

## **Self-Image and Impulsive Buying Orientation of Adolescents\***

**Sun-Young Paik · Myoung-Hee Lee**

Post-doc., Dept. of Clothing and Textiles, Sungshin Women's University  
Professor, Dept. of Clothing and Textiles, Sungshin Women's University

### **I . Introduction**

Although today's teenagers do not hold any good jobs, they are enjoying very prosperous economic spending than any previous generations by simply relying on their parents' wealth. They are very sensitive, aggressive, and emotional to the popular fashions. Their opinions also considerably impact on family purchasing decision-making process as the size of family is decreased to the nuclear family from the traditional big family, i.e., the teenager becomes an important role player in the consumer market.

Concepts for self-recognition and self-image(SI) are identified as two main factors for influencing teens to form their characteristics behavior. Because the SI can be translated as 'self-centered-idea' to the teens, the SI deserves special attentions to understand its representations to teens among many other factors.

Depending on the field of studies or the point of views, the SI concepts can be interpreted in many different ways. Sirgy(1982) has studied for use of other linguistic representations for SI. His findings of self, ego, self-concept, self-esteem, self-knowledge, self-identity, self-understanding, and phenomenal-self were among them. From his findings, he articulated that the concept for SI itself is unclear. In a psychological term, the SI is a stimulus to an action for personal cravings and satisfactions, or it forms a basic reaction frame for experience handling of subjects or information.

The formation of a product representation to the consumer for its image can be established from a positive relationship between the brand-image(BI) of a product and the SI of a consumer(Nam, 1987; Na, 1992; Suk, 1992; Kwon, 2000). The SI of a consumer can be used as a standard evaluation for products or brands or it can be used as a variable for determining the purchasing trends.

On the other hands, mentally prepared with their own SI, today's adolescent shows very diverse purchasing orientations. However, the impulsive buying is the

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most common form of their purchasing behaviors. The impulsive buying is a habit of unplanned or unintended purchasing of merchandise due to a sudden urge for satisfaction. Teens' impulsive buying have been arisen to an important social issue because their Impulsive Buying Orientation(IBO) impedes otherwise stable markets, and its severity is harmful to the traditional market(Seock & Hong, 1996; Park, 1996; Lee & Kim, 1998). Therefore, the impulsive buying for adolescents can be defined as a typical characteristics of purchasing patterns among teens.

Many leading researches on SI for the Clothing and Textiles field have concentrated on the studying of leading-fashions, self-esteems, personal-attires, product-evaluations, and purchasing-trends(Kim, 1989; Chang & Lee, 1994; Kim, 1998; Kim, 2001). However, researches on the preferable clothing-style or BI have failed to associate the practical understanding of practical purchasing attitude with the theoretical base of multi-dimensional SI(Nam, 1987; Na, 1992).

Thus, the purpose of this study is to: (1) reveal that both male and female teenagers' SI and their IBO dimensions, (2) verify how teens' ASI and ISI have influenced the BI, and (3) investigate how teens' BI affect the IBO.

The result of this study will help to understand how teens' SI and individuality leads their IBOs. Further, this study will explain teenager's IBO in systematic and integrated views.

## II. Theoretical Background

### 1. The Self-Image

The self-image can be conceptually defined as a person's view of self-portrait or a person's imagination of his/her image to the others. Chung & Lee(1996) stated that the SI is a person's recognitions and abilities to describe or to express its own entity to others in their research on the 'Self-Image.'

Sirgy(1982) viewed the SI as two-dimensional being, and defined as the actual self-image(ASI) is a recognition of an actual appearance of him/herself and the ideal self-image(ISI) is a desired appearance to others. Rosenberg(1979) expressed the SI as multi-dimensional entity; recognized ASI, desired SI, and expressed SI. Na(1992) also viewed it as three-dimensional entities, i.e., physical-dimension, temperamental-dimension, and social-dimension.

On the other hands, the brand-image(BI) is a psychologically combined entity by the consumer's state of mind. It contains consumer's prejudice toward certain products, preference to certain products, or biased views on different brand names. Chang(1987) and Lee(1994) defined the brand name as a consumer's biased attitude

toward a particular trademark merchandise with both emotional and psychological effects. Shin(1985) defined the brand name as a company created entity of a manufacturer name, a product name, and a style to distinguish its own products from comparators.

According to previous researches about relationships between SI and BI, people tendency to think that their preferable BI matches with their SI(Birdwell, 1968; Ross, 1971; London, 1974; Nam, 1987; Chang & Lee, 1994; Kwon, 2000). Ross' research (1971) stated that consumers were perceived that their preferable trademarks were matched with their ASI. London(1974) also described sharp distinctions between men and women in purchasing desire. He said that men tended higher purchasing desire in matched ASIs, while women showed it higher in ISIs.

Sirgy(1982) has stated that both ASI and ISI motivated purchasing decisions. To refine his statement, Nam(1987) and Nam(1992) have concluded that the ISI influenced more to consumers for their preferable brand clothes, while the ASI influenced more for actual purchasing of clothes.

