing economy to keep up with the ever-changing fashion cycle – clothes sharing (“Clothes sharing,” 2018). There’s a growing trend among internet users to create their own commercial groups that allow them to sell, buy or rent items. Among internet users, this kind of commercial group is called marketplace especially rental platform (Chang, Lu, & Lin, 2019). Apart from stores for clothes renting, users purchase their clothes through e-commerce. For consumers, online rental service is convenient and saves time, and there is abundant and free information for reference. Moreover, users can compare the prices and products of different suppliers and fashion trends have led to higher consumer demand for clothes and a higher expectation on fashionable clothes (Tu & Hu, 2018). Whether clothing rental can change the development of fashion industry, spreading the idea of replacing purchases with renting.

Lately, some scholars have initiated research into collaborative consumption, which is a economic model and most distinct from traditional consumption in that it does not involve the sale of a new material good (Lang & Armstrong, 2018). However, most of the studies mainly stay in the exploratory stage and focus on clothes swapping or trading perspectives; and data in most of the research were collected in western countries (Abbes, Hallem, & Taga, 2020; Ferraro, Sands, & Brace-Govan, 2016; Lang & Armstrong, 2018). For instance, people have concern about the social influences of renting issues of clothing items. Recently, a quantitative research study

conducted by Tu and Hu (2018) indicated compatibility matters the most in driving to have a positive assessment and perception of online clothes renting in terms of attitude and behavior. In Lang and Armstrong (2018)’s study, an online survey was conducted with US females and the results highlights the role of personality traits, attitude perceived ability and past experiences on clothes rental, providing guidance and suggestions for clothing renting business.

Currently, Chinese consumers apparel spending is rising. The Chinese apparel market is expected to be the largest apparel market worldwide. Along with the increasing sustainable awareness, Chinese consumers have displayed high intention to buy less environmentally harmful products and service (Lang & Zhang, 2019). While clothes rental has been suggested as a new style to pursue sustainable behavior, and it is gaining more popularity in the western world (USA, Europe etc.). These include the higher likelihood of costly product returns when customers’ ability to “touch and feel” products is important in determining fit (Ofek, Katona, & Sarvary, 2011). Therefore, there is a need to investigate the attitude and behavior of Chinese renting clothes, including external influence. This study aims to whether or not Chinese consumers have demand or identity of the behavioral intention of clothes rental will be the focus of this study. It hopes to take technology acceptance model (TAM) to construct the framework of this research, so as to explain the factors why the consumers accept the network clothes rental.

II. Literature Review

1. Clothes Rental

Rental is different from purchasing. In a rental exchange, in contrast, a product goes from provider to renter –and money goes from renter to provider –and then the product goes back to the provider (Durgee & O’Connor, 1995). According to the State Information Center, China’s sharing economy was worth 2.94 trillion yuan by 2018, an increase of 41 percent year-on-year,

and more than 760 million Chinese—over half the country's population—have paid for shared services or products (“Sharing,” 2019). Clothes rental, as like collaborative systems are often supported by a technological infrastructure, referred to as “collaborative platforms” (Abbes et al., 2020), enabling access over ownership and focus on using rather than owning. Clothes rental platforms can also take on the role of mediator and interfere in the relationship between users by controlling the terms of the rent in return for financial compensation (Taobao, Amazon, Xianyu etc.). They present a solution for users who always want something fresh and new that they have never worn before, regardless of whether it is second or first hand.

Clothes rental is dominated by wedding and dance/drama stores, which provided rental services for consumers when they need to participate in banquets or important occasions. But consumption patterns tend to be short-lived. Like the Korean traditional costume, consumer rent more than buy the Hanbok (S. Park, 2018). The main researchers expect that more clothes rental will focus on online service, and this technology refers to the network type rather than the clothing technology (Tu & Hu, 2018). Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) indicated that the demand from non-ownership services rental is negatively influenced by possession importance and positively influenced by trend orientation and convenience orientation. But the other proposed determinants—experience orientation, price consciousness, and environmentalism do not appear to influence a preference for rental modes of consumption. Rental has been suggested as alternative sources of revenue for industry while also extending the life and use frequency of clothing products (Lang & Armstrong, 2018). For example, fashion collection provides consumers with an unlimited assortment of designer dresses and accessories via a rental subscription service. The state of knowledge regarding clothes rent networks is not well developed, so that, this paper provides extensive empirical sketching of the connections.

2. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Based on Fishbein and Ajzen (1977)'s Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), TAM (Technology Acceptance Model) assumes that the beliefs about the computer system influence attitudes, which in turn lead to intention of behavior (Figure 1). TAM assert that the influence of external variables upon user behavior is mediated through user beliefs and attitudes. Beliefs relate to an individual's subjective assessment that performing some behavior will result in a specific consequence (Shang, Chen, & Shen, 2005). This paper focuses on the user regarding to rental service, so that is suitable for using TAM model as below.

According to TAM, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are the two factors that influence attitude. Similar to TRA, TAM assumes that the use of a computer depends on behavioral intention. In other words, TAM believes that behavioral intention has significant positive effects on actual behavior (Tu & Hu, 2018).

Shang et al. (2005) revised TAM to predict and explain consumers' extrinsic and intrinsic motivation of shop on-line. The findings of their study show that perceived usefulness has significant positive effects on the shopping online. In the studies on information technology, some experts have expanded TAM and discussed the other variables that may play a role. Thus, this paper not only considers TAM, but also introduces the other factors that may influence users' online clothes renting and discussing and explaining consumers' behaviors of online clothes renting on a broader basis.

3. Perception-Attitude-Behavior Hierarchy

According to regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997), consumers with a salient influence need regulate their attention, perception, attitudes, and behaviors toward approaching gains and avoiding non-gains (Wanke, 2009). This paper expected the consumers' perception with clothes rental influence attitude and behavior of clothes rental in platform. In such case, perception can be classified into 2 predisposing factors: Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of rental.

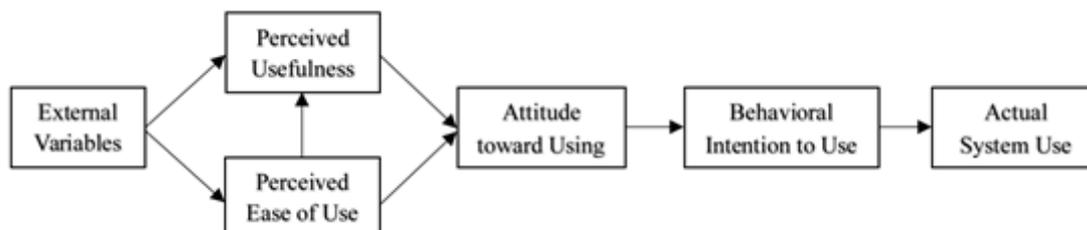


Figure 1. Technology Acceptance Model

With few exceptions, theories are constructed to account for a circumscribed range of phenomena that can be identified using a clothes rental platform and stimulus external variable. Tu and Hu (2018) indicated that external influence contains mass media, views in online forums, celebrities saying, and all of them have positive influence on renting clothes intention.

In addition, Attitude is initially conceptualized as a disposition to behave in a positive or negative way toward an object (Allport, 1935). According to theory of reasoned action asserts, a much better predictor of a person's behavior toward an object is the person's attitude toward the behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). That is, attitudes are an additive function of the evaluations of the possible consequences of the behavior, each weighted by the likelihood that the behavior would actually have this effect (Wanke, 2009). In effect, this paper explored that attitude toward using clothes rental platform as a basis for a behavior decision (rental intention) is governed in part by situation factors that influence its accessibility in memory.

III. Research Methods

1. Proposed Model and Hypothesis

This study is an attempt to investigate the external influence of clothes rental platform and their influence on consumer perception, attitude, behavior. The conceptual

framework in this study is based on the TAM (Technology Acceptance Model), which is a dual-route theory and used in network service as like platform. This study investigates the external influence of clothes rental platform, running by online sites including mobile channel.

There are two consumer perception used in this study to measure the effect of stimuli on consumer attitudes and behavior, including perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Different from standard TAM theory, we just conduct rental intention to judge 'behavior intention to use', and the 'actual system to use' variable was ignored in this time. The reason is that intention is enough to evaluate consumers' decision and also this paper is just initial stage yet. Overall, a total of five constructs are employed in this study, for which the proposed model is shown in Figure 2.

Hypothesis 1a: External influence has a positive relation to consumer perceived usefulness with clothes rental platform.

Hypothesis 1b: External influence has a positive relation to consumer perceived ease of rental with clothes rental platform.

Hypothesis 2: Consumer perceived ease of rental has a positive relation to perceived usefulness with clothes rental platform.

