Exploring the Relationships between Regret, Dissatisfaction, and Repurchase Intention of Fashion Goods

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Keywords

chosen regret,
forgone regret,
dissatisfaction,
regret-solving effort,
repurchase intention

Abstract

In the current economic downturn, it is easy for consumers to be emotional and regret their fashion product purchases. The purpose of this paper was to understand the effect of customer regret on the dissatisfaction and repurchase intention of fashion consumers in China, which is the world's largest fashion trading country. A total of 275 participants were recruited from a Chinese online survey system (www.sojump.com). The SPSS 22.0 statistical package was used for various data analyses. This study conceptualized the positive relationship between customer regret and dissatisfaction and the negative relationship between dissatisfaction and the repurchase intention of fashion goods. The findings indicated that customer regret could be categorized into two distinct types, chosen and forgone regrets. Chosen regret had a greater effect than forgone regret on dissatisfaction. The negative influence of dissatisfaction on repurchase intention was weak in consumers with a high level of regret-solving effort. The results of this study will help fashion businesses retain their customers, thus gaining long-term and repurchase economic value for the fashion industry.

I. Introduction

Clothing is a must-have every day and night, and also a consumer goods to be considered in life. Therefore, the most common consumer regret is also related to fashion goods. People often regret consumption for many reasons, such as conspicuous consumption and impulse purchase. If the regret factors of fashion consumers are not solved in time, fashion operators will encounter many troubles (Chen, Teng, Liu, & Zhu, 2015). As a big country of fashion consumption, China often has regret choices in consumption (Chen et al., 2015), which is why this paper sets the target group as Chinese clothing consumers.

When reviewing a purchase decision, consumers usually regret their choices. For example, when there are two options, the consumer chooses one and later regrets not choosing the other. Or consumers may regret not buying the product at a special time, such as discounts or promotions (Simonson, 1992).   The term regret is generally used to describe the sense of sorrow or disappointment over something done or not done. Previous research (Inman, Dyer, & Jia, 1997; Tsiros & Mittal, 2000) has suggested that the forgone purchase is also necessary to fully explain the behavior after purchase. In practical terms, these studies have demonstrated that the comparison between chosen and forgone alternatives can affect consumer behavior to a certain extent. If consumers think that the forgone is better than chosen, they will feel regret and disappointed; if consumers think that the forgone is worse than chosen, they will feel happy and satisfied. Even if consumers are satisfied with the fashion goods they buy, this kind of regret may lead to product switching. Furthermore, the regret-solving effect has been found to have a positive influence on repurchase behavior. Studying regret factors is nothing but to find regret-solving factors (Cho & Park, 2015), so that more consumers can correctly understand their fashion consumption behavior.

However, there is lack of research on the regret after fashion goods shopping, as well as the regret-solving efforts and repurchase intentions. Past research on regret (Gilovich, Medvec, & Chen, 1995; Inman et al., 1997) indicate that consumers must always be provided with information about forgone alternative to make them feel regret. This case may not always occur, considering that people may do their best to save the failed purchasing, called the regret-solving effort. The moderating effect of regret-solving effort on dissatisfaction and repurchase intention is not clear. This understanding is necessary in view of the importance of two types of regret (chosen regret vs. forgone regret) in post-choice assessment. This paper reviews the literature on regret, dissatisfaction, and regret-solving effort, and proposes a regret model. Through statistical analysis, the model and its hypotheses are tested, the contribution and significance are discussed.

II. Theoretical Background

1. Regret

Regret theory is a quite important and uncertain decision theory, especially in explaining and predicting consumer behavior (Zhang, Liang, Fang, & Chen, 2018). Regret is defined as consumers' irrational and unworthy cognitive feeling after purchasing, which affects their negative emotions (Park & Hill, 2018). Zeelenberg and Pieters (2004) also indicate that regret is a kind of disgust based on cognition, and people instinctively want to regulate this bad mood. This is a functional emotion that can affect choice decisions.

