

Gender, fashion consumer group, need for touch and Korean apparel consumers' shopping channel preference

Jane E. Workman and Siwon Cho

Fashion Design and Merchandising Program, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL, USA

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Correspondence

Jane E. Workman, Fashion Design and Merchandising Program, Southern Illinois University, 311 Quigley Hall, Carbondale, IL 62901-4318, USA.
E-mail: jworkman@siu.edu

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Abstract

Shopping preferences are affected by the culture in which an individual grows up as well as by individual differences in consumers such as differences in gender, fashion leadership and need for touch. The current study examined the influence of consumers' need for touch and fashion leadership on preference for shopping outlets (e.g. touch and non-touch shopping channels) between genders and within a particular culture. The purpose of this study was to examine gender, fashion consumer group, need for touch and Korean apparel consumers' shopping channel preference. Participants were a convenience sample of 262 Korean college students who were recruited in Changwon, South Korea. A questionnaire was compiled that included a request for demographic information, the Need For Touch scale, the Measure of Fashion Innovativeness and Opinion Leadership, and items assessing preference for touch and non-touch shopping channels for clothing. Women and men did not differ in overall need for touch or instrumental need for touch. Fashion change agents and fashion followers did not differ in their preference for touch and non-touch shopping channels. Preference for touch shopping channels was more greatly affected by variables such as need for touch, gender, and fashion innovativeness and opinion leadership than preference for non-touch shopping channels. Preference for non-touch shopping channels was virtually unaffected by the variables examined in the current study. Implications for theory and research are provided.

Introduction

A number of planned and unplanned events can intervene between preferences and behaviour resulting in what Sheth (1981, 1983) called the preference-behaviour discrepancy. Patronage behaviour refers to purchase behaviour regarding a particular product from a particular outlet. Patronage behaviour is hypothesized to be a function of preference-behaviour discrepancy caused by unexpected events that encourage, inhibit or have no effect on an individual's shopping preference.

Unexpected events are those an individual cannot anticipate because the events occur between the time when shopping preferences and intentions were established and when actual shopping behaviour occurred. Numerous events do intervene and influence attitudes and intentions with respect to their manifestation into behaviour, and positive attitudes are the precursors of positive intentions (Blackwell *et al.*, 2001). Consumer attitudes, positive or negative, are reflected in shopping preferences which, according to Oliver (1997), refer to loyalty in re-buying a product or brand, or re-patronizing a store or shopping channel. Thus, it is important to investigate factors affecting shopping preferences that ultimately determine shopping patronage.

Shopping patronage theory

Shopping patronage theory has its foundation in psychology because it describes and explains individual patronage behaviour (Sheth, 1981, 1983). The theory consists of two sub-theories: (a) preference for a shopping outlet and (b) buying behaviour from that outlet. Shopping preference theory is made up of four constructs and their determinants: shopping predisposition, shopping motives, methods for decision making and shopping options.

Shopping predisposition is the end result of an individual's deliberations, that is, outlet options are ranked in relative preference for products (e.g. clothing) being considered for purchase (Sheth, 1981, 1983). Shopping motives are individuals' functional needs and non-functional wants (i.e. social, emotional and epistemic values) related to preference for shopping outlets for a particular product (Sheth, 1981, 1983). Examples of functional needs include cost and availability of needed products, parking convenience, and accessibility; non-functional wants include outlet image, atmosphere, or personnel. Examples of epistemic (i.e. knowledge) values include variety seeking, boredom coping, and keeping current with new trends. For a particular category of

products (e.g. clothing), the shopping behaviour of some individuals (e.g. fashion followers) will be functionally motivated [e.g. instrumental need for touch (NFT)] and for others (e.g. fashion change agents) non-functionally motivated (e.g. autotelic NFT; Workman, 2010).

