Article

Exploring the Effect of Status Quo, Innovativeness, and Involvement Tendencies on Luxury Fashion Innovations: The Mediation Role of Status Consumption

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Abstract: The article explores the mechanisms that affect consumers' interest in luxury clothing innovations. The actual research aims to investigate the effect of status quo and clothing involvement on consumer brand loyalty. More, it was intended to quantify the influence of the level of engagement concerning clothing acquisition and the status quo tendency on the consumers' level of interest toward innovative luxury fashion products. The models were analyzed through the partial-least square-path modeling method. The results revealed that status quo bias and consumers' involvement in fashion influence their loyalty to brands and level of innovativeness. The novelty of the present research comes from the analysis of the impact of the status quo manifest variables on consumers' innovative tendencies. Moreover, it was found that status consumption fully mediates the relationships among the investigated predictors and considered outcome variables. The mediator manifests the highest effect size of all investigated predictors. The actual paper advances research in a direction that was not sufficiently addressed in the past, introducing the status quo construct as the main predictor of peoples' inclination to be loyal to a brand or to manifest a tendency toward innovativeness. Moreover, the article emphasizes the essential role manifested by social status in foreseeing a behavioral response.

Keywords: luxury fashion goods; status consumption; status quo; clothing innovativeness; clothing involvement; PLS-PM

1. Introduction

Consumption appoints a process of spending for getting utility or for satisfying specific needs. Consumers buy products for a variety of reasons. Their behavior manifests an essential element in the survival of an industry in the market.

More than to satisfy existential needs and carry out practical functions, several goods are bought because of their potential to respond to social or psychological necessities [1]. One of the several social motives that urge consumers to buy items is represented by their desire to confirm their social status [2–4]. This necessity of social status confirmation is more visible when it comes to luxury goods. Luxury is characterized by conspicuousness, social value, prestige, and wealth, playing an essential role in social stratification [5]. Consumers consider luxury a vital element in defining themselves as members of a high social class [6].

Luxury commodities are components of a novel social protocol, where individuals' identity is appreciated considering the visible brands worn in their daily lives [3]. Fashion goods signal a consumer's social standing, transmitting at the same time symbolic value [2]. Individuals consume luxury goods to achieve higher social status and to confirm their wealth [5]. In this respect, clothing brands try to offer consumers status-seeking reasons to create a loyalty relationship concerning their brand [7].

Of interest in studying social status consumption are the motives that drive consumers to show loyalty to a brand or to search for novel and innovative substitutes available on the market. The attention was directed to the status quo dimension and the consumer interest in fashion. Status quo manifest constructs refer to people's satisfaction with the available fashion products and their satisfaction concerning the extent of innovations when referring to luxury fashion items [8]. On the other hand, interest in fashion appoints the degree to which a specific buying decision is indispensable for an individual [9].

Multiple existing studies revealed that status consumption is a strong motivator of consumer behavior [5,10]. In this study, it was proposed to investigate the role of status consumption in the change of the consumers' clothing brand loyalty and their level of innovativeness when dealing with luxury clothes.

A high level of status consumption serves as a justification for brand loyalty. Regarding the influence of the status quo on status consumption, it was supposed a negative relationship because a desire for change is inconsistent with holding the existing habits without assuming a behavioral change.

The focus of our study is on the luxury fashion brands, which is a product category where status consumption manifests an essential role. Luxury articles of clothing are connected to an individual social and personal identity [6,7]. Moreover, the research was conducted on students, youths being an essential market because of two reasons: for their current spending behavior and their future spending behavior as adults. Even if European youths spend less on clothes, they are still a relevant market [8]. This aspect explains why several companies design luxury fashion products especially for teens. Existing studies revealed that social motives enhance the acquisition of luxury brands of late adolescents and young adults [11]. Social constraints do not determine the purchase of luxury brands of middle-aged adults [12]. As a result of the emergence of the teenager's market, it is considered essential to understand their position in relation to luxury fashion innovations [13]. Moreover, the study was conducted on Romania, a country that is part of the European Union, an extensive and highly internationalized market. Studying the behavior response of consumers about the adoption of innovative luxury fashion products manifests a wide interest for international fashion clusters.

The obtained results of the present research are in line with existing studies. We found a positive relationship among status consumption and consumers' level of involvement, their innovativeness tendency, and loyalty to brands. In addition, the research was advanced in a direction that earlier studies do not considered sufficiently, analyzing the mediation role of status consumption when discussing mechanisms that affect consumers' interest in luxury clothing innovations. Moreover, we introduced the status quo constructs as main predictors of peoples' inclination to be loyal to a brand or exhibit a tendency toward innovativeness. Practical implications derive from the fact that innovative individuals manifest high brand loyalty, being in the interest of the luxury fashion providers to support a high level of novelty of their products and to align their marketing strategies to the segment of customers who are interested in status confirmation.

Section 2, Literature Review, discusses the theoretical background and the hypotheses development. Section 3, Materials and Methods, discusses the characteristics of the gathered sample and the method used to construct the latent variables. Section 4, Results, presents the outcomes of the partial-least-squares-path model (PLS-PM). Section 5, Discussions, shows the interpretation of the findings and extensive discussions of our results. Section 6, Conclusions, briefly summarizes the paper and discusses limits and future perspectives of research.

2. Literature Review

Luxury could be a term difficult to define because it has subjective meanings to different consumers. In addition, almost all luxury brands have products that start at low price points, whether it is about keyrings, pairs of socks, or sports cars, so that consumers position themselves differently to the category of luxury goods. Luxury designates limited

supply goods at higher prices that contribute to consumer satisfaction by adding pleasure to their life, without being available for everyone [14].

Luxury appoints a concept of refinement, elegance, opulence, and wealth that is desirable but not necessary in peoples' existence [15]. It is claimed that luxury derives from the scarcity of resources used in the production process or from their high price [16]. However, luxury appoints more than materials, skills in producing those goods, or other attributes. Luxury holds social meanings [16].