In Landman (1987)'s study, the finding shows a intense tendency for people to imagine greater regret after action than when they don't (greater regret for acts than non-acts) through a experiment of drama mode. The same pattern was observed in the case of joy over positive outcomes. In two of the three outcomes presented, this "actor effect" was stronger for negative than for positive outcomes. Regarding two types of regret (chosen regret vs. forgone regret), a forgone alternative that would have led to a better outcome than the one chosen is an unpleasant experience. In the paper of Tsiros and Mittal (2000), regret and dissatisfaction are

achieved through comparative reactions. As for dissatisfaction, it compares the expected and realistic outcomes; as for regret, it compares the outcomes of chosen and forgone. It can be seen that shopping related regret is often divided into 'act' and 'non act,' which can also be interpreted as 'chosen regret' and 'forgone regret.'

Based on the above theory, this paper defines regret as follows: After fashion goods shopping, consumers have emotional adverse reaction, which come from the negative emotions of fashion suitability and rationality. Moreover, regret is divided into two dimensions: Chosen regret is defined as 'I regret purchasing the fashion goods,' while forgone regret is defined as 'I regret not purchasing other fashion goods.' According to the above literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a: Chosen regret is positively associated with the dissatisfaction of fashion goods.

H1b: Forgone regret is positively associated with the dissatisfaction of fashion goods.

H2a: Chosen regret is negatively associated with repurchase intention.

H2b: Forgone regret is negatively associated with repurchase intention.

2. Dissatisfaction

Dissatisfaction is a kind of negative emotion, frequent service failure, implying strong response demand (Mattila & Ro, 2008). Shin (2019) have shown that the measure of satisfaction is related to happy emotions, on the contrary, we can infer that dissatisfaction is related to unhappy emotion. Zeelenberg and Pieters (2004) defined dissatisfaction with products as negative emotions when they are far away from their expectations. Understanding the dissatisfaction response from the perspective of coping can further understand the relationship between specific emotions and various behavioral intentions. When evaluating the experience of buying a product at a time, it not only buys the product characteristics, but also depends on the characteristics of the products that are not purchased. If we know other choice and have a

good evaluation, then the satisfaction of recently purchased products may decrease (Cooke, Meyvis, & Schwartz, 2001).

Several related studies on the relationship between regret and dissatisfaction are summarized into Table 1, the more regretful a decision is, the more dissatisfied it is. Cook et al. (2001) indicate that if consumers regret gourmet coffee and gasoline, they will directly express dissatisfaction, and defer their purchases longer or not repurchase again. In Tsiros and Mittal (2000) study, when students receive a personal laptop computer that they are not they want, they will feel very dissatisfied in the use process. Even if the laptop computer performance is good, but they are not their favorite brand, model, specification, etc., they will regret having it and not be satisfied with it. Zeelenberg and Pieters (2004) indicated that the personal computers and modems that the respondents received at home were not what they wanted. At this time, no matter how good the function or performance, they would still feel dissatisfied.

In the related research of fashion product shopping, Cho and Park (2015) indicate that the regret factor of fashion products after purchase has a positive impact on product dissatisfaction, and these dissatisfaction has a negative impact on re-buying intention. Durmaz, Demirag and Cavusoglu (2020) show that regret positively affect dissatisfaction and the effort to reverse the feeling of regret after purchasing fashion products. In addition, for the relationship between regret and dissatisfaction of Chinese consumers, Chen, Hui and Wang (2011) indicate that perception of risk in home buying evoked anticipated regret, which in turn aggravated experienced regret and dissatisfaction directly or via upward counter-factual thinking. In other words, home buyers' experienced regret significantly improve the dissatisfaction. Therefore, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H3: Dissatisfaction is negatively associated with repurchase intention.