Hypothesis 3a: Consumer perceived usefulness has a positive relation to attitude toward renting with clothes rental platform.

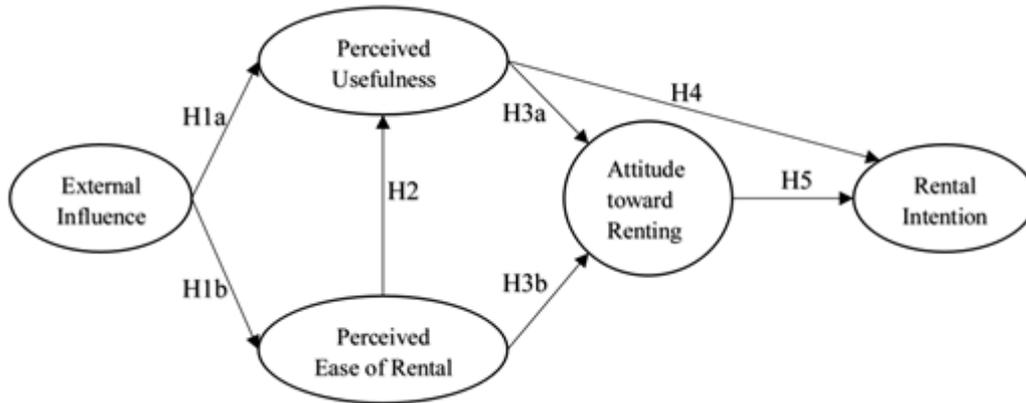


Figure 2. Proposed Model

Hypothesis 3b: Consumer perceived ease of rental has a positive relation to attitude toward renting with clothes rental platform.

Hypothesis 4: Consumer perceived usefulness has a positive relation to rental intention with clothes rental platform.

Hypothesis 5: Consumer attitude toward renting has a positive relation to rental intention with clothes rental platform.

2. Sample and Data Collection

An online survey (www.sojump.com) was conducted to collect data in China who purchased fashion goods using online before. WeChat, a widely-used mobile social network App in China, which has more than 1040 million active users in 2018 (Lang & Zhang, 2019), was utilized to recruit participants. We sent an invitation message to WeChat friends through group chats, moments and QR code on WeChat, followed by the survey link and invited respondents to complete the survey. In turn, those contacts were also requested to distribute the invitation message to others, as well as the survey link to their WeChat contracts. In total, data collection generated 303 valid samples (male=77, female=226).

3. Instrument Development

This survey contains a variety of 5-point Likert scales (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) to evaluate all variables, including external influence, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of rental, attitude toward renting, and rental intention. In order to be more suitable for the contents and variables of this paper, measurements need to be developed and modified. Specifically about attitude toward renting, three items “I think it is a good idea to rent clothes” “I think it is wise to rent clothes” “I enjoy renting clothes” that were borrowed from Tu and Hu (2018), and two items “positive to rent” and “useful to rent” that were revised from Padmavathy et al, (2019). The other measurement items were all modified from Tu and Hu (2018).

To provide a better knowledge of clothes rental, a scenario statement regarding an imaginary platform was described. Firstly, participants were requested to read the scenario “Imagine that you are going to choose fashion goods on a clothes rental platform”, then they were asked to evaluate the level of their opinion about clothes rental described in the scenario. Respondents’ demographics were collected in the last section. The instruments in this study were initially developed in English as all of the measurements adapted were

originally written in English. The survey was then translated into Chinese by a scholar who is fluent in both English and Chinese. In addition, to ensure an accurate translation (Lang & Zhang, 2019), a different bilingual scholar translated the Chinese version back to English.

IV. Research Findings

1. Measurement Model

All constructs in this study were adapted from the literature using 5-point Likert scales. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to estimate the measurement model by AMOS. The CFA model indicated an acceptable fit ($X^2=425.066$, $df=199$, $X^2/df = 2.136$, $p<0.001$, CFI=0.944, NFI=0.913, IFI=0.952, RMSEA=0.061). Each a priori factor loading was positive and significant, and all coefficient alphas exceeded the recommended 0.70 criterion (Nunnally, 1978), thereby demonstrating convergent validity (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988). Next, a series of nested CFA models were compared for any two factors in the overall measurement model to assess their discriminant validity. All chi-square difference tests were significant, providing evidence of discriminant validity (Bagozzi, Yi, & Phillips, 1978). In addition, using SPSS, the reliability of each measurement was also achieved given that all Cronbach's α estimates exceeded 0.80 (Cortina, 1993). Both convergent validity and discriminant validity were confirmed shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

2. Test of Demographic Differences

This paper conducted a one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) to examine the demographic variables that significantly influence the external influence, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitude toward renting, rental intention. Difference analysis of all variables by gender, marital status, age group, education level, and income is shown in Table 3.