Luxury and affluence goods were mostly related to a higher rank in the social hierarchy, giving rise to the concept of consumption for social status confirmation [17]. This concept describes any consumption activity realized to show off wealth to other people when using the good in public, even if it is about wearing a brand dress or driving an expensive car [18]. The status consumption concept is widely available in the existing literature. Some authors [19] described status consumption as being a mechanism through which someone owns the power of imposing respect, consideration, and envy from others.

Several authors that studied the human condition figured out that the intrinsic desire for social position or higher status in the social hierarchy is an effective motivator of behavior [20]. A study found the desire for status as a principal motivator for brand choice [21], while another one showed that the desire for status determines a purchasing behavior [22]. In direct connection to this study, clothing serves as a social symbol of status or social position [23]. Earlier studies reported that status consumption is positively related to the consumer level of involvement and their innovativeness tendency [24,25].

Related to our study, innovative luxury clothing refers to those items carried out using innovative materials and techniques combined in the production process to deliver superior products that enable a novel fashion experience when consumers wear or interact with them.

Consumers involved in fashion will experience earlier innovative luxury articles of clothing compared to consumers that manifest a low involvement in fashion, who will procrastinate regarding this decision. In this respect, consumers' involvement in fashion or their interest concerning this area will affect their acquisition of luxury fashion goods. Consumers' luxury preferences are related to their level of involvement [26].

Moreover, the connection set up with a brand describes a psychological preference toward famous brand goods [18]. Brand loyalty influences in a significant manner the purchase decision. Loyal consumers to a brand expect that brand to satisfy their necessities concerning the social standing and prestige confirmation [1].

The individuals' willingness to accept novel ideas or products is strongly related to their innovativeness [27]. Fashion innovators try to differentiate themselves from the rest of the consumers by looking for novel and innovative styles to conserve their status as innovators [28]. In our study, we paid attention to the concept of fashion innovativeness in the context of luxury fashion items. Fashion innovators are more mindful of brand names when realizing a purchase decision, manifesting a higher need for uniqueness, value, and status confirmation [29]. In other words, innovators are interested in their look, behavior, style, and the extent to which these are following their social status [3]. This tendency toward innovativeness is contradictory to consumers' bias toward the status quo, which appoints their preference for products or services already tested.

All these previously discussed aspects conduct to a brand or product choice that will assure an improvement of the consumers' social standing through social prestige.

Hypothesis Development

Considering the theoretical aspects already presented in the literature review section, the paper will continue with the hypothesis development.

Involvement is a broadly investigated construct linked to consumer behavior. Involvement defines a mental predisposition of being interested in or enthusiastic about a given product category [30]. Consumers that look for status are aware of clothing [24]; therefore, they are conscious about which clothing brands offer status and develop a preference

in this respect. In addition, the involvement concept may be a relevant variable in the interpretation of dress codes specific to a certain social class [31].

Considering those aspects, we formulated the first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Clothing involvement manifests a positive influence on status consumption.*

On the other side, innovativeness tendency appoints the interest in new products, figuring out consumers to be among the first buyers of the new commodity. Those early buyers are characterized by involvement, knowledge, and seeking out information. They are opinion formers for the product category [32,33]. Being one of the first buyers of a newly appeared product was associated with social status [34–37]. Thus, it is argued that status consumption may mediate the relationship between the consumers' innovativeness and their level of involvement in the acquisition of luxury clothing.

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Status consumption mediates the relationship between the level of innovativeness and clothing involvement.*

Hypothesis 2a (H2a). *Clothing involvement manifests a positive influence on the level of innovativeness.*

Hypothesis 2b (H2b). *Status consumption manifests a positive influence on the level of innovativeness.*

Over time, consumers may develop connections with the brands that they grow accustomed to buying [38,39]. A few researchers investigated the brand loyalty dimension; nevertheless, the investigation of the relationship with variables included in the present model was not previously studied—in particular, the relationship between brand loyalty and the status quo features. Consumers that are interested in status confirmation will search for those brands that confirm their social position. They will set up a sort of loyalty with that brand as time as the status confirmation endures [25]. This aspect fits in the case of clothing acquisition, garments being a visible symbol of social status. We hypothesized the following aspects:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Status consumption mediates the relationship between clothing involvement and clothing brand loyalty.*

Hypothesis 3a (H3a). *Status consumption positively influences clothing brand loyalty.*

Hypothesis 3b (H3b). *There is a positive relationship between clothing involvement and clothing brand loyalty.*

Moreover, high social status is associated with a conservative attitude, consumers being prone to status quo bias and resistant to innovations. In this respect, our proper contribution comes from investigating the status quo influence on status consumption and its indirect effect on luxury fashion innovativeness and clothing brand loyalty.

Status quo appoints an essential reference point in the decision process realized by consumers. People are inclined to favor already tried and familiar products, rather than new or innovative alternatives, even if the last would provide them with more utility or satisfaction. This situation occurs because of two reasons: firstly, because people experience emotional attachment to the product that they hold [40], and secondly, because a novel experience comes with a level of prospect and uncertainty. Risk is difficult to set up before testing the product. Human beings are inclined to minimize the risk and uncertainty, as buyers will strive for coherence and prefer the default option [41].

From another perspective, the existence of multiple available alternatives leads to a complex process of selecting information and realization of fast and correct comparisons

among available possibilities. Since consumers may feel oversaturated by the existing available options, their receptiveness to innovations diminishes. In this case, the preference for status quo is increasing.

The earlier study finds two features that compose the status quo satisfaction dimension, namely satisfaction with existing products and satisfaction with the extent of innovations [8,42]. It is proposed to investigate if this aspect is also applicable for luxury fashion products. It is expected to find a negative relationship between satisfaction with existing luxury fashion products and status consumption. As previously discussed, consumers tend to show low interest in innovation when they are in their comfort zone.

