

# 진기함추구성향 (novelty seeking)이 패션혁신행동과 대인영향력에 미치는 영향 -성별에 따른 차이(gender difference) 분석-

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## Novelty Seeking, Fashion Innovative Behavior and Personal Influence: What Gender Tells

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### Abstract

진기함추구성향 (novelty seeking)이란 새롭고 다양한 경험을 추구하는 소비자의 욕구로서, 혁신행동의 인지적 근본으로 간주되기도 한다. 본 연구는 소비자의 진기함추구성향, 패션혁신행동, 그리고 대인영향력간의 관계를 조사하고, 이러한 관계가 성별(gender)에 따라 차이가 있는지 조사하였다. 대학생집단을 표본으로 한 설문지조사를 통해 자료가 수집되었으며, 539장의 응답지가 분석되었다. 여자대학생이 모든 변인(진기함추구, 패션혁신행동, 대인영향력, 의복흥미, 정보추구)에 있어 남자대학생보다 높은 경향을 나타냈으나, 변인들간의 관계에 있어서는 뚜렷한 성차가 보이지 않았다. 정보추구활동이 패션혁신행동에 영향을 주는 공통변인으로, 의복흥미, 정보추구활동, 패션혁신행동이 대인영향력에 영향을 주는 공통변인들로 나타났으나 진기함추구성향은 패션혁신행동과 대인영향력에 직접적인 영향을 미치지 않는 것으로 나타났다. 즉, 새로움과 다양함을 시도하려는 성향/의도는 채택이라는 실질적인 행동을 수반하는 패션혁신행동을 예측하는데는 충분하지 않은 것으로 보인다.

**Key words:** novelty seeking, fashion innovative behavior, gender difference, personal influence;  
진기함추구성향, 패션혁신행동, 성차, 대인영향력

### I. Introduction

In consumer behavior and marketing, the innovativeness and diffusion is one of the most well-developed research agendas studied over the last 30 years. Particularly, consumer researchers have been concerned with innovators who adopt

new products(innovations) earlier than other consumers. Innovators are important since they start the diffusion process. More importantly, they influence other consumers' adoption decisions by providing information and legitimation relevant to the new product. As innovators often exert personal influence as an opinion leader, innovative behavior and opinion leadership both have

received extensive attention. At the very early stage of a product life cycle, concentrating marketing programs on these innovative consumer groups has been popular marketing practice for the success of the new product. Consequently, attempts to identify the characteristics of these innovative groups (even though these two groups are overlapped in most cases) and to reach them have formed rich research background.

Novelty seeking is the desire of an individual to seek out novel stimuli by looking for new and different experiences (Hirschman 1984). As a general trait of willingness to try new experiences, it is regarded as a cognitive origin of innovative behavior (Hirschman 1984). As innovators have been one of the most important target segments due to their early adoption and personal influence, utilizing novelty seeking will be valuable to predict innovative behavior. However, innovative behavior is often product specific, not generally overlapped across consumption areas. For example, some consumers tend to be innovators in apparel while others do in sports. As an individual exhibits different levels of interest to different consumption areas, a general trait of novelty seeking will not be enough in explaining innovative behavior in a specific product category. Rather a willingness to try something new and different in certain consumption areas (product/domain specific novelty seeking) can be a better indicator of innovative behavior.

Various factors can affect product specific novelty seeking and innovative behavior. Gender is one of the most important and easy variables to be considered. Interestingly, gender comparison has not been a major concern in innovative behavior (including apparel) and shopping oriented behavior. However, changing consumer life styles and social roles have caused changes in consumer tastes and shopping patterns, and increasing

numbers of specialty retailers (regardless of distribution channels they are engaged in) target and use the same marketing programs for both genders. Hence, it is necessary to investigate the differences and similarities between male and female innovative behavior in order to develop the most suitable marketing programs for females, males or both.