Table 1. Previous Studies between Regret and Dissatisfaction

Researcher	Subjects	Object	Variable Relation	Results
Cooke et al. (2001)	Undergraduate students (78 samples)	Gourmet coffee and gasoline	Regret → satisfaction	(-)
Tsiros and Mittal (2000)	Undergraduate students (91 samples)	Laptop computer	Regret → satisfaction	(-)
Zeelenberg and Pieters (2004)	CentER-Data Telepanel Members (961 samples)	Personal computer modem	Regret → dissatisfaction	(+)
Cho and Park (2015)	Female consumer (642 samples)	Fashion products	Regret → dissatisfaction	(+)
Durmaz et al. (2020)	441 consumers in Gaziantep	Fashion products	Regret → dissatisfaction	(+)
Chen et al. (2011)	Home buyers (437 Chinese sample)	House	Regret → dissatisfaction	(+)

3. Regret-solving Effort

Problem-solving effort is usually expressed as a stochastic variable, which is a deliberate effort made by people to retrieve their wrong choices (Bockstedt, Druehl, & Mishra, 2015). To keep the psychological balance, consumers will constantly strive to eliminate the sense of regret and make their psychology more comfortable, that is, regret-solving effort. Durmaz et al. (2020) stated that regret reversing efforts of the consumers includes intentions and actions to change the regretted outcome. This way, the consumers can decrease the negative effects of regret if they make an effort to reverse their regret.

In the study of Zeelenberg and Pieters (2004), the effects of emotions on dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction-related behaviors can be positively or negatively modeled by various psychological experiences. When consumers regret buying fashion products, regret reversing effort will reverse this regret emotion and have a positive impact on repurchase intention (Durmaz et al., 2020). Also in Cho and Park (2015) study, even if consumers are dissatisfied with the purchased fashion

goods, the process factor of regret solving effort will statistical positively improve re-buying intention. In the current study, we can use regret-solving effort as a moderating variable to mediate and promote consumers' repurchase intention. Regret-solving effort in this paper is defined as the effort of self factors and external factors (ex, fashion company publicity efforts) to reduce the negative pessimism brought by regret and re-examine the fashion goods with a positive and optimistic attitude. Thus, a hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H4: Regret-solving effort positively moderates the relationship between dissatisfaction and repurchase intention.

4. Repurchase Intention

Repurchase intention refers to the intention to continue of using products or services (Kim, Lee, & Lee, 2018). Repurchase intention is also defined as the determination of consumers to buy a certain service from the same company by taking the current situation and possible conditions into consideration (Durmaz et al., 2020). In other words, repurchase intention refers to the desire of

consumers who have had enough buying experience at least once to buy again. The repurchase intention of consumers is an indispensable factor for the successful operation of fashion company.

Research on consumer fashion behavior has shown the negative relationship between dissatisfaction and repurchase intention (Cho & Kim, 2015) and the positive relationship between dissatisfaction and complaint intention (Richins, 1983). Making consumers with regret or dissatisfaction become regular consumers is important for them to repurchase. This study thus focuses on consumers who bought fashion goods and regret to understand their repurchasing behavior. Respondents were asked to recall the personal experience with a dissatisfying fashion product and to answer questions about their feelings and behaviors in response to this encounter in the survey. All the hypotheses are shown in Figure 1.

III. Research Method

1. Measures

Measurement scales used in this paper refer to the question items that have been confirmed in the previous research and have a high degree of trust, including consumer regret (Calseyde, Zeelenberg, & Evers, 2018; Creyer & Ross, 1999), dissatisfaction (Mattila & Ro,

2008), regret-solving effort (Cho & Park, 2015; Durmaz et al., 2020), repurchase intention (Cho & Kim, 2015), and demographic measures that were developed. English scales were translated into Chinese, and both languages were used for asking questions. All questionnaire items were measured by the typical approach on a 5-point Likert Scale (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

2. Data Collection and Sample Characteristics

As Chinese consumers are the most influential among the fashion industries all over the countries, and there is almost no empirical research on the regret factors of Chinese fashion consumers in the relevant research, so that current paper focuses on Chinese consumers. A self-administered online survey from authoritative questionnaire web-site in China (www.sojump.com) was developed to varify the aforementioned hypotheses. The survey link was provided in WeChat where the consumers completed the online questionnaire from February 10th to 17th in 2020. A total of 275 usable responses were used in the data analysis after deleting incomplete answers.