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Status consumption mediates the relationship between status quo manifest constructs and consumer level of innovativeness.*

Hypothesis 4a (H4a). *Status quo constructs negatively influence consumers' level of innovativeness.*

Hypothesis 5 (H5). *Status consumption mediates the relationship between status quo manifest constructs and consumers' brand loyalty.*

Hypothesis 5a (H5a). *Status quo manifest constructs positively influence consumers' loyalty to brands.*

To specify and clarify the social motives that underlie loyalty to a brand or tendency toward innovativeness, the focus of our study is represented by clothing, which is an area suitable to teenagers. Since this period of adolescence and young adulthood is a period of forming attitudes concerning the identity development mechanisms, clothing plays an important role in their connection to their ideal social groups [43].

3. Materials and Methods

The data were collected through a questionnaire that was distributed in the period November–December 2020. It used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods, respondents' participation in this study being voluntary. The size of the sample is large enough to sustain the structural analysis because of the following reasons. Firstly, the WarpPLS software supplies a function that allows determining the sample size such that to be representative. In our case, considering a significance level of 0.050, a power level of 0.950, and an inverse square root method [44], the software recommends a minimum required sample size of 279 respondents. Secondly, the partial-least square-path modeling analysis that was conducted is based on variances. This method allows the usage of smaller sample sizes compared with covariance-based structural equation modeling that requires larger sample sizes [45,46].

The data that were used in this study include 383 students enrolled in universities with economic and business profiles from Romania. Regarding the demographic features of the sample, the participants were 73.62% women and 26.37% men (Table 1). Most of them were aged between 18 and 27 years old (57.18%) and were from an urban area (79.11%).

The demographical characteristics of the sample were somehow expected. Earlier studies [47] revealed that women are more involved than men in buying luxury fashion brands. People from urban areas are more likely [48] to invest in luxury items than people from rural areas. Regarding the revenues, 13.83% of the respondents earn a net monthly income lower than 1000 USD, while 12.80% of the respondents reported a net monthly income higher than 2000 USD (Table 1). Respondents that reported monthly incomes higher than 2000 USD were preponderantly women aged between 28–37 years from urban areas. The respondents that reported between 1000 USD and 2000 USD were mostly women aged between 18 and 37 years from urban areas. The majority of our respondents (73.36%) earned a net monthly income in the interval 1000–2000 USD, their revenues being in accordance

with the mean income, reported at the national level in the 3rd trimester, by the Romanian National Institute of Statistics [49].

Table 1. Summarizing the demographics of the sample.

Item	Class	N [1] = 383	
		No.	**Percentage (%)**
Gender	Women	281	73.62
	Men	101	26.37
Age	18–27 years	219	57.18
	28–37 years	102	26.63
	38–47 years	62	16.18
Residence	Urban	303	79.11
	Rural	80	20.89
Income	Lower than 1000 USD	53	13.83
	1000–2000 USD	281	73.36
	More than 2000 USD	49	12.80

[1] N = sample size.

We employed three models of the same variance-based, structural equation model. The difference between the models was represented by the outcome variable. The first model used clothing brand loyalty as the outcome, while the second and the third ones used two different dimensions of luxury clothing innovativeness. All three models have three predictors and one mediator variable.

The items that were used to measure consumers' brand loyalty were adapted from research that aimed to conceptualize the brand commitment and habit influence toward an attitude–behavior adoption [50]. The exploratory analysis allowed us to keep all items of the original scale. Regarding the measurement of luxury clothing innovativeness dimension, we adapted the Goldsmith and Hofacker scale [32], the difference being that our exploratory analysis split the original dimension into two distinct concepts and investigated each of them as an independent outcome variable. The items that correspond to the direct variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Outcome variables: clothing brand loyalty and luxury clothing innovativeness.

Dimension	Item	
Clothing Brand Loyalty (CBL) [50]	I consider myself to be loyal to a specific luxury clothing brand.	CB1
	If my preferred brand of an item of clothing was not available at the store, I would shop at other stores until I found my brand.	CB2
Innovativeness Interest—Luxury Clothing Innovativeness (CIN$_a$) [51]	In general, I am among the last in my group of friends to buy a new outfit or fashion.	CN1
	Compared to my friends, I do little shopping for new fashions.	CN2
	In general, I am the last in my group of friends to know the names of the latest designers and fashion trends.	CN3
Innovativeness Awareness—Luxury Clothing Innovativeness (CIN$_b$) [51]	I know more about new fashions before other people do.	CN4
	If I heard that an innovative luxury outfit was available through a local clothing or department store, I would be interested enough to buy it.	CN5
	I will consider buying an innovative luxury fashion item, even if I have not heard of it yet.	CN6

The clothing involvement scale developed by Mittal and Lee [51] offers us the first predictor. Following an exploratory analysis, were kept only two items of three. The second and the third predictors were adapted from an existing status quo scale [8,42]. We emphasized two distinct latent variables that measure consumers' tendency toward status quo: namely, satisfaction with existing luxury fashion products and their satisfaction with the extent of fashion innovations. To measure those dimensions, we used the 7-point Likert scale, where 1 means "total disagreement" and 7 corresponds to "total agreement" (Table 3). Regarding the level of involvement influence on the luxury clothing innovativeness, we expected a moderate positive effect [25]. Concerning the impact of innovativeness on clothing brand loyalty, we anticipated a positive but modest relationship [25]. There is no former forecasting about the inherent existing relationship between status quo components and the considered outcome variables.

Table 3. The components of latent variable predictors: clothing involvement and status quo.

Latent Variable	Manifest Variable	Item
Clothing Involvement [51]	I have a strong interest in clothing.	CINV1
	Clothing is important to me.	CINV2
Satisfaction with existing luxury fashion products [8,42]	In the past, I was very satisfied with available luxury fashion products.	SQSP4
	In my opinion, past luxury fashion products were completely satisfactory so far.	SQSP5
	Past luxury fashion products fully met my requirements.	SQSP6
Satisfaction with the extent of fashion luxury innovations [8,42]	My personal need for innovations in the field of luxury fashion products has been by far not covered in the past.	SQSI1
	I consider the number of innovations in the field of luxury fashion products as being too low.	SQSI2
	I consider the pace of innovations in luxury fashion products as being too low.	SQSI3

Status quo is the principal predictor: a dimension consisting of two manifest variables, each one formed of three items. The difference between the satisfaction with the extent of fashion luxury innovations and satisfaction with existing luxury fashion products relates to the fact that the second manifest variable relates to situation-specific factors [8].