External influence differed significantly with respect to

gender (Female > Male, $F = 4.627$, $p < 0.05$), education level (Graduate > Undergraduate > High school, $F = 3.622$, $p < 0.05$). Perceived usefulness differed significantly with age group (Over 30yrs > Below 29yrs, $F = 3.103$, $p < 0.05$), education level (Graduate > Undergraduate > High school, $F = 3.200$, $p < 0.05$). Perceived ease of use differed significantly with respect to marital status (Married > Single, $F = 5.883$, $p < 0.05$), age group (Over 30yrs > Below 29yrs, $F = 9.433$, $p < 0.001$). Attitude toward renting differed significantly with all variables, gender (Female > Male, $F = 6.855$, $p < 0.01$), marital status (Married > Single, $F = 16.120$, $p < 0.001$), age group (Over 30yrs > Below 29yrs, $F = 5.725$, $p < 0.01$), education level (Graduate > Undergraduate = High school, $F = 14.292$, $p < 0.001$), income (Over 15000\$ > Below 15000\$, $F = 7.719$, $p < 0.001$). Rental intention also differed significantly with all variables, gender (Female > Male, $F = 9.085$, $p < 0.01$), marital status (Married > Single, $F = 18.468$, $p < 0.001$), age group (Over 30yrs > Below 29yrs, $F = 7.998$, $p < 0.01$), education level (Graduate > Undergraduate = High school, $F = 20.797$, $p < 0.001$), income (Over 15000\$ > Below 15000\$, $F = 10.758$, $p < 0.001$).

3. Test of Hypothesis

To test the proposed hypothesis, a structural equation model (SEM) was conducted. The analysis results discovered an acceptable model fit ($X^2=453.209$, $df = 202$, $X^2/df = 2.244$, $p < 0.001$, NFI = 0.907, IFI = 0.946, TLI = 0.938, CFI = 0.946, RMSEA = 0.064). Results from the research model sample bootstrap are presented in Figure 2, and in Table 4 for total effects.

Specifically, external influence was found to have a positive impacts on perceived ease of rental ($\beta = 0.112$, $p = 0.05$), but have no significant impact on perceived usefulness ($\beta = 0.075$, $p = 0.201$). This results indicated that consumers perceived the higher external influence, they perceived the most ease of rental with clothes. However, whether consumers' external influence perception is high or low, it has no effect on perceived usefulness. Thus, H1a was rejected and H1b was

Table 1. Analysis of Each Construct

Constructs	Item	Standard Estimate	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
External Influence	I think mass media influences my intention of renting clothes	.842	.947	.934	.623
	I think the views in online forums influence my intention of renting clothes	.859			
	I think what celebrities say influences my intention of renting clothes	.888			
	I think government's appeal influences my intention of renting clothes	.905			
	I think how fashion leaders' dress influences my intention of renting clothes	.921			
Perceived Usefulness	I think clothes renting is very convenient	.730	.846	.828	.585
	I think clothes renting is useful for me	.774			
	I think clothes renting can make me more fashionable	.825			
	I think clothes renting can quickly bring me the products I want	.725			
Perceived Ease of Rental	I think the way to use clothes renting is clear and highly understandable	.831	.909	.853	.716
	I think clothes renting dose not require too much learning	.824			
	I think the learning of clothes renting is simple and easy	.865			
	I think I can select clothes through appropriate renting according to my needs	.864			
Attitude toward Renting	I think it is positive to rent clothes	.789	.872	.892	.578
	I think it is very useful to rent clothes	.710			
	I think it is a good idea to rent clothes	.788			
	I think it is wise to rent clothes	.748			
	I enjoy renting clothes	.762			
Rental Intention	I choose to rent clothes rather than purchasing clothes	.790	.863	.845	.613
	I try to replace the purchase of clothes with the renting of clothes	.790			
	In the future, I will rent clothes rather than purchasing clothes	.754			
	In the future, I will voluntarily share my thoughts on clothes renting	.797			