Chinese consumers who had experienced regret after purchasing fashion goods participated in this study. In addition, the questionnaire also includes the definition of fashion products, which generally refers to clothing,
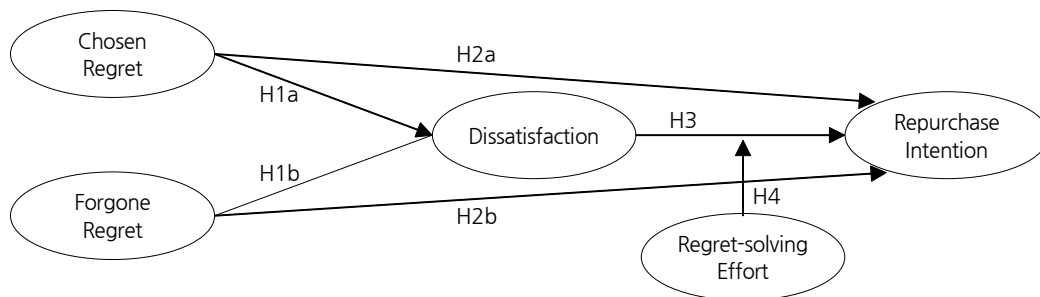

Figure 1. Research Model

footwear, hats, scarves and other apparel related products.

Demographic information of current study is presented Table 2. In total 59 male (21.5%) and 216 female (78.5%) could be obtained. Our survey focuses on younger people between 20 until 49 of age, as they often purchase fashion products. Therefore, the majority of the samples were unmarried with 187 people (68.0%), having a high education with undergraduate 170 (61.8%) and graduate 57 (20.7%). In the regarding of their monthly household income, under $750 were 96 (34.9%), between $750 and $1,500 were 86 (31.3%), between $1,500 and $2,250 were 44 (16.0%), above $2,250 were 49 (17.8%). National statistics show that the average monthly income of Chinese families is more than $750, accounting for the top 5.0% of the country; $1,500 or more, accounting for 0.61%; $3,000 or more, accounting for the top 0.05% of the country ("Monthly income of Chinese households," 2020).

IV. Results and Discussion

1. Reliability and Validity Analyses

The validity of the constructs was verified through exploratory factor analysis (EFA). In this paper, each variable was analyzed by a separate factor analysis. The result of EFA of chosen regret, forgone regret, dissatisfaction, regret-solving effort, and repurchase intention is presented in Table 3, and everything was confirmed to be on a single dimension.

Before proceeding with hypothesis testing, this paper conducted reliability and validity assessments. The Cronbach's alpha proved the reliability of the measurement items (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). The commonly used indicators are Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient and composite reliability value. The data used in this study were analyzed using SPSS 22.0. Cronbach's alpha coefficients of all variables were greater than 0.8,

Table 2. Sample Characteristics

| Category		Frequency(s)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	59	21.5
	Female	216	78.5
Marital Status	Unmarried	187	68.0
	Married	88	32.0
Age	20s	168	61.1
	30s	67	24.4
	40s	40	14.6
Education	High School	48	17.5
	Undergraduate	170	61.8
	Graduate	57	20.7
Monthly Household Income	Under $750	96	34.9
	$750~1,500	86	31.3
	$1,500~2,250	44	16.0
	Above $2,250	49	17.8

indicating the reliability of the study measurements of various structural variables. The results indicated that all factor loading values were greater than 0.7 and were statistically significant. These results suggested that each statement had high measure convergent validity on the measured variable and demonstrated the relationship among the interests. The relationships had good discriminant validity among the various dimensions of quality.