Status consumption is a latent predictor that was used as a mediator. Existing studies revealed that a desire for social position appoints a strong motivator to adopt a behavioral change [52]. Suitable for this study is the fact that clothing is a universal emblem of status [23], while social rank connects to brand loyalty and people's devotion to fashion pieces [53].

Social consumption is delimited as a motivational agent that encourages consumers to improve their social positions through the acquisition and consumption of products that symbolize status [54,55]. The status consumption dimension was measured through the scale developed by Eastman, Goldsmith, and Flynn [54]. The original scale contained five items, but the exploratory factor analysis dropped two items to keep the factor loadings above 0.7 (Table 4).

Table 4. The mediator variable "status consumption".

Latent Variable	Manifest Variable	Items
	I would pay more for a product if it had status.	SC1
Status Consumption [54]	I am interested in new products with status.	SC2
	A product is more valuable to me if it has some snob appeal.	SC3

Previous studies revealed a positive influence of status consumption on clothing brand loyalty and the level of clothing innovativeness [25]. Regarding the impact of status quo la-

tent variables, we expected a negative influence on status consumption because people who are inclined to status quo manifest a tendency to strive for consistency, while high scores on the status consumption scale are associated with complex personalities [24]. Regarding the clothing involvement, we expected a positive influence on status consumption [25].

Gender and residence were used as control variables. Earlier studies revealed that women are more willing to buy luxury fashion clothes than men [47]. Regarding residence, existing studies revealed that people from urban areas are more prone to invest in luxury items than people from rural areas [48].

Table 5 creates a summary of the latent variable predictors, which were formed as a weighted average of their related manifest variables [56].

Table 5. An outline of latent predictors, with abbreviations and descriptions.

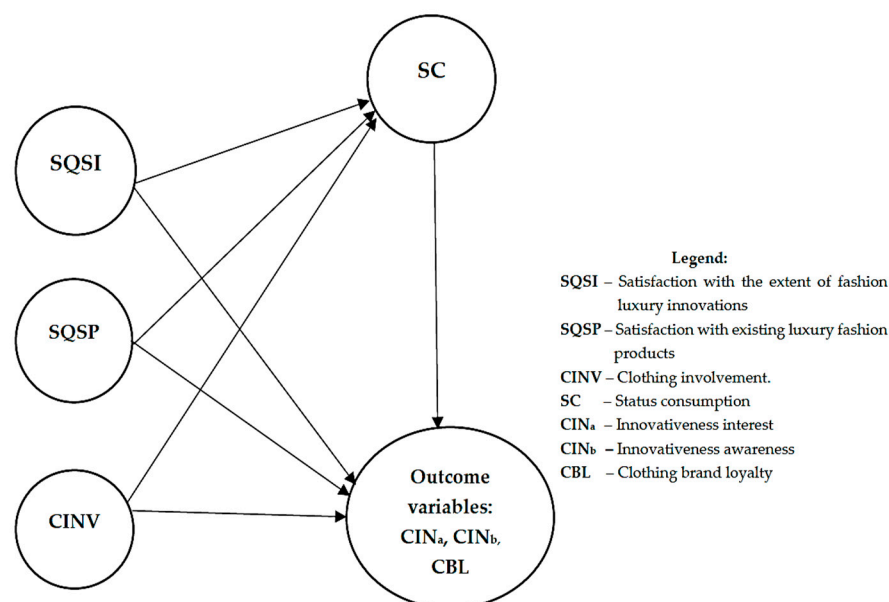| Latent Structure	Observed Variables
SC	Status consumption. Refers to people interested in confirming their social position; SC1, SC2, SC3.
SQSP	Satisfaction with existing luxury fashion products. Part of the status quo dimension; SQSP4, SQSP5, SQSP6.
SQSI	Satisfaction with the extent of fashion luxury innovations. Part of the status quo dimension; SQSI1, SQSI2, SQSI3
CINV	Clothing involvement. Describes a subjective disposition of being interested and excited about a particular product category; CINV1, CINV2.
CBL	Clothing brand loyalty. Refers to consumers' relationship with the brand that they buy; CBL1, CBL2.
CIN_a	Innovativeness interest. Part of the luxury clothing innovativeness scale. Captures consumers interest toward exiting innovation in luxury fashion clothing; CIN1, CIN2, CIN3.
CIN_b	Innovativeness Awareness. Part of the luxury clothing innovativeness scale. Captures consumers awareness toward exiting innovation in luxury fashion clothing; CIN4, CIN5, CIN6.

The research model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The research model.

4. Results

The PLS-PM analysis proposes maximizing the explained variance of the dependent latent variables [57]. Our outcome variables are innovativeness interest (CIN_a), innovativeness awareness (CIN_b), and clothing brand loyalty (CBL). We used status consumption

(SC) as a mediator in the relationship between the predictors and outcome variables. Status quo with its two manifest variables is the main predictor.

Briefly speaking, the estimation technique describes an iterative algorithm that is based on the ordinary least squares' approach. A PLS-PM analysis considers a measurement model and a structural model. The measurement model estimates the relationship between the latent variables and their corresponding manifest variables evaluated considering the composite criteria. The structural model investigates the existing relationships between latent variables.

In the incipient stage of our analysis, the model was estimated using the R software, version 3.6.3 [58] with the "lavaan" package [59]. After that, the obtained results were checked using WarpPLS software, version 7.0 [60].