## II. Research Background

### 1. Novelty Seeking and Innovative Behavior

Consumers who are most likely to adopt brand-new products and services are a diverse group. Despite their diversity, change leaders (innovators) exhibit consistent personality traits. They seek out novelty, stimulation and information; and they are fashion-conscious, sociable, and self-confident (MacEvoy 1994). Based on a survey of upscale households, MacEvoy (1994) concludes that change leaders fall into two distinct groups: a younger, extremely active group with high levels of fashion awareness, stimulation-seeking, and sociability; and a middle-aged group with high self-confidence and a great appetite for information. A core trait of the change-leader personality shared by both groups is an endless search for new things (MacEvoy 1994).

The basic notion underlying the construct of novelty seeking is that through some motivating force the individual seeks out novel information (Acker and McReynolds 1967; Cattell 1975). Novelty seeking represents an innate search for information and new experiences as a construct which deals with a portion of experience seeking (Hirschman 1984). Hirschman (1980) contends the two aspects of novelty seeking: seeking stimulation; and seeking variety. Seeking new and discrepant information is described as

venturesomeness by Rogers(1983). The extent to which individuals vary their choices among known stimuli is described as variety seeking or stimulus variation. The desire to seek out the new and different(i.e., inherent novelty seeking) is conceptually indistinguishable from inherent innovativeness(the predisposition to acquire new products) (Hirschman 1980; 1984). Past research findings support the Hirschman's argument revealing the empirical relationships between adoption behavior and alternative constructs of novelty seeking—variety seeking and venturesomeness. For example, Rogers(1983) and Gatignon and Robertson(1985) summarize the relation between venturesomeness and innovative behavior. Workman and Johnson(1993) found that fashion innovators showed higher variety seeking (sensation seeking) than did followers, and they concluded that part of the psychological makeup of fashion innovators was a great need for variety in the form of mental stimulation. Hirschman (1984) also found that novelty seekers were above average in job status, were highly exposed to mass media, and were above average in exposure to stimulation.

## 2. Innovative Behavior and Personal Influence

Numerous studies have examined consumer innovative behavior. Research results have shown that innovators have certain consistent characteristics which distinguish them from others(late adopters or non—adopters). Innovative behavior has been related to higher income or higher spending on products(Mason and Bellenger 1973—4; Baumgarten 1975; Goldsmith and Flynn 1992); higher product interest(Schrank and Gilmore 1973; Mason and Bellenger 1973—4; Reynolds and Darden 1973, 1974; Goldsmith, Stitch and White 1987; Davis 1987); higher information

seeking activities(Mason and Bellenger 1973—4; Reynolds and Darden 1973, 1974; Painter and Granzin 1976; Goldsmith and Flynn 1992); and higher perceptions of innovation attributes(Labay and Kinnear 1981; Holak 1988; Holak and Lehmann 1990).

Innovators exert personal influence to potential adopters who are searching for information of new products and legitimation for social acceptance(relevant to the adoption of an innovation). That is, innovators tend to be opinion leaders. The relationship between innovative behavior and opinion leadership has been broadly researched(For summary of these findings, see Gatignon and Robertson 1985; For more recent research in fashion, see Ree and Rhee 1989; Kim and Hong 1996).

## 3. Gender Differences

It is known that females enjoy shopping and engage in comparison shopping more than do males. Likewise, gender differences may be observed in interest toward different product categories. For example, females tend to be more interested in fashion product categories(clothing) while males are more interested in sporting goods and technological products(computers, cars, etc). That is, male consumers are likely to be innovators in technological products and sporting goods while more female consumers become innovators in clothing fashion. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that most research in fashion innovativeness targets females. Indeed, females showed higher clothing interest and purchase intention for fashionable clothing items than did males(Shim and Koh 1997).

However, gender differences in fashion interest and adoption of new fashion styles become reduced. From fashionable hair coloring, earrings, and see-through t-shirts to hip-hop looks and

retro-fashion styles, what is in fashion among young males and females appears to be not much different. Such blurry distinction reflects changing consumer life styles and value. That is, an increasing tendency of males and females to share social experiences and roles reduce differences in tastes and purchasing patterns between them (Eastlick and Feinberg 1994; Roberts 1984). More and more couples share shopping experiences and affect each other's purchase decisions. As value and life styles of males as well as those of females have been rapidly changing and men's demands for expressing own individuality have been increasing, more males become interested in fashion and its changes (Kim and Hong 1996; Lee 1993; Lee, Kim and Son 1997). Lee et al. (1997) found that there was no difference by gender in clothing interest among high school students, and they concluded that it was an evidence of increasing clothing interest of males.