Shopping options are the outlets available to satisfy shopping motives for a particular category of products (Sheth, 1981, 1983). For example, a consumer's motive for shopping may be experiential or recreational such as enjoyment and sensory gratification (Hirschman and Stern, 1999; Peck and Childers, 2003a). Shopping outlets vary in ability to fulfill experiential motives. *Touch shopping channels* (i.e. brick-and-mortar stores) excel in fulfilling experiential goals. Consumers can engage their senses as they see, touch, try on, smell and taste products before purchase. *Non-touch shopping channels* (i.e. catalogs, television, Internet) have other benefits (e.g. convenience) that may outweigh the lack of experiential aspects.

Determinants of shopping preference theory

Some researchers have examined determinants of shopping motives, shopping options and shopping preferences (e.g. Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Peck and Childers, 2003b; Peck & Childers, 2006). Sheth (1981, 1983) cautioned that even though the label *determinant* is used, most research has been correlational, not causal. Sheth suggested that complex statistical procedures such as multivariate analysis are necessary to examine causal relationships among determinants. Sheth's (1981, 1983) shopping preference theory proposes three types of product determinants: (a) product (i.e. different products provide differential satisfaction of needs and wants); (b) use (i.e. situational and social settings in which a product is consumed); and (c) brand predisposition (i.e. preference for specific brand names). Experiential goods, such as clothing, call for evaluation by direct, physical experience such as touch (Lynch *et al.*, 2001; Chiang and Dholakia, 2003). Clothing is a product category that matches with the benefits of touch shopping channels because evaluation of clothing quality relies on physical inspection (Peck and Childers, 2003a).

Shopping preference theory (Sheth, 1981, 1983) proposes three sets of personal determinants: (a) personal values (i.e. beliefs about what to consider when shopping for particular products; determined by personal traits such as sex, age, race, culture and religion); (b) social values (i.e. normative values imposed by others such as family, friends, reference groups or society); and (c) epistemic values (i.e. curiosity, knowledge, other exploratory values or sensory stimulation). Personal determinants may be noticeable in individuals' shopping orientations such as fashion-, brand- or price-conscious orientations (Cho and Workman, 2011).

Shopping preferences are affected by individual differences in consumers (e.g. Schoenbachler and Gordon, 2002; Kanu *et al.*, 2003; Seock and Chen-Yu, 2007) such as differences in gender, fashion leadership and NFT. Gender affects consumer behaviours such as shopping orientations, time spent shopping, information search, browsing and purchasing (Beaudry, 1999; Cleaver, 2004; Hensen and Jensen, 2009; Workman, 2010; Cho and Workman, 2011; Workman and Cho, 2012). Fashion leadership affects con-

sumer behaviours such as optimum stimulation level, boredom coping and variety seeking (Workman and Johnson, 1993; Kwon and Workman, 1996; Studak and Workman, 2004). Further, individual differences in NFT influence consumer behaviours such as choice of shopping channels (Peck and Childers, 2003a; Cho and Workman, 2011).

Personal determinants (i.e. personal values, social values, epistemic values) are affected by culture, that is, people who grow up in different cultures are socialized to have different values such as individualism or collectivism (Hofstede, 1980). Cultural values significantly affect consumer behaviour (Hofstede, 1980; Itim International, 2009). In collectivist societies such as South Korea, individuals value strong, cohesive in-groups (e.g. extended families) who require unquestioning loyalty. An individual in a collectivist culture 'is inherently connected to other people, and he or she reinforces his or her relationships through reciprocity, sentiment, and kinship networks' (Joy, 2001, p. 240). Some fashion items serve as communicators of status and prestige (Barnett, 2005; Wang and Wallendorf, 2006). In collectivist cultures, group members may experience pressure to own certain items as a reflection of not only their own, but also the group's, social status (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2002).

Sheth (1981, 1983) proposed studying functional needs and non-functional wants underlying shopping motives and the relationship between them and preference for various types of shopping options. The current study examines some specific non-functional wants (e.g. epistemic values of NFT and fashion leadership) on preference for shopping outlets (e.g. touch and non-touch shopping channels) between genders and within a particular culture. The purpose of this study was to examine gender, fashion consumer group, NFT and Korean apparel consumers' shopping channel preference.