The reliability results of the measurement model were exposed in Table 6. In terms of the composite reliability, the scores ranged from 0.791 to 0.965, those registered values being above the score of 0.7 recommended by the theoretical background [61]. Concerning the Cronbach alpha indicator, all manifest variables registered scores above the 0.70 threshold [62]. In the case of the average variance extracted (AVE), we considered relevant a score higher than 0.50 [63], which was a criterion met for all latent variables.

Table 6. Evaluation of the measurement model.

Variable	Abbreviation	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Status consumption	SC	0.897	0.791	0.711
Clothing involvement	CINV	0.965	0.927	0.932
Innovativeness interest	CIN_a	0.913	0.856	0.777
Innovativeness awareness	CIN_b	0.866	0.767	0.683
Clothing brand loyalty	CBL	0.894	0.763	0.808
Satisfaction with the extent of fashion luxury innovations	SQSI	0.845	0.725	0.646
Satisfaction with existing luxury fashion product	SQSP	0.932	0.890	0.821

Table 7 presents diagonal components of the inter-correlation matrix. It is desirable to register higher values of the square roots of all the averages variance extracted values than their off-diagonal components in their corresponding lines and columns. Moreover, all off-diagonal coefficients of correlation were below the 0.8 recommended cut-off [64].

Table 7. Inter-correlation of variables constructs.

Variable	SC	CINV	CIN_a	CIN_b	CBL	SQSI	SQSP
SC	0.843	0.344	−0.228	0.572	0.515	0.369	0.357
CINV		0.965	−0.410	0.467	0.321	0.221	0.312
CIN_a			0.882	−0.389	−0.170	−0.008	−0.224
CIN_b				0.826	0.620	0.387	0.441
CBL					0.899	0.355	0.402
SQSI						0.804	0.186
SQSP							0.906

Table 8 shows the loadings and cross-loadings of the manifested variables considered in the present research. All loadings registered values higher than 0.7, with values ranging from 0.740 to 0.981. The fact that items that correspond to the same dimension register values higher than cross-constructs loadings show the convergent validity of those indicators and infer that they cluster in distinct latent dimensions.

Table 8. Inter-item correlations of variable constructs.

Variable	SQSP	SQSI	CINV	CIN$_a$	CIN$_b$	SC	CBL
SQSP6	0.932	0.152	0.264	−0.198	0.417	0.350	0.370
SQSP5	0.929	0.147	0.252	−0.183	0.355	0.295	0.352
SQSP4	0.856	0.210	0.338	−0.232	0.430	0.325	0.372
SQSI1	0.107	0.770	0.141	0.102	0.276	0.281	0.283
SQSI2	0.118	0.830	0.135	−0.010	0.273	0.252	0.268
SQSI3	0.223	0.809	0.258	−0.106	0.384	0.357	0.306
CINV1	0.329	0.245	0.965	−0.402	0.463	0.324	0.310
CINV2	0.273	0.182	0.965	−0.389	0.439	0.339	0.310
CIN2	−0.202	0.020	−0.363	0.911	−0.344	−0.215	−0.181
CIN3	−0.216	−0.053	−0.407	0.873	−0.464	−0.253	−0.182
CIN1	−0.175	0.011	−0.312	0.860	−0.219	−0.135	−0.085
CIN4	0.326	0.267	0.444	−0.415	0.797	0.395	0.462
CIN5	0.456	0.387	0.403	−0.362	0.872	0.538	0.575
CIN6	0.304	0.299	0.312	−0.187	0.807	0.479	0.497
SC1	0.335	0.298	0.248	−0.204	0.510	0.893	0.507
SC3	0.342	0.406	0.275	−0.191	0.530	0.904	0.483
SC4	0.212	0.212	0.365	−0.184	0.396	0.719	0.291
CBL1	0.391	0.332	0.291	−0.147	0.573	0.500	0.899
CBL2	0.331	0.307	0.286	−0.159	0.543	0.427	0.899

Table 9 presents the results of the first structural model. This model uses clothing brand loyalty as the outcome variable. Table 10 presents the results of the second structural model, where innovativeness interest is the outcome variable. The third structural model, which uses innovativeness awareness as a direct variable, is presented in Table 11. The models' figures are placed in the Appendix A. Figure A1 corresponds to the first structural equation model, Figure A2 corresponds to the second structural model, and Figure A3 refers to the third model.

Table 9. The first structural equation model.

	Direct Effects		Indirect Effects	Direct Effect Sizes		Total Effects (Direct Effect + Indirect Effect via Status Consumption)
	SC	CBL	CBL	SC	CBL	CBL
SC	-	0.339 *** [0.049] (<0.001)		-	0.176 [0.049]	0.339 *** [0.049] (<0.001)
SQSI	0.289 *** [0.049] (<0.001)	0.164 *** [0.049] (<0.001)	0.098 ** [0.036] (0.003)	0.110 [0.049]	0.093 [0.049]	0.262 *** [0.049] (<0.001)
SQSP	0.239 *** [0.049] (<0.001)	0.243 *** [0.049] (<0.001)	0.081 * [0.036] (0.012)	0.087 [0.049]	0.135 [0.049]	0.324 *** [0.049] (<0.001)
CINV	0.218 *** [0.050] (<0.001)	0.117 * [0.050] (0.010)	0.074 * [0.036] (0.020)	0.076 [0.050]	0.063 [0.050]	0.191 *** [0.050] (<0.001)
Gender	-	−0.044 [0.051] (0.196)	-	-	0.002 [0.051]	−0.044 [0.051] (0.196)
Residence	-	0.05 [0.051] (0.457)	-	-	0.000 [0.051]	0.05 [0.051] (0.457)
R^2 / Adj R^2	0.273/0.267	0.373/0.363	-	-	-	-

Note: *** p value < 0.001; ** p value < 0.01; * p value < 0.05; · p value < 0.10; [ ]—standard error.

Table 10. The second structural equation model.