2. Testing of Hypotheses

In order to test each hypothesis, this paper uses the linear regression analysis method for statistical analysis. Table 4 presents the results of the hypotheses. H1-a and H1-b predicted that chosen and forgone regrets positively influenced consumer dissatisfaction with fashion goods, which is consistent with the extant research study findings (Cooke et al., 2001; Tsiros & Mittal, 2000;

Table 3. EFA of Variables

Factor		Items	Factor loading	Eigen value	Variance explained %	Cronbach's α
Regret	Chosen regret	I shouldn't have chosen this kind of item.	0.907	3.716	61.933	0.829
		I regret choosing this fashion item.	0.913			
		I regret not thinking more clearly before buying.	0.760			
	Forgone regret	I regret not purchasing the other fashion item.	0.891	1.031	17.192	0.888
		In retrospect, the other fashion item should be a better choice.	0.936			
		I would choose the other fashion items if I could.	0.875			
Dissatisfaction		The purchased products were overall unsatisfactory.	0.821	2.370	78.986	0.866
		I feel that buying this fashion item was a wrong decision.	0.935			
		Purchasing this fashion item was not a sensible choice.	0.906			
Regret-solving effort		Although I regret choosing this dress, I will continue to wear it in order not to waste it.	0.843	3.446	68.926	0.884
		Even if I regret buying this one, I will keep it. Maybe I can wear any clothes when I become beautiful.	0.847			
		If I see the corresponding poster of this dress, I will try it on.	0.855			
		If someone commented positively on the dress, I would feel much better.	0.690			
		If a star advertises this dress, I will still try to put it on.	0.901			
Repurchase intention		I will buy similar style fashion products.	0.875	2.504	83.460	0.900
		I will buy fashion products of the same brand again.	0.942			
		I will use the same fashion store again.	0.923			
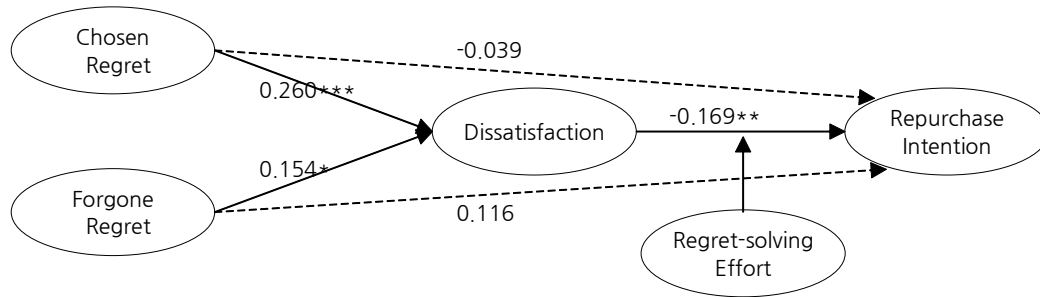
*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

Figure 2. Results of the Hypotheses

Table 4. Results of Hypothesis Testing

DV	IV	B	S.E.	β	t	p	F	R^2 $(_{adj}R^2)$
Dissatisfaction	Chosen Regret	0.251	0.067	0.260	3.746***	0.000	21.802	0.132
	Forgone Regret	0.140	0.063	0.154	2.228*	0.027		
Repurchase Intention	Chosen Regret	-0.037	0.070	−0.039	−0.525	0.600	1.330	0.002
	Forgone Regret	0.103	0.066	0.116	1.560	0.120		
	Dissatisfaction	-0.166	0.058	−0.169	−2.834**	0.005		

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004). Chosen regret (β = 0.260, p < 0.001) and forgone regret (β = 0.154, p < 0.05) had significant positive effects on dissatisfaction. It means that the more regret, the more dissatisfied. And chosen regret played a greater effect on dissatisfaction than forgone regret. Thus, H1-a and H1-b were supported. As expected, consumers chosen regret is more likely to affect their dissatisfaction with the fashion products they have bought, perhaps because they care about the money, time and energy they pay, much more than forgone regret. However, both regrets had no statistical influence on repurchase intention. Accordingly, dissatisfaction exerted a complete mediation effect. H2-a and H2-b were rejected. The results show that there is

a large distance between regret variables and repurchase intention, and there is no statistically significant relationship between them. Only through the role of mediating variables can indirect connection be generated.