Literature review

NFT

Peck and Childers (2003a) developed the NFT scale to measure individual differences in 'preference for the extraction and use of information obtained through the haptic system' (p. 431). The scale measures preference for autotelic touch (i.e. touch for enjoyment, pleasurable emotions and to seek variety) as well as instrumental touch (i.e. goal-directed touch). Autotelic touch entails pleasure-seeking often accompanied by a compelling urge to explore the environment through touch. Consumers who engage in autotelic touch do not necessarily have a purchase goal in mind. Instrumental touch entails gathering information in order to evaluate products and solve problems, for example, exploring texture or weight – properties that affect a product's use.

Differences among individuals, products, and situations affect the extent to which consumers experience the urge to touch a product (Peck and Childers, 2008). For example, Peck and Childers (2003a) found that individuals with high NFT felt less frustrated and expressed greater confidence when touch was a component of their product evaluations. The confidence of individuals with low NFT was unaffected by whether touch was or was not a component of their evaluation. Attributes of clothing are likely to elicit pre-purchase touch because texture, softness, weight and temperature are essential attributes to evaluate before

purchase. Increases in positive attitudes towards a product, purchase intentions and confidence in product evaluations resulted when consumers touched a product (McCabe and Nowlis, 2003; Peck and Wiggins, 2006). Individuals' urge to touch products can be affected by situational influences, for example, a point-of-purchase sign (vs. no sign) suggesting that customers touch the product resulted in more impulsive purchases particularly among consumers high in autotelic NFT (Peck and Childers, 2006). One reason individuals do not purchase products such as clothing online is lack of accessibility to touch (Citrin *et al.*, 2003; Lester *et al.*, 2005).

NFT and gender

Women had a greater NFT – total, autotelic, and instrumental – than men (Workman, 2010; Cho and Workman, 2011). Women's scores did not differ significantly for autotelic and instrumental NFT but men scored higher on instrumental than on autotelic touch. Citrin *et al.* (2003) found women had a greater need for tactile input than men. Women rated the importance of all sensory modalities, including touch, higher than men (Schifferstein, 2006). The following hypotheses were proposed.

- H1:** Women will score higher on NFT than men.
- H2:** Women will score higher on autotelic NFT than men.
- H3:** Men will score higher on instrumental NFT than women.
- H4:** Women will score equally high on autotelic and instrumental NFT.
- H5:** Men will score higher on instrumental than autotelic NFT.

NFT and fashion consumer groups

Consumers can be classified into fashion change agents (i.e. innovators, opinion leaders, innovative communicators) and fashion followers (Hirschman and Adcock, 1978). Fashion change agents are also known as fashion leaders or early adopters; fashion followers are also known as imitators or late adopters. Fashion innovators promote fashion change by buying and wearing new fashions early in the fashion cycle; fashion opinion leaders influence others to purchase and wear newly introduced fashion styles; and innovative communicators serve in both capacities. Fashion followers delay purchasing until acceptance of a style is widespread.

Compared with fashion followers, fashion change agents had a greater NFT – total, autotelic and instrumental (Workman, 2010; Cho and Workman, 2011). Fashion change agents had equally high autotelic and instrumental NFT, but fashion followers had higher instrumental than autotelic NFT. The following hypotheses were proposed.

- H6:** Fashion change agents will score higher on NFT than fashion followers.
- H7:** Fashion change agents will score higher on autotelic NFT than fashion followers.
- H8:** Fashion change agents will score higher on instrumental NFT than fashion followers.
- H9:** Fashion change agents will score equally high on autotelic and instrumental NFT.
- H10:** Fashion followers will score higher on instrumental than autotelic NFT.