Most of research in fashion innovativeness has targeted females while a few studies have investigated male innovators (i.e., Reynolds and Darden 1974; Painter and Granzin 1976; Hirschman and Adcock 1978; Kim et al. 1996). Only a couple of research reports compare males and females in innovative behavior. According to these research findings, female consumers are more fashion-conscious and innovative than are male consumers (Goldsmith et al. 1987; Lee et al. 1997). Such findings imply that females seeking individuality and fashion (Lee et al. 1997) are more likely to be fashion innovators though males' clothing interest has increased and research, especially conducted to high school students (i.e., Lee et al. 1997), reports no difference between males and females.

### III. Research Purposes

This study investigates the relationships between novelty seeking, fashion innovative behavior, and personal influence and gender differences in those relationships. Specific research purposes include the following investigations: 1) gender differences in novelty seeking (in general and apparel specific), innovative-related variables, fashion innovative behavior and personal influence; 2) the relationships between novelty seeking (in general and apparel specific) and fashion innovative behavior; 3) gender differences in the effects of novelty seeking and the innovative-related variables on fashion innovative behavior; and 4) gender differences in the effects of novelty seeking, the innovative-related variables, and fashion innovative behavior on personal influence.

### IV. Method

#### 1. Data Collection

Data were obtained from a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was revised through several steps including focus group interviews and pretests. College students of a major university at a medium-sized city in a southeastern state, USA were the subjects. The student sample was selected based on the following judgements: 1) The college student group was an useful market segment targeted by many apparel manufacturers and retailers since this group was sensitive to fashions and actually spent for new fashion; and 2) Though it could not represent diverse consumer groups, such homogenous group was appropriate to accomplish the purposes of this study examining gender differences. Questionnaires were distributed to and collected from volunteers during the regular class meetings. The total number of

responses collected was 586. Except unusable ones, 539 responses were used for data analysis. Of the respondents, 40.3 percent (217 respondents) were males and 59.7 percent (322 respondents) were females. Chi-square test revealed no significant difference in family annual income between genders.

## 2. Measurement

Novelty seeking was measured by an adapted scale from the Hirschman (1984)'s. Hirschman (1984) measured novelty seeking by asking how willing the respondent was to try something new in each of several consumption areas. Such approach assessing the consumer's motivation or actual willingness to try items in each product class generates both a composite set of domain specific scores, which should correlate highly with the individual's score on general items. The use of a battery of domain-specific questions could help in locating consumption areas in which the consumer is especially high/low in novelty seeking (Hirschman 1984). The scale consisted of 13 consumption areas measuring on a 7-point scale. The alpha coefficient was .93.

Clothing interest and information seeking were selected as the innovative-related variables. The Schrank (1973)'s clothing interest inventory was modified to measure clothing interest. The modified scale consisted of 5 items on a 5-point scale, and the alpha coefficient was .87. The information seeking scale was developed based on past research. It consisted of three items representing information sources (print media readership, store display observation and personal discussion) on a 5-point scale asking the respondent's exposure hours to each of these sources. The alpha coefficient was .80.

The fashion innovative behavior scale was developed based on the cross-sectional method.

Respondents were asked: 1) to list the clothing items they had purchased in the last two months (Clothing type categories were provided to help the respondents recall their past purchases.); and 2) to indicate, on a 5-point scale, the degree of innovativeness for each item they had listed. The fashion innovative behavior was the total number of actual purchases each of which was scored 1 to 5 points depending on the degree of innovativeness. Such method that made the respondent define an innovation was appropriate as an innovation depended on each consumer's perception (Rogers 1983). That is, "the innovation need not to be new in an absolute sense. What is important is an individual's perception of an object as new..." (Sproles 1979, p. 99). The personal influence scale was modified from the Reynolds and Darden's (1971) opinion leadership scale for clothing fashion. The modified scale consisted of four items on a 5 point scale, and the alpha coefficient was .88.