Notes: $\chi^2 = 425.066$, $df = 199$, $\chi^2/df = 2.136$, $***p < .001$, CFI = .944, NFI = .913, IFI = .952, RMSEA= .061

Table 2. Correlation Matrix of the Measurement Model

	External Influence	Perceived Usefulness	Perceived Ease of Rental	Attitude toward Renting	Rental Intention
External Influence	.623				
Perceived Usefulness	.167	.585			
Perceived Ease of Rental	.197	.388	.716		
Attitude toward Renting	.193	.331	.480	.578	
Rental Intention	.110	.322	.533	.480	.613

Notes: The squared correlation estimates between the variables are listed below the diagonal and the AVEs are displayed in the diagonal

Table 3. Results of Demographic Differences

		Frequency	Percentage (%)	External Influence	Perceived Usefulness	Perceived Ease of Use	Attitude toward renting	Rental Intention
Gender	Male	77	25.4	3.20B	3.94	3.53	3.12B	2.73B
	Female	226	74.6	3.49A	4.09	3.69	3.38A	3.09A
	F-value			4.627*	1.570	1.134	6.855**	9.085**
	Sig.			.032	.211	.288	.009	.003
Marital Status	Single	184	60.7	3.45	3.99	3.52B	3.18B	2.82B
	Married	119	39.3	3.36	4.16	3.85A	3.52A	3.27A
	F-value			.587	2.892	5.883*	16.120***	18.468***
	Sig.			.444	.090	.016	.000	.000
Age	Below 19yrs	102	33.7	3.43	3.96B	3.50B	3.18B	2.81B
	20-29yrs	100	33	3.46	3.98B	3.40B	3.25B	2.91B
	Over 30yrs	101	33.3	3.36	4.24A	4.05A	3.51A	3.28A
	F-value			.287	3.103*	9.433***	5.725**	7.998***
	Sig.			.750	.046	.000	.004	.000
Education Level	High school	55	18.2	3.14B	3.90B	3.62	3.26B	2.78B
	Undergraduate	189	62.4	3.42AB	4.02AB	3.58	3.19B	2.86B
	Graduate	59	19.5	3.65A	4.30A	3.92	3.75A	3.64A
	F-value			3.622*	3.200*	1.891	14.292***	20.797***
	Sig.			.028	.042	.153	.000	.000
Income	Below 5000 \$	118	38.9	3.40	4.07	3.63	3.23B	2.84B
	5000-15000 \$	117	38.7	3.35	3.91	3.52	3.11B	2.76B
	Over 15000 \$	68	22.4	3.47	4.12	3.74	3.51A	3.29A
	F-value			.301	1.186	.826	7.719***	10.758***
	Sig.			.740	.307	.439	.001	.000

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Duncan: A>B

supported. In this paper, external variables cannot influence consumers' perceived usefulness. Although the renting clothes with strong promotion with forum, celebrities or fashion leaders etc., there is no effect of usefulness perception about Chinese consumers. In addition, perceived ease of rental positively influences the perceived usefulness ($\beta = 0.470$, $p = 0.001$), in support of H2. We can find that perceived ease of rental play

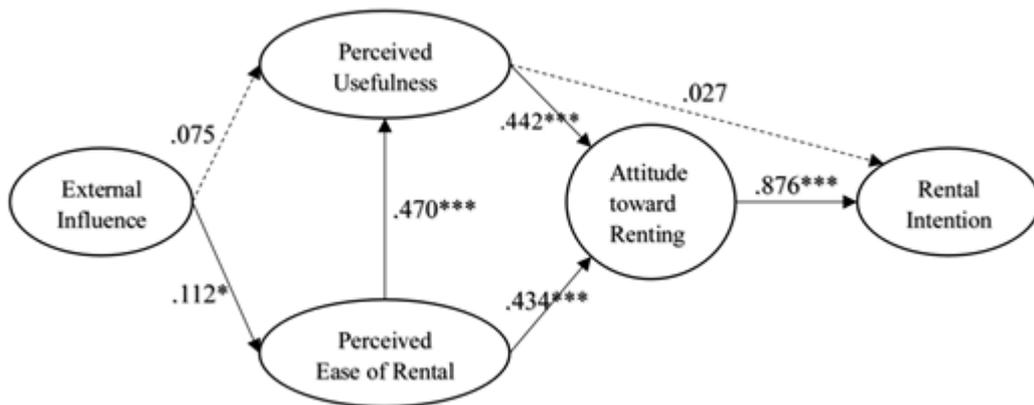
a role in complete mediation between external influence and perceived usefulness.