Preference for shopping channels

Benefits of brick-and-mortar stores include fulfillment of experiential shopping motives (i.e. provide sensory stimulation). Customers at brick-and-mortar stores see and touch products, interact with sales associates, take possession of products immediately after purchase, and have a variety of payment options and services (Burke, 2002). Benefits of non-touch retail channels include convenience, unlimited store hours, extensive product selection, ease of comparison shopping and ease of information search (Burke, 2002).

Research has found gender differences in shopping channel preference. Gender influenced touch/non-touch channel preference indirectly via NFT (Cho and Workman, 2011). Women are less likely than men to shop online because of a lack of social interaction (Hasan, 2010). Because women have a greater preference for physically evaluating products than men, it follows that women would have a greater preference for touch shopping channels than men. Compared with men, women bought more clothing regardless of shopping channel and were more likely to purchase clothing from both touch and non-touch channels (Goldsmith and Flynn, 2005). The following hypothesis was proposed.

- H11:** Women will show (a) greater preference for touch shopping channels and (b) lesser preference for non-touch shopping channels than men.

Individuals high in fashion leadership (vs. low) were more likely to use multiple channels for clothing shopping and preferred non-touch channels (Cho and Workman, 2011). However, women who were high in fashion leadership and also high in NFT preferred touch shopping channels. The following hypothesis was proposed.

- H12:** Fashion change agents will show (a) greater preference for touch shopping channels and (b) lesser preference for non-touch shopping channels than fashion followers.

Individuals high in NFT were less likely to shop via the Internet (Peck and Childers, 2003a,b). Purchasing products such as clothing via non-touch channels was negatively related to consumers' need for tactile input (Citrin *et al.*, 2003). Individuals who had higher NFT preferred touch shopping channels (Cho and Workman, 2011). The following hypotheses were proposed.

- H13:** Participants with high NFT will show (a) greater preference for touch shopping channels and (b) lesser preference for non-touch shopping channels than participants with low NFT.
- H14:** Participants with high autotelic NFT will show (a) greater preference for touch shopping channels and (b) lesser preference for non-touch shopping channels than participants with low NFT.
- H15:** Participants with high instrumental NFT will show (a) greater preference for touch shopping channels and (b) lesser preference for non-touch shopping channels than participants with low NFT.

Method

Participants

Participants were a convenience sample of 262 Korean college students who were recruited in Changwon, South Korea. In recent years, Korean college students reported spending about \$300 a month on discretionary items (Kim, 2010). Most Korean college

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and reliability for measures

Scale	Mean	SD	Observed range	Reliability Cronbach's α
Fashion Innovativeness and Opinion Leadership	12.95	3.97	0–24	0.81
Need for Touch	2.12	14.14	–36 to +36	0.92
Autotelic Need for Touch	0.77	7.74	–18 to +18	0.89
Instrumental Need for Touch	1.34	7.72	–18 to +18	0.89
Preference for Shopping Channels				
Preference for Touch Shopping Channels	2.27	0.39	1.0–3.25	0.66
Preference for Non-Touch Shopping Channels	2.89	0.88	1.20–6.0	

SD, standard deviation.

students surveyed reported that their spending on discretionary items in 2010 was nearly twice as much as the previous year (Kim, 2010). Young Korean consumers in their twenties are key consumers of global luxury brands (South Korea: Living It Up in Luxury 2010). Because of their collectivist culture, Korean college students have a notable influence on the consumer behaviour of peers and families.

Materials, data collection and analysis

A questionnaire was compiled that included demographic items (age, gender, level of education), NFT scale (Peck and Childers, 2003a), Measure of Fashion Innovativeness and Opinion Leadership (Hirschman and Adcock, 1978), and items assessing preference for touch and non-touch shopping channels for clothing (Cho and Workman, 2011). The back-translation method was used to translate the questionnaire into Korean and assure the specific meaning of questionnaire items was equivalent.