Oh(1984) expressed that matching a SI with the BI is an important factor to make a purchasing decision, and Kwon(2000) said that the matching a SI to the BI has a proportional relationship to a purchasing decision.

Because of the SI's relationship on ASI and ISI, this study is to establish a two-dimensional model for SI. Then, this study further investigates on other relationships between the established model and the BI.

## **2. The Impulsive Buying**

Wolman(1973) and Goldenson(1984) states that the meaning of impulsive is a strong and forceful urge that cannot be prevailed at times, or a sudden action without careful thoughts. For impulsive buying, Engel and Blackwell(1982) also defines as a sudden purchasing behavior of a consumer before maturing mind-sets.

To figure out aspects on impulsive buying, all previous researches have been focused on products, marketing, triggering factor, and consumer characteristics(Stern, 1962; Kollat & Willet, 1967; Bellenger, 1978; Rook & Hoch, 1985; Park, 1996; Hong, 1996; Lee & Kim, 1998; Cha, 1999).

Stern(1962) assumed that both the impulsive buying and unplanned buying were the same. He, then, attempted the systematic analysis first in the world for what factors were affected impulsive buying. His impulsive buying factors were; a product factor, a consumer related factor, and a purchase status factor. He concluded that consumer showed careful and planned purchase for expensive items. However, if the price is relatively insignificant, then the possibility of their IBO became greater. He said that low price, mass quantity, self-service, mass advertisement, and neat display

are good examples of factors for the impulsive purchasing.

To observe influencing factors for impulsive buying, Kollat & Willet(1969)studied the demographic factor, the characteristic factor, and the general shopping behavior factor. However, he concluded that demographic factors could not affect their unplanned purchase. He stated that consumers displayed higher ratio for the unplanned purchase in four factors. They are major shopping trip, high spending or high number of purchasing items, infrequent shopping items, and long marriage terms of consumers.

Lee(1997) identified three factors for impulsive buying. They are a product factor, an environment, and a consumer factors. She included negative-criticism, recommendation, matching-image, and hobby-related as variables to identify the IBO in her study. She concluded that the consumers displayed a higher IBOs when they felt negatively or dipressed, when they purchased their hobby items, or when they saw specially priced limited quantity promotional items.

Cha(1999) studied the IBO with a product factor, a retailer location factor, a consumer factor, and a sales promotion factor. She concluded that consumers tended to buy more impulsively for unknown brand items than the planned purchase, they preferred department stores than the other stores, and they showed lower satisfaction after the purchase on the impulsive purchasing than the planned purchasing.

When purchasing merchandise, as Weinberg & Gottwald(1982) states, an emotional reaction takes more roles than a rational reasoning for impulsive shoppers. Rook & Hoch(1985) also states that younger people and females have a higher ratio of impulsive buying than that of older people and males.

Cha's research(1999) indicates that education level, average clothing expenditure, and average income show positive relationships for both impulsive purchasing and planned purchasing on the quality of the clothes. However, consumers' occupations showed a positive relationship for the quality of the clothes on the impulsive purchasing. Consumers with younger ages and higher clothes expenditures consider fashionable and sociable factors when impulsively purchase. Higher their income levels, they valued higher on brand-names.

For the level of impulsive buying among teens, in demographic view, the amount of their allowances, shopping experiences, ages, and gender affected positive relationships(Park, 1996; Hong, 1996; Lee & Kim, 1998).

From the above findings, the impulsive buying can be defined as an action for the quick purchasing transaction of a personal behavior due to the result of an exposure to uncontrollable circumstantial stimulus and a form of unplanned purchasing. Therefore, by observing factors for consumer's impulsive purchasing patterns, main variables on impulsive buying can be obtained. By studying these variables, the IBO can be analyzed objectively.

Unlike from any previous studies, this study reveals relationships between SI and

IBO in psychological aspect, establishes behavior types for teenagers' impulsive buying, and investigate relationships between SI and BI, that can explain inner characteristics of clothes consumers.

### **III. Research Methods**

The SI was measured separately from an ASI and an ISI, i.e., an image perceived by self. The product BI was obtained by conducting a survey for recently purchased clothes items from subjects. To find common elements, identical items were used for the ASI, the ISI, and the product BI.

Total thirty items were selected from previous researches for measuring the SI (Chung & Lee, 1992; Koh, 1990; Kim, 1996; Seock, 1997; Moon, 1999; Kim, 2001). All questions were measured with 5-point Likert type scale. 80 samples were then processed with preliminary examinations. The data of pretest were analyzed by using factor analysis to identify important variables. Finally, 4 factors and 15 items were decided by eliminating questions with a factor loading less than or equal to 0.5.

To measure IBO, 35 questions from previous researches were selected (Rook and Fisher, 1995; Chae-Hee Lee, 1997; and Juna-Ah Cha, 1999) with 5-point Likert type scale. Preliminary examinations were performed to simplify questionnaires and to analyze sub-structures. Then the factor analysis method was chosen; just the same was as it was done in SI. After eliminating items of factor loading less than or equal to 0.5, final 25 questions were selected.