	Direct Effects		Indirect Effects	Direct Effect Sizes		Total Effects (Direct Effect + Indirect Effect via Status Consumption
	SC	CIN$_a$	CIN$_a$	SC	CIN$_a$	CIN$_a$
SC	-	0.389 ** [0.050] (0.002)		-	0.233 [0.050]	0.389 *** [0.050] (<0.001)
SQSI	0.239 *** [0.049] (<0.001)	0.165 * [0.050] (0.006)	0.113 *** [0.036] (<0.001)	0.110 [0.049]	0.110 [0.050]	0.278 *** [0.050] (<0.001)
SQSP	0.239 *** [0.049] (<0.001)	0.187 ** [0.050] (0.004)	0.093 ** [0.036] (0.005)	0.087 [0.049]	0.123 [0.050]	0.280 *** [0.050] (<0.001)
CINV	0.218 *** [0.050] (<0.001)	0.242 *** [0.049] (<0.001)	0.085 * [0.036] (0.009)	0.076 [0.050]	0.153 [0.049]	0.327 *** [0.049] (<0.001)
Gender	-	0.022 [0.051] (0.336)	-	-	0.002 [0.051]	0.022 [0.051] (0.336)
Residence	-	−0.052 [0.051] (0.154)	-	-	0.001 [0.051]	−0.052 [0.051] (0.154)
R^2/Adj R^2	0.273/0.267	0.192/0.179	-	-	-	-

Note: *** *p* value < 0.001; ** *p* value < 0.01; * *p* value < 0.05; · *p* value < 0.10; [ ]—standard error.

Table 11. The third structural equation model.

	Direct Effects		Indirect Effects	Direct Effect Sizes		Total Effects (Direct Effect + Indirect Effect via Status Consumption)
	SC	CIN$_b$	CIN$_b$	SC	CIN$_b$	CIN$_b$
SC	-	0.339 *** [0.048] (<0.001)		-	0.176 [0.048]	0.339 *** [0.048] (<0.001)
SQSI	0.289 *** [0.049] (<0.001)	0.164 *** [0.050] (<0.001)	0.098 ** [0.036] (0.003)	0.110 [0.049]	0.093 [0.049]	0.262 *** [0.049] (<0.001)
SQSP	0.239 *** [0.049] (<0.001)	0.243 *** [0.050] (<0.001)	0.081 * [0.036] (0.012)	0.087 [0.049]	0.135 [0.049]	0.324 *** [0.049] (<0.001)
CINV	0.218 *** [0.050] (0.001)	0.117 * [0.050] (0.010)	0.074 * [0.036] (0.020)	0.076 [0.050]	0.063 [0.049]	0.191 *** [0.049] (<0.001)
Gender	-	−0.044 [0.051] (0.196)	-	-	0.002 [0.051]	−0.044 [0.051] (0.196)
Residence	-	0.05 [0.051] (0.457)	-	-	0.000 [0.051]	0.05 [0.051] (0.457)
R^2/Adj R^2	0.273/0.267	0.495/0.487	-	-	-	-

Note: *** *p* value < 0.001; ** *p* value < 0.01; * *p* value < 0.05; · *p* value < 0.10; [ ]—standard error.

All three models previously presented estimated the direct, indirect, and total effects and their level of statistical significance. It was also reported the effect size of each direct path. Tables 9–11 indicated very food explanatory power, with R-squared values of 37.3 (clothing brand loyalty); 27.3 (status consumption); 19.2 (innovativeness interest); and 49.5 (innovativeness awareness).

Table 12 realizes a summary of the already exposed results in Tables 9–11 by revealing the effect and the level of significance of each relationship in a simpler format, having the three versions of the model in the same table.

Table 12. Simplified structural equation model (with the mediator).

Predictor	Status Consumption	Direct Effects			Indirect Effects			Total Effects		
		CBL	CIN_a	CIN_b	CBL	CIN_a	CIN_b	CBL	CIN_a	CIN_b
SQSI	+ ***	+ ***	+ *	+ ***	+ **	+ ***	+ **	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***
SQSP	+ ***	+ ***	+ **	+ ***	+ *	+ **	+ *	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***
CINV	+ ***	+ *	+ ***	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ *	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***
Residence	None	+	-	+	None	None	None	+	-	+
Gender	None	-	+	-	None	None	None	-	+	-

Note: *** *p* value < 0.001; ** *p* value < 0.01; * *p* value < 0.05; · *p* value < 0.10; + positive coefficient; - negative coefficient.

SQSI is a positive and significant predictor of the status consumption and the mediator variable, and it manifests a statistically significant and positive total effect on all outcome variables. It manifests statistically significant total effects on clothing brand loyalty, innovativeness interest, and innovativeness awareness. In addition, the SQSI predictor manifests a direct and indirect effect on all outcome variables. It was considered that status consumption fully mediates the relationship between satisfaction with the extent of fashion luxury innovations and all outcome variables. Satisfaction with the extent of fashion luxury innovations increases consumers' level of clothing brand loyalty, as well as their level of innovativeness. As expected, the relationship is mediated by status consumption. Even if there was no former expectation regarding the inherent potential relationship between the status quo manifest variables and the considered outcome variables, the positive relationship between status quo and status consumption was unexpected. Status consumption designates people's motivator to adopt a behavioral change to improve their social position. This positive relationship between status quo and status consumption reveals that people are satisfied with their acquisitions. The prestige and social status that they acquire while purchasing the existing luxury fashion innovations is satisfactory.

Satisfaction with existing luxury fashion products manifests a positive influence on status consumption (the mediator) and has a statistical total effect on all outcome variables. There is a direct and positive effect on all outcome variables. The indirect effect on the clothing brand loyalty and innovativeness awareness (via the mediator, status consumption) has a slight statistical significance. In this case, status consumption fully mediates the relationship between satisfaction with existing luxury fashion products and the considered outcomes.

Regarding the clothing involvement, we expected a positive influence on status consumption [25]. That hypothesis was confirmed by our results. It was observed that clothing involvement exhibits positive total effects on all outcome variables. When decomposed, the indirect effect is marginally significant in the case of all outcome variables. The direct effect is highly significant in the case of innovativeness interest outcome variables and marginally significant for the rest of the outcome variables. As expected, the relationship between all three outcome variables and clothing involvement is mediated by status consumption.