Peck and Childers (2003a) developed the 12-item NFT scale to include two dimensions: autotelic (6 items; e.g. 'When browsing in stores, I like to touch lots of products') and instrumental (6 items; e.g. 'There are many products that I would only buy if I could handle them before purchase'). A scale ranging from –3 (strongly disagree) to +3 (strongly agree) accompanies each item. Peck and Childers (2003a) reported scale reliability at 0.95; Workman (2010) reported 0.93.

Hirschman and Adcock (1978) developed the 6-item Measure of Fashion Innovativeness and Opinion Leadership. Three items measure fashion innovativeness (e.g. How often are you among the first to try new clothing fashions?) and three items measure fashion opinion leadership (e.g. How often do others turn to you for advice on fashion and clothing?). Participants respond to each item using the categories (4 = often, 3 = sometimes, 2 = seldom, 1 = never, 0 = do not know). Lower scores indicate lower levels of fashion innovativeness and/or fashion opinion leadership. Based on the group mean and standard deviation (SD), participants are categorized into fashion innovators, fashion opinion leaders, innovative communicators and fashion followers. The measure has established content validity and reliability (e.g. 0.93; Workman, 2010) and has been used extensively in research regarding fashion consumers.

Cho and Workman (2011) developed the 10-item measure of preference for touch and non-touch shopping channels. Four items

measure preference for touch shopping channels (e.g. 'For clothing shopping, I prefer local stores') and six measure preference for non-touch shopping channels (e.g. 'For clothing shopping, I prefer TV retailers'). Items are accompanied by a 5-point response scale (5 = always; 3 = occasionally; 1 = never). Reliability of the scale was 0.70 for touch channels and 0.78 for non-touch channels (Cho and Workman, 2011).

Data were collected in large lecture classes. Volunteer participants completed the questionnaire in about 20 min. Data were analysed by descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha for reliability, paired samples *t*-tests, and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA)/ANOVA.

Results

Participant profile and preliminary data analysis

Participants were 263 Korean students (122 men; 140 women; mean age = 22.47; range = 18–40). All levels of school were fairly evenly represented: 85 freshmen, 64 sophomores, 59 juniors and 52 seniors (3 with missing data). Most participants were single (97.3%). All variables had acceptable reliability (although the shopping channel preference scale at 0.66 is a bit low). See Table 1 for reliabilities and descriptive statistics.

Participants were categorized into fashion consumer groups using Hirschman and Adcock's (1978) procedure. Means (M) and SDs were calculated for the three items measuring innovativeness (M = 6.94; SD = 2.24) and opinion leadership (M = 6.01; SD = 2.23). Innovative communicators ($n = 14$) scored more than one SD above the mean on both innovativeness (>9.18) and opinion leadership (>8.24). Fashion innovators ($n = 11$) scored more than one SD above the mean on innovativeness (>9.18), but less than one SD above the mean on opinion leadership (<8.24). Fashion opinion leaders ($n = 21$) scored more than one SD above the mean on opinion leadership (>8.24), but less than one SD above the mean on innovativeness (<9.18). These three groups were called Fashion Change Agents ($n = 46$). Fashion Followers ($n = 217$) scored more than one SD below the mean on innovativeness (<9.18) and opinion leadership (<8.24). This procedure resulted in a division proportional to these consumer groups in the actual marketplace (Behling, 1992). Fashion Change Agents were comprised of 27 women and 19 men; 113 women and 103 men

Scale	Mean (SD)	Mean square	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Need for Touch				
<i>Fashion Consumer Group</i>				
Fashion change agents	8.93 (15.50)	2554.98	13.54	0.001
Fashion followers	0.67 (13.46)			
<i>Gender</i>				
Women	4.35 (13.87)	316.20	1.69	0.195
Men	-0.40 (14.13)			
Autotelic Need for Touch				
<i>Fashion Consumer Group</i>				
Fashion change agents	5.07 (8.20)	970.58	18.27	0.001
Fashion followers	-0.14 (7.36)			
<i>Gender</i>				
Women	2.63 (7.51)	340.45	6.41	0.012
Men	-1.34 (7.52)			
Instrumental Need for Touch				
<i>Fashion Consumer Group</i>				
Fashion change agents	3.87 (8.58)	376.08	6.38	0.012
Fashion followers	0.81 (7.46)			
<i>Gender</i>				
Women	1.72 (7.62)	0.45	0.008	0.931
Men	0.93 (7.89)			