## V. Analysis and Results

T-tests revealed that female students had significantly higher novelty seeking in general than did male students as shown at Table 1. Also, the female's product specific novelty seeking was significantly higher than the male's in seven consumption areas including: places to shop; health/personal care; apparel; organization memberships; books and magazines; places to travel; and restaurants in that order. There was no significant difference in the rest 6 areas: movies; foods and drinks; records, tapes and discs; sports and leisure activities; appliances; and types of transportation.

Female students showed higher tendencies on clothing interest, information seeking, fashion innovative behavior and personal influence. T-

**Table 1. Gender Differences in Novelty Seeking**

Variable	Females	Males	T-value
Organization memberships	4.65	4.17	4.18****
Appliances	5.08	4.97	.86
Types of transportation	5.06	5.05	.06
Sports and leisure activities	5.47	5.48	-.05
Health/personal care products	5.49	4.75	5.64****
Places to shop	6.13	5.35	6.11****
Apparel	5.70	5.00	5.52****
Movies	6.02	5.77	1.85
Records, tapes and discs	5.56	5.50	.41
Books and magazines	5.56	5.10	3.29***
Places to travel	6.02	5.61	2.88**
Foods and drinks	5.61	5.46	1.08
Restaurants	5.91	5.57	2.46*
Novelty seeking in general	5.56	5.21	3.43***

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001 \*\*\*\*p<.0001

**Table 2. Mean Differences Between Genders**

Variable	Females	Males	T-value
Clothing interest	18.82	14.63	10.35****
Information seeking	7.83	5.62	10.73****
Fashion innovative behavior	23.81	14.05	7.39****
Personal influence	14.26	10.99	9.04****

\*\*\*\*p<.0001

tests revealed that such differences were significant as shown at Table 2. That is, females were significantly more interested in clothing, were more engaged in information seeking activities, had higher fashion innovative behavior, and exerted higher personal influence.

As expected, novelty seeking in general showed a very small but significant correlation with fashion innovative behavior ( $r=.14$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Apparel specific novelty seeking showed a higher relationship with fashion innovative behavior ( $r=.26$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), but the coefficient was still low. Since the correlation coefficients with fashion innovative behavior of novelty seeking in general and apparel specific novelty seeking were not much different ( $r=.14$  vs  $.26$ ), novelty seeking in general was used for further analyses of the relationships between novelty seeking, fashion innovative behavior, and personal influence.

Based on the significant mean differences between genders, the relationships among these variables were analyzed by gender. The effects of novelty seeking, clothing interest, and information seeking on fashion innovative behavior were examined by multiple regression. Three variables predicted 20 percent ( $R^2=.20$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) of the female innovative behavior and 10 percent ( $R^2=.10$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) of the male innovative behavior as shown at Table 3. For female consumers, information seeking was the only predictor ( $Beta=.35$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) of fashion innovative behavior. For male consumers, information seeking and clothing interest had moderately small effects on fashion innovative behavior ( $Beta=.19$ ,  $p<.05$  for both). Novelty seeking did not have a significant effect for both genders.

**Table 3. Regression for Fashion Innovative Behavior**

Gender	Variable	B	Beta	T-value	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Females	Novelty seeking	.12	.09	1.68	26.02****	.20
	Clothing interest	.45	.12	1.87		
	Information seeking	2.44	.35	5.67****		
Males	Novelty seeking	-.03	.00	-.06	7.44****	.10
	Clothing interest	.49	.19	2.54*		
	Information seeking	1.03	.19	2.59*		