Gender manifests negative total effects on clothing brand loyalty and innovativeness awareness, but the influence is not statistically significant. The relationship with the innovativeness interest is positive, but again, it is not statistically significant. There are no indirect effects, only direct effects.

A similar situation emerged regarding the residence—total effects are not significant, and there are only direct effects on the outcome variables. The influence on clothing brand loyalty and innovativeness awareness is negative, while the impact on innovativeness involvement is positive. In those models, residence and gender are not good predictors of the outcome variables.

5. Discussion

The considered models showed that status quo manifest constructs present a strong statistical significance in their relationship with consumers' loyalty to brands. The satisfaction experienced by consumers determines them to create a sort of emotional connection with the brand. This relation is available over time, as the excitement that is offered by that brand remains constant.

On the other hand, status quo influence on consumers' innovativeness awareness and their innovativeness interest was positive, contrary to our expectations. This was interpreted in the light that the existing innovations in the luxury fashion markets are not such disruptive to disorder the consumers' equilibrium such that to determine their resistance to the available novelties. It was interesting to note the positive relationship between status quo and status consumption, suggesting that consumers manifest satisfaction with the acquisition that they gather, their desire for social confirmation and prestige being satisfied by the already exiting fashion innovations.

The positive influence of the clothing involvement on the investigated predictors was expected [25] and confirmed by our research. Clothing involvement exhibited a positive effect on the mediator: status consumption.

Previous studies hypothesized the positive influence of the innovativeness in fashion on consumers' brand loyalty [17,55]. Moreover, we hypothesized the positive impact of the innovativeness on status consumption when discussing luxury fashion products [17,56], and the influence that was also confirmed by our research. An innovative consumer results in high brand loyalty, being in the interest of the luxury fashion providers to maintain a high level of fashion design. Of course, this aspect may not prove applicable if referring to other types of products than luxuries.

Existing studies find a positive relationship between consumers' status consumption and their loyalty to brands [57]. Consumers that manifest interest in status-seeking discover which brands provide and confirm this status and develop a connection with them as time as this status confirmation persists. This aspect is more visible when referring to clothes because those act as a dominant symbol of social status [27]. Our research also confirmed this positive influence among status confirmation and brand loyalty.

The hypothesis testing results suggest that there is a need to pay attention to the status consumption. Its direct effects on clothing brand loyalty and consumer level of innovativeness are both significant. Moreover, it fully mediates all the tested relationships among predictors and the outcome variables, indicating that the consumers' connection with a brand or its interest concerning innovations in the area of luxury fashion innovations is dictated by social status confirmation.

As the luxury market advances, consumers exhibit interest in luxury products because of their symbolic value, status consumption manifesting an essential role in attracting consumers that are eager to show their place in society. This aspect could be in the interest of the marketers, to align their marketing strategies to the segment of customers who are interested in status confirmation.

All three models have good explanatory power. The predictors explained 50% of the variation of the innovativeness awareness. Furthermore, 27.3% of the mediator variation is

explained by the predictors included in the analysis. The control variables do not manifest a statistically significant influence.

The contribution of each predictor to the overall explanatory power of the model represents an essential feature. To be considered as being an effective contribution, the effect size of that predictor should be above 0.02 [65]. In all models, it seems that the status consumption manifests the greatest effect size of all predictors. In addition, in the first and the third models, satisfaction with existing luxury fashion products manifests the second most powerful effect size.

6. Conclusions

The existing literature revealed that status consumption represents an effective motivator to adopt a behavioral change. Status consumption was identified as a good predictor of consumers' brand loyalty and their innovativeness capacities. This paper proposed to take the available literature one step further. It investigated the relationship between consumers' default tendencies, their level of involvement in clothing, and their loyalty to brands or innovativeness tendencies, using the status consumption as a mediator. The focus of the present research was designated by luxury fashion items, which is a product category where status consumption manifests an essential role. The analysis was conducted on teenagers because there are only a few studies that investigate their position regarding luxury clothing innovations and because of the development of the teenagers market, it is essential to identify and understand their attitude concerning this topic. Moreover, the actual study was conducted on Romania, which is an emerging country that is part of the European Union, a highly internationalized market. In this context, the behavioral response of the youth consumers may be in the interest of the fashion providers and international clothing clusters. The gathered data of the present study consisted of a sample of 383 students enrolled in different universities in Romania, most of them aged between 18 and 27 years old. It was used as a method in the PLS-PM analysis. There were three outcome variables: clothing brand loyalty, innovativeness interest, and innovativeness awareness. The principal predictor was the status quo with its two manifest variables: satisfaction with the extent of innovations and satisfaction with the existing luxury fashion products. The control variables were gender and residence. Status consumption was used as a mediator between the considered predictors and our outcome variables.

The obtained results highlighted a positive relationship among status consumption and consumers' loyalty to brands, their level of involvement, and innovativeness tendencies. Moreover, it was revealed that status consumption is a good mediator of the relationship among proposed predictors and considered outcome variables. In addition, status consumption manifested the highest effect size of all investigated predictors.

The results suggest that there is a need to direct our attention to the status consumption variable. The fact that it fully mediates all the tested relationships among predictors and the outcome variables indicates that the consumers' connection with a brand or its interest concerning luxury fashion innovations is related to social status confirmation.

The present study is an exploratory one, and there are several limitations of this research. For the future, it is proposed to test these hypotheses on distinct groups of consumers to check the reliability of the results. Even if the results sustained the hypotheses, the study is not without limitations. The obtained results have a limited degree of generality considering the convenience sample and its relative homogeneity. It is quite probably to not gather the same results on different groups of consumers. In addition, our findings are limited to one product category. It could not be assumed that the same results would be obtained for other product categories. In the end, the limitation is figured out by the fact that the model does not hold all predictable essential predictors. It is necessary to conduct further theoretical investigations to fully understand the phenomena before testing new models.