In turn, both perceived usefulness ($\beta = 0.442$, $p = 0.001$) and perceived ease of rental ($\beta = 0.434$, $p = 0.001$) were found to have positive impacts on attitude toward renting with clothes platform. This indicated that consumers perceived usefulness have a little more influence that perceived ease of rental with clothes

Table 4. Total Effects of the Research Model

Hypot hesis	Structural Paths	Standard Coefficient	Standard Error	t-value	Results
H1a	External Influence → Perceived Usefulness	.075	.048	1.280	Reject
H1b	External Influence → Perceived Ease of Rental	.112	.076	1.817*	Support
H2	Perceived Ease of Rental → Perceived Usefulness	.470	.045	7.027***	Support
H3b	Perceived Ease of Rental → Attitude toward Renting	.434	.038	7.131***	Support
H3a	Perceived Usefulness → Attitude toward Renting	.442	.061	6.732***	Support
H4	Perceived Usefulness → Rental Intention	.027	.072	.408	Reject
H5	Attitude toward Renting → Rental Intention	.876	.100	10.290***	Support

Notes: * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$



Notes: $\chi^2 = 453.209$, $df = 202$, $\chi^2/df = 2.244$, *** $p < .001$, NFI = .907, IFI = .946, TLI = .938, CFI = .946, RMSEA = .064

Figure 3. SEM Results

platform. Thus, H3a and H3b were both supported.

In regard to relationship among perception – Attitude – Behavior, only consumers’ attitude toward renting ($\beta = 0.876$, $p = 0.001$) was significantly associated with the intention to rental in clothes platform. Differently,

perceived usefulness ($\beta = 0.027$, $p = 0.683$) has no effect on rental intention. Thus, H4 was rejected and H5 was supported. This findings verifies attitude toward renting play an in important role as a complete mediation between perception and behavior.

V. Discussion

With clothes as the products for renting, this study helps relevant enterprises understand the factors influencing consumers' adoption of renting and their attitude and behavioral intention towards clothes renting. Taking the theory of planned behavior as the theoretical foundation, this study thus adopts the technology acceptance model (TAM), the structural model (SEM), and collected information to develop a research methodology that is both theoretical and practical. All of the findings were as followed:

This paper examined the differences in every variable in terms of gender, marital status, age group, education level, and income. The results show that respondents with female, married, older, high education, and high income showed the higher level of five variables. This finding was consistent with the results for Wang, Mei, Liu, Zhou, and Zhang (2019) that the oldest participants reported the highest level of variables. An understanding of these differences can help clothes rental marketers to improve overall levels of efficiency by targeting these groups.

The core formulations of TAM have argued that the effects of external variables on ending outcomes are mediated by consumers' perception and attitude toward renting in cloths rental platform. This argument was still sustained the TAM model from previous research (Shang et al., 2005; Tu & Hu, 2018). These findings are also consistent with other studies (Fazio & Williams, 1986) about positive relationship among consumers' perception, attitude and behavior. This paper found that perceived ease of rental was more important than perceived usefulness while they were being mediation variable. Perceived usefulness cannot be influenced by external influence, and have no significant impact on rental intention. No matter how famous it is (celebrities, government, fashion leaders' effect etc.), it will not affect the practical function of matter itself. It's consist with the results of Shang et al. (2005) that perceived usefulness had no effect on the shipping online behavior. So that, the way to use clothes renting need to be clear

and highly understandable, and the learning of clothes rental service must be simple. It suggests the Clothes rental marker put an importance on consumers' perceived ease of rental. Regarding to external influence, it also has a significantly positive impact on consumers' perceived ease of rental. This findings suggest that clothes rental promotion from mass media, government, online forums. In addition, celebrities saying and fashion leasers' dress can improve consumers' perception of rental. So, it would be important for retailers to try to keep the external influence as high as possible.

Some limitations in the present study are acknowledged. The data were collected entirely from Chinese respondents in an online platform. Future research should be exercise in generalizing the present findings to all consumers from other countries in other contexts. In further extending this research, it is pertinent to note that other variables may be important in segmenting clothes rental consumers and should be explored.

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