\*p<.05 \*\*\*\*p<.0001

Table 4. Regression for Personal Influence

Gender	Variable	B	Beta	T-value	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Females	Novelty seeking	.03	.01	.24	46.79 <sup>****</sup>	.38
	Clothing interest	.35	.45	8.18 <sup>****</sup>		
	Information seeking	.20	.14	2.49 <sup>*</sup>		
	Fashion innovative behavior	.03	.14	2.72 <sup>**</sup>		
Males	Novelty seeking	-.07	-.03	-.49	38.65 <sup>****</sup>	.44
	Clothing interest	.52	.54	8.92 <sup>****</sup>		
	Information seeking	.35	.17	2.87 <sup>**</sup>		
	Fashion innovative behavior	.04	.12	2.06 <sup>*</sup>		

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*\*p<.0001

The effects of novelty seeking, clothing interest, information seeking activities, and fashion innovative behavior on personal influence were examined by multiple regression. These four variables predicted 38 percent ( $R^2=.38$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) of personal influence for the female and 44 percent ( $R^2=.44$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) for the male as shown at Table 4. For both genders, clothing interest was the best predictor of personal influence (Beta=.45,  $p<.0001$  for females, Beta=.54,  $p<.0001$  for males). Information seeking and fashion innovative behavior had moderately small effects. Novelty seeking did not affect personal influence of both groups.

## VI. Discussion and Conclusion

For an extensive time period identifying predictor variables of innovative behavior and its influence has been a major concern of consumer innovativeness and diffusion research. This study was particularly interested in examining the relationships between novelty seeking, fashion innovative behavior, and personal influence and comparing those relationships between genders.

The results of the study indicate that there are gender differences in bivariate comparisons of novelty seeking, fashion innovative behavior and personal influence. Females showed higher

novelty seeking in general than did males. But, the extent of novelty seeking was different by consumption area in some of which (such as apparel) significant differences between genders were observed. Not surprisingly, female consumers showed significantly higher tendencies on innovative-related behaviors (clothing interest and information seeking), fashion innovative behavior and personal influence than did male consumers. Such results supporting past research (Goldsmith et al. 1987; Lee et al. 1997; Shim and Koh 1997) indicate that fashion is still the female's interest area though males become more interested in fashion than before.

A very low correlation coefficient between novelty seeking and fashion innovative behavior indicates that a general tendency/willingness to try something new is not enough to explain an actual behavior of adoption. Even though such willingness is confined to apparel (product specific novelty seeking), the relationship is not much improved. Moreover, no significant effect of novelty seeking on fashion innovative behavior implies that while novelty seeking could be one of the influencing variables of innovative behavior, such influence is not directly observed as complex intervening variables lie between the intention and the actual behavior.

Though females showed higher tendencies on

all variables than did males, the relationships between the variables were not gender specific. That is, there was not much difference between genders in the relationships between novelty seeking, innovative-related variables, fashion innovative behavior, and personal influence. Information seeking was the common predictor of fashion innovative behavior for both genders. It was more important in explaining fashion innovative behavior than was clothing interest or novelty seeking. Even though information seeking and fashion innovative behavior also affected personal influence, clothing interest was the best predictor of personal influence for both gender groups. However, no direct effect of novelty seeking implies that an intention itself does not necessarily influence potential adopters. What is important is that such an intention should be actualized into an adoption behavior. The results support the past innovativeness research tradition in that: 1) innovative behavior leads to personal influence; 2) product interest and information seeking are the major predictors of innovative behavior and its personal influence.

The same marketing programs for male and female segments seem to work. Information sources such as print media, store display or personal discussion can be useful tools for marketers to reach consumers and to stimulate their innovative behavior. While female consumers can be easily accessed by these information sources, stimulating the male consumer's interest toward the clothing product category is more challenging. Products of the male's interest (such as sporting goods) can be used as props for promotional programs in order to stimulate attention to merchandise presentation in display or advertising.

The results of this study might not be generalized beyond the clothing product category

and the college consumer group. Gender comparisons in novelty seeking, innovative behavior and personal influence across different product categories and different sampling groups, in which the extent of interest toward the product varies between genders, are recommended for future studies. Socio-psychological intervening variables will give further understanding of gender differences in novelty seeking, fashion innovative behavior and personal influence.

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