SD, standard deviation.

were Fashion Followers. Women and men were equally likely to be fashion change agents, Pearson chi-square (1, 262) = 0.62; $P < 0.27$.

NFT

MANOVA was conducted with gender and fashion consumer group as independent variables and NFT, autotelic NFT, instrumental NFT, and preference for touch and non-touch shopping channels as dependent variables. There was a significant effect for gender [$F(4, 254) = 3.94$, $P < 0.004$] and fashion consumer group [$F(4, 254) = 5.34$, $P < 0.001$] on the dependent variables. ANOVA was conducted as a follow-up procedure.

Gender

Women and men did not differ in overall or instrumental NFT (see Table 2). H1 and H3 were not supported. However, women ($M = 2.63$) reported a greater autotelic NFT than men ($M = -1.34$). H2 was supported. Selecting only women, a paired samples t -test examined H4. Women scored higher on autotelic ($M = 2.63$) than instrumental NFT ($M = 1.72$), $t(138) = 1.78$, $P < 0.08$, but the difference was not statistically significant. H4 was supported. Selecting only men, a paired samples t -test examined H5. Men scored higher on instrumental ($M = 0.93$) than on autotelic NFT ($M = -1.34$), $t(122) = 4.07$, $P < 0.001$. H5 was supported.

Fashion consumer groups

Fashion change agents ($M = 8.93$) had a greater NFT than fashion followers ($M = 0.67$) (see Table 3). Fashion change agents had a greater need for instrumental ($M = 3.87$) and autotelic ($M = 5.07$) touch than fashion followers (instrumental $M = 0.81$; autotelic

Table 2 Analysis of variance results of fashion consumer group and gender for Need for Touch, Autotelic Need for Touch and Instrumental Need for Touch

$M = -0.14$). H6, H7 and H8 were supported. Selecting only fashion change agents, a paired samples t -test examined H9. Fashion change agents scored higher on autotelic ($M = 5.07$) than instrumental NFT ($M = 3.87$), but the difference did not reach significance, $t(45) = 1.26$, $P < 0.21$. H9 was supported. Selecting only fashion followers, a paired samples t -test examined H10. Fashion followers scored higher on instrumental NFT ($M = 0.81$) than on autotelic NFT ($M = -0.14$), $t(215) = 2.25$, $P < 0.025$. H10 was supported.

Preference for shopping channels

Gender

Women ($M = 2.34$) indicated a greater preference for touch shopping channels than men ($M = 2.20$) [$F(1, 261) = 4.53$, $P < 0.03$]. Women ($M = 2.92$) and men ($M = 2.84$) did not differ in preference for non-touch shopping channels [$F(1, 261) = 2.47$, $P < 0.12$]. H11a was supported; H11b was not supported.

Fashion consumer groups

Fashion change agents and fashion followers did not differ in preference for touch [$F(1, 261) = 0.03$, $P < 0.993$] and non-touch [$F(1, 261) = 2.23$, $P < 0.09$] shopping channels. H12a,b were not supported.