H3 predicted that dissatisfaction negatively influenced the repurchase behavior of fashion goods, and H4 predicted that regret-solving efforts positively moderated the negative effects of dissatisfaction and repurchase behavior. As H3 predicted, consumer dissatisfaction (β = −0.169, p < 0.01) negatively influenced repurchase behavior, which is consistent with the findings of other studies (Durmaz et al., 2020; Tsiros & Mittal, 2000). Regarding H4, the result of this calculation process showed that the moderating effect of regret-solving

Table 5. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis to Examine the Moderating Effect of Regret-solving Efforts on the Relationship between Dissatisfaction and Repurchase Intention

IV	B	S.E.	β	t	p	F	R^2 ($_{adj}R^2$)
Dissatisfaction	-0.325	0.167	-0.332	-1.940*	0.005	8.030	1.089
Dissatisfaction	-0.248	0.058	-0.253	-4.319***	0.000	19.737	1.034
Regret-solving effort	0.333	0.060	0.324	5.529***	0.000		
Dissatisfaction	-0.166	0.058	−0.169	−2.834**	0.050	13.200	1.036
Regret-solving effort	0.280	0.125	0.273	2.240*	0.026		
Dissatisfaction×Regret-solving effort	-0.022	0.046	-0.108	-0.487*	0035		

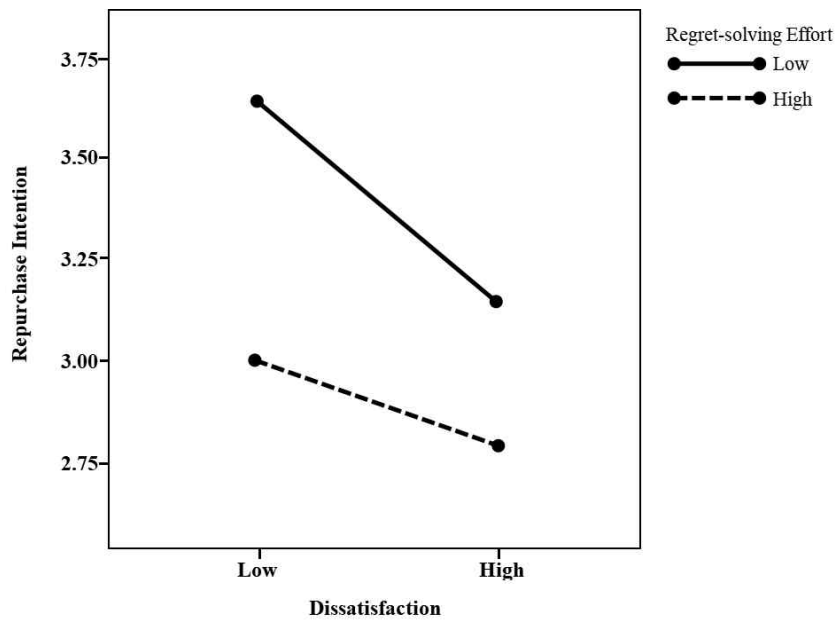*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$

Figure 3. Moderating Effect of Regret-solving Efforts on the Relationship Between Dissatisfaction and Repurchase Intention.

efforts was significant ($t = 12.200$, $p < 0.001$). That is, the coefficient of regret-solving efforts representing the interaction between consumer dissatisfaction and repurchase intention was positive and significant (low-effort as $\beta = -0.169$; high-effort as $\beta = -0.253$), as shown in Table 5. Here we need to explain that we use the average value of regret-solving effort variable (MEAN$_{regret-solving\ effort}$ = 3.2785) to divide it into low and high, also use the average value of dissatisfaction variable (MEAN$_{dissatisfaction}$ = 2.5285) to divide it into 1 (Low) and 2 (High) point as shown in Figure 3. This finding suggested that consumers' regret-solving efforts reduced the negative effect of dissatisfaction on the repurchase intention, which is

consistent with the regret-solving effort research (Cho & Kim, 2015; Durmaz et al., 2020). Therefore, H3 and H4 were supported.