Appendix A

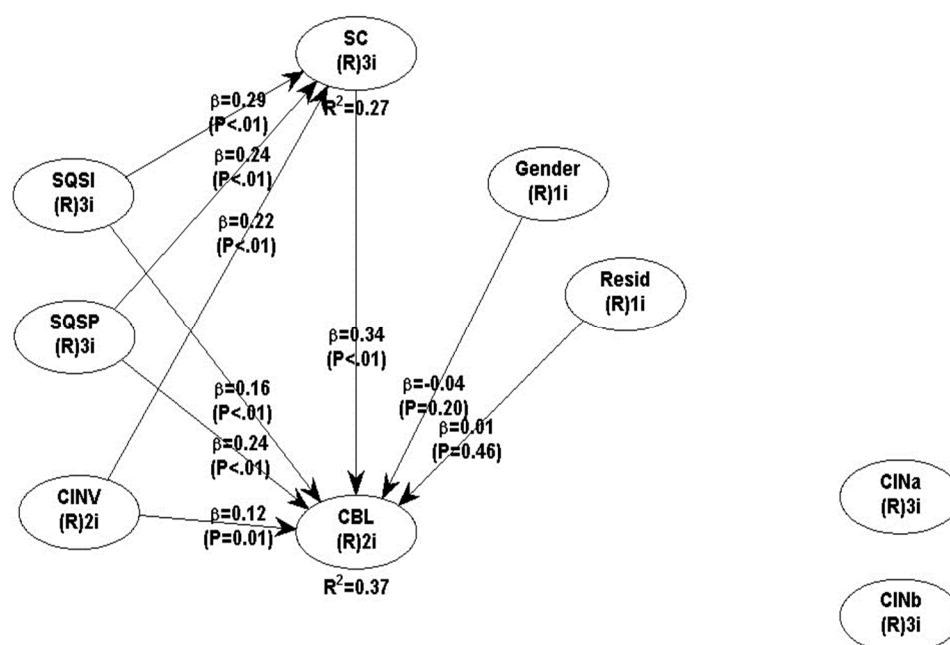Analysis results presented in figures.

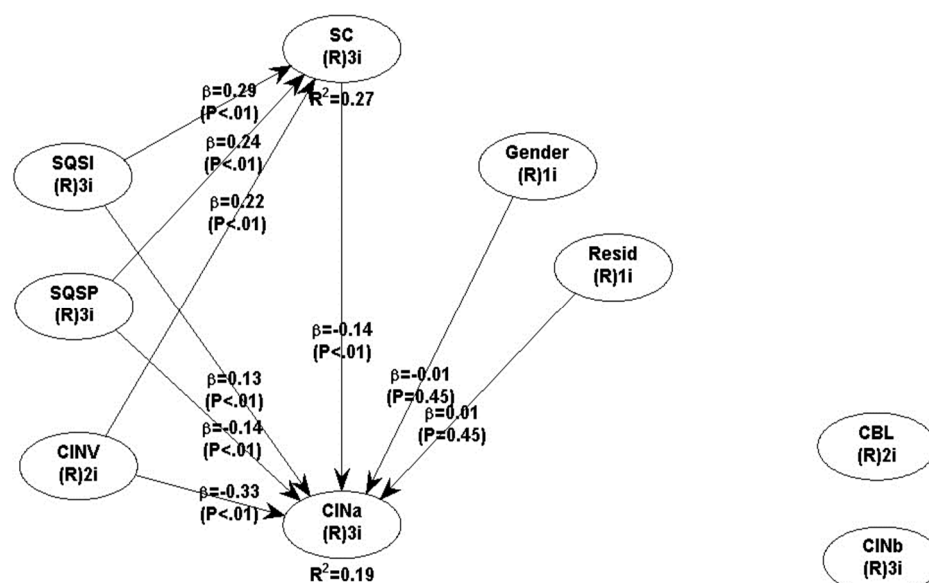**Figure A1.** The first structural equation model—clothing brand loyalty (CBL) is the outcome variable.

Figure A2. The second structural equation model—innovativeness interest (CINₐ) is the outcome variable.
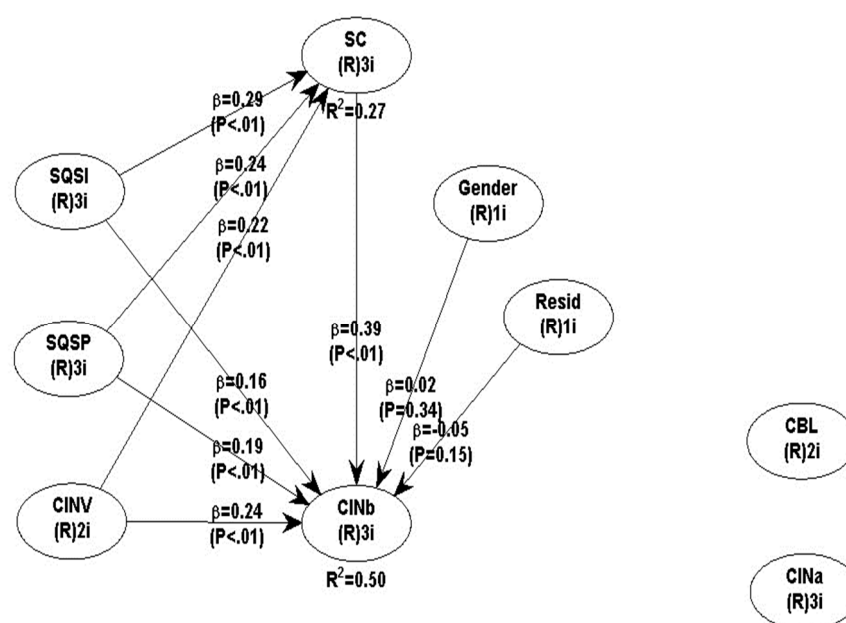
Figure A3. The third structural equation model—innovativeness awareness (CIN$_b$) is the outcome variable.

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