NFT

To test hypothesis H13, participants were divided into two groups: above ($n = 129$) and below ($n = 133$) the median (2.00) on NFT. Groups differed in preference for touch shopping channels, $F(1, 260) = 24.50$, $P < 0.001$ ($M^{\text{high NFT}} = 2.39$; $SD = 0.33$; $M^{\text{low NFT}} = 2.16$; $SD = 0.40$). Groups did not differ in preference

Table 3 Analysis of variance results of fashion consumer group and gender on preference for touch and non-touch shopping channels for clothing

Scale	Mean (SD)	Mean square	F	P
Preference for Touch Shopping Channels				
<i>Fashion Consumer Group</i>				
Fashion change agents	2.28 (0.40)	1.08	0.000	0.993
Fashion followers	2.27 (0.38)			
<i>Gender</i>				
Women	2.34 (0.38)	0.66	4.53	0.043
Men	2.20 (0.38)			
Preference for Non-Touch Shopping Channels				
<i>Fashion Consumer Group</i>				
Fashion change agents	3.31 (0.94)	2.50	3.24	0.073
Fashion followers	2.83 (0.87)			
<i>Gender</i>				
Women	2.92 (0.91)	1.90	2.47	0.117
Men	2.84 (0.86)			

SD, standard deviation.

for non-touch shopping channels, $F(1, 260) = 0.29$, $P < 0.59$ ($M^{\text{high NFT}} = 2.92$; $SD = 0.98$; $M^{\text{low NFT}} = 2.85$; $SD = 0.78$). H13a was supported; H13b was not supported.

To test hypothesis H14, participants were divided into two groups: above ($n = 127$) and below ($n = 135$) the median (1.00) on autotelic NFT. Groups differed in preference for touch shopping channels, $F(1, 260) = 22.92$, $P < 0.001$ ($M^{\text{high autotelic NFT}} = 2.39$; $SD = 0.34$; $M^{\text{low autotelic NFT}} = 2.17$; $SD = 0.40$). Likewise, groups differed in preference for non-touch shopping channels, $F(1, 260) = 4.47$, $P < 0.035$ ($M^{\text{high autotelic NFT}} = 3.00$; $SD = 0.99$; $M^{\text{low autotelic NFT}} = 2.77$; $SD = 0.76$). H14a was supported; H14b was not supported.

To test hypothesis H15, participants were divided into two groups: above ($n = 132$) and below ($n = 131$) the median (2.00) on instrumental NFT. Groups differed in preference for touch shopping channels, $F(1, 260) = 13.87$, $P < 0.001$ ($M^{\text{high instrumental NFT}} = 2.36$; $SD = 0.37$; $M^{\text{low instrumental NFT}} = 2.19$; $SD = 0.38$). Groups did not differ in preference for non-touch shopping channels, $F(1, 260) = 2.34$, $P < 0.127$ ($M^{\text{high instrumental NFT}} = 2.81$; $SD = 0.94$; $M^{\text{low instrumental NFT}} = 2.97$; $SD = 0.83$). H15a was supported; H15b was not supported.

Discussion

By using a sample of Korean male and female college students in the current research, earlier research examining gender, fashion consumer groups and NFT was extended to another culture. It seems clear that preference for touch shopping channels is more greatly affected by variables such as NFT, gender and fashion leadership than preference for non-touch shopping channels. Preference for non-touch shopping channels was virtually unaffected by variables examined in the current study.

Hypotheses not supported

Women and men did not differ in overall NFT or instrumental NFT. Results are inconsistent with Cho and Workman, 2011; Citrin, *et al.*, 2003; Schifferstein, 2006; and Workman, 2010 who

found that women had a greater NFT or tactile input and rated the importance of all sensory modalities, including touch, higher than men. Fashion change agents and fashion followers did not differ in their preference for touch and non-touch shopping channels. Results are inconsistent with Cho and Workman (2011) who found that participants high (vs. low) in fashion leadership were more likely to prefer non-touch channels. Women and men did not differ in preference for non-touch shopping channels. Participants who were high and low in NFT – total and instrumental – did not differ in their preference for non-touch shopping channels but participants with high (vs. low) autotelic NFT reported a greater preference for non-touch shopping channels.