To facilitate interpretation, these relationships were plotted again with regret-solving efforts and consumer dissatisfaction taking low and high values. The figure depicts that consumer dissatisfaction had a weak negative relationship with repurchase intention, which had high regret-solving efforts (dashed line). In other words, even if Chinese consumers' dissatisfaction with fashion goods has a negative impact on the repurchase of these products, the role of trying to regret-solving effort will reduce this negative effect, and then enhance the repurchase intention. When consumers did low regret-solving efforts, they would occasionally not take the initiative to repurchase even if their buying regret emotion does not too much and the fashion goods are not too unsatisfied. In the lack of empirical research on the regret, dissatisfaction and other factors of Chinese fashion consumers, the above results of this study would provide a good reference for the marketing practitioners of fashion industry.

V. Conclusion

The results of this study elucidate important issues concerning the effect of consumers' regret (chosen regret; forgone regret) on dissatisfaction and repurchase intention, which is moderated by regret-solving efforts that have not been addressed by previous studies. This paper proposes a model that strives for an understanding of consumers' regret psychology and how to influence on repurchase. It is consistent with the current research hypothesis, this study have the following results.

First, this study indicates the effect of consumers' regret on dissatisfaction with fashion goods. Chosen and forgone regrets can increase consumers' dissatisfaction, as we expected. In addition, respondents care more about chosen regret, which plays a greater role in consumer dissatisfaction than forgone regret. The reason is that the chosen regret includes economic, time, experience and other losses. In contrast, there is not so much concern about the forgone regret. And these factors can not directly have an effective impact on the repurchase, only through the dissatisfaction can be connected. In order to reduce more dissatisfaction, we should try to reduce consumers' regret on fashion consumption, especially the 'chosen regret.' From the quality, price, style and other attributes of clothing, as far as possible to do better. In the process of purchasing fashion goods, we should try our best to recommend and select the satisfied products to the consumers, try them on several times and recommend more styles, so that the consumers can choose the most satisfied clothes.

Second, consumers' dissatisfaction with fashion products can reduce repurchase intention. That is, consumers with perceived dissatisfaction with fashion products will not tend to make a repurchase decision. The less satisfied you are, the less likely you are to buy again. This seems to be a very natural result. However, if you are not satisfied with the clothing products you have purchased, will you really stop buying clothes again? In fact, it may not be true. Not everyone will give up repurchasing clothes when they are not satisfied. There must be some factors that make consumers think that even if they are not satisfied with this one, I will buy it again. That variable is the regret-solving effort. Current paper suggest that fashion marketers should consider focusing their energy on providing regret-solving efforts, that is also the most important content of this study.

Third, we can't ignore regret-solving efforts, which remain as the feeling of being forever in the consumer behavior unless addressed appropriately. Regret-solving efforts have a positive significant moderating effect on the negative relationship between consumers' dissatisfaction and repurchase intention. High regret-solving effort perceptions attenuate the negative relationships between dissatisfaction and repurchase intention of consumers, and consumers also want to make profits rather than lose when shopping. Therefore, a fashion business person must highlight the potential benefits of the to mitigate dissatisfaction factors. For example, we can conduct regular surveys on consumers'

dissatisfaction with the fashion products, enthusiastically and sincerely accept what the regret factors of consumers are for the products, listen more, look more, and find out more problems, so as to reduce the problems of clothing products. In addition, this study shows that if consumers believe that the clothes they regret buying are advertised on posters, have positive comments, and have stars advertise, their regret will be greatly reduced. Therefore, fashion marketers need to take initiatives to reduce consumers' dissatisfaction. It can track consumers' behavior after purchase, such as filling in positive comments on users' SNS, praising consumers. The more dissatisfied the fashion product is, the more celebrity poster advertising should be carried out to make consumers feel that it is worth the money.

Lastly, methodological limitations and future research opportunities are highlighted. This study examines only the chosen and forgone regrets differences on consumers' dissatisfaction but there is no comprehensive classification of regret factors. Regret-solving efforts also need to be collected and analyzed in a wider range. In the follow-up research, we need to use the way of interview research method to take the various measurements. We relied on the data of Chinese survey web-site, to test our hypotheses. Future investigation to conduct cross-border survey in other countries would also be valuable.

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