Hypotheses supported

Women had greater autotelic NFT than men. Women scored equally high on autotelic and instrumental NFT. Men scored higher on instrumental than autotelic NFT. Results are consistent with Workman (2010) who found the same gender differences in NFT. Fashion change agents, compared with fashion followers, had a greater NFT – total, autotelic, and instrumental. Fashion change agents scored equally high on autotelic and instrumental NFT. Fashion followers scored higher on instrumental than autotelic NFT. Results were consistent with Workman (2010) who found the same differences in NFT among US fashion consumer groups. Women had a greater preference for touch shopping channels than men. Participants high (vs. low) in NFT – total, autotelic and instrumental – reported greater preference for touch shopping channels. Results are consistent with Cho and Workman (2011) who found that women who were fashion leaders and also high in NFT preferred to shop at touch channels and that individuals high in NFT preferred touch shopping channels. Results are also consistent with Lester *et al.* (2005) who suggested that individuals do not purchase products such as clothing from online retailers because of lack of accessibility to touch. Results are consistent with Citrin *et al.* (2003) who found that need for tactile input and purchase of products such as clothing via non-touch channels were negatively related.

Summary

Generally, results were consistent with previous research. For example, Korean fashion change agents and fashion followers differed in NFT – total, autotelic and instrumental. Likewise, Korean men and women differed in autotelic NFT. Korean women had a greater preference for touch shopping channels than men. Korean consumers high in NFT reported greater preference for touch shopping channels. One notable exception was that Korean men and women did not differ in overall NFT or in instrumental NFT. One explanation for the lack of gender differences is that increasing numbers of young Korean men are spending more money and time on grooming (Kang, 2012). Since 2006, Korean men have outspt women on clothes (Kim, 2012). The men's clothing industry has outgrown the women's, recording 7.27 vs. 7.1 trillion won in sales in 2010. Therefore, we can assume that Korean men have developed similar levels of interest and knowledge in fashion and clothing shopping. Results of this study showed that Korean men and women had similar NFT in clothing shopping.

Implications and limitations

Theoretical implications

Sheth (1981, 1983) suggested that shopping preference theory, which is based on psychological constructs, can be applied to market segments by combining it with sociological constructs. In the current study, psychological constructs of NFT and shopping preferences were combined with sociological constructs of gender and fashion consumer groups to provide new insights into shopping preferences. Both the NFT scale and the fashion leadership scale demonstrated discriminant validity. That is, the NFT scale successfully differentiated Korean consumers into high- and low-NFT groups who differed in shopping preferences. Likewise, the fashion leadership scale successfully differentiated Korean consumers into fashion change agents and fashion followers who differed in NFT and shopping preferences.

Research implications

To our knowledge, the NFT scale has not been previously used in consumer research in Asian cultures and the fashion innovativeness and opinion leadership scale has been used minimally in Asian cultures. Both scales demonstrated not only discriminant validity as noted earlier, but also good reliability. Other researchers might consider using these scales in research with Asian consumers. The current research found NFT and shopping preferences differed among fashion consumer groups and genders. Because shopping preference is a multidimensional concept (Sheth, 1981, 1983), additional variables mentioned in the theory should be examined, for example, personal values, social values and episodic values.

Practical implications

To predict shopping preferences, consumers are sometimes segmented into groups based on geography, demographics, psychographics and behaviour. To achieve the goal of accurate prediction

of shopping preferences, it is critical to understand consumer characteristics within their own cultural context. Consumer research in Asian cultures has become increasingly important as world trade expands.

Limitations

Demographic variables of age (young adults), social status (undergraduate university students) and culture (Korea) were limitations of the sample. Results of research engaging student participants cannot be generalized to other consumers. Because of these limitations, the research should be expanded to different age groups or other cultures.

The measures used in this research had high reliability and validity with one exception – preference for shopping channels at $\alpha = 0.66$ was of relatively low reliability. Authors would like to add a note of caution that lower reliability of a measure may hinder detection of hypothesized effects. Future research may consider the development of more reliable measures for examining such constructs.

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