Subjects for this study were both male and female high school junior students, in Seoul metropolitan area. The total of 583 samples was used for this study from collected samples. The sample selection process was necessary in order to avoid regional or gender concentrations. Subjects were composed of 49.4% of male and 50.6% of female students. Age distributions of subjects were 49.9% of 16 years old, and 50.1% were 17.

## **IV. Result and Discussions**

### **1. Analysis of self-image and impulsive buying factors**

In order to understand male and female high school students' SI perception, the factor analysis was executed. The minimum eigenvalue for effective variable was set to '1'. Four variables were selected out of 12 items and three items were eliminated. Results of the study are shown in Tab. 1.

The SI factors were analyzed by combining the ASI, ISI, and BI. In this way, all items on each sub-category are uniformly arranged so that comparing data, reviewing results, or further analysis can be performed the later studies. The items self-image and brand-image were categorized to four factors. They were 'activeness', 'neatness', 'fashion', and 'appearance-oriented' image. The sum of four variables was 70.31% from the total and the  $\alpha$ -reliability coefficients of four factors were greater than 0.657.

This study established that the variable 'activeness' was the most important SI image factor for teens. This result was consistent with previous researches for the 'active-image concept' by Kim(1996), Chung(1999), and Kim(2001).

<Tab. 1> Self-image Variable Analysis

		factor	f1	f2	f3	f4
items						
activeness	Active looks		.821			
	Sociable looks		.809			
	Openness looks		.771			
	Aggressive looks		.640			
	Positive looks		.784			
neatness	Clean and neat looks			.838		
	Graceful looks			.845		
fashion	Fashionable looks				.835	
	Modern looks				.810	
	Stylish looks				.833	
appearance-oriented	Thin looks					.765
	Tall looks					.851
eigenvalue			4.338	1.209	1.837	1.055
% of variance			36.148	10.071	15.308	8.788
cumulative % of variance			36.148	46.219	61.527	70.315
Cronbach's $\alpha$			.816	.685	.657	.790

To identify Impulsive Buying Orientation dimensions, factor analysis was executed. Then, variables were decided from the result that has a eigenvalue greater than one. The results of study were shown in Tab. 2. The IBO was categorized to 6 factors. They were 'stress-relieving', 'peer-pressure', 'price-consciousness', 'mood-swing', 'individuality', and 'sudden-urge' factor. The  $\alpha$ -reliability coefficients of 6 factors were greater than 0.570.

The result showed that the most influence factor for teens' IBO was the stress. They have a tendency to go out shopping impulsively to relieve their stress. This result confirmed earlier findings by Lee(1997) and Cha(1999) for total number of variables.

&lt;Tab. 2&gt; IBO Variable Analysis

items		factor					
		f1	f2	f3	f4	f5	f6
stress-relieving	To relief stress	.797					
	To refresh broken feeling	.810					
	To refresh empty feeling	.811					
	To refresh bad feeling	.648					
	To refresh moody feeling	.581					
peer-pressure	My fashionable friends recommended		.536				
	Salesman's person recommended very nicely even though I knew it was his sales strategy.		.766				
	The sales person said the clothes matched with me very well. I was hesitating at that moment.		.764				
	My friends said it looked OK to me. I did not like it initially.		.699				
price-consciousness	I bought it because of it was a promotional sale and I was afraid of sold-out if I visit next time.			.728			
	I bought it because of its sales price regardless of the season.			.664			
	I purchased one because it was the limited quantity sale item.			.647			
	I bought it because someone told me it would be a sold-out item.			.615			
	I bought it because it was an expensive famous designer's clothes if regurly priced. It was a big bargain for me.			.535			
mood-swing	I bought it because I was happy.				.690		
	I bought it because I was very proud of myself on that day.				.750		
	I bought it because I felt that I could do anything on that day.				.590		
individuality	I bought it because I felt that it would make me stand out.					.712	
	I bought it because it has very illustrious design.					.741	
	I bought it because of its distinct colors.					.675	
sudden-urge	I bought it because I wanted buy it regardless of any consequences when I saw it first time.						.562
	I have bought it suddenly and I don't know why.						.785
	I bought it as soon as I saw it.						.581
eigenvalue		6.477	1.783	1.538	1.491	1.233	1.061
% of variance		28.159	7.752	6.688	6.482	5.362	4.612
cumulative % of variance		28.159	35.912	42.599	49.081	54.443	59.054
Cronbach's $\alpha$		.836	.772	.726	.659	.621	.570

## 2. Effects of the self-image on the brand-image

The multiple regression analysis was executed to understand effects of SI on BI.

Results of the study are shown in Tab. 3.

<Tab. 3> Effects of the self-image on the brand-image

dependent variables(BI)	independent variables(SI)	male		female		total	
		$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t
activeness	ASI-activeness	.305	4.36***	.240	3.86***	.271	5.87***
	ISI-activeness	.182	3.07**	.207	3.50**	.197	4.74***
	ASI-fashion	.169	2.64**	.149	2.57*	.164	3.83
$R^2$		.279		.199		.240	
F		33.527***		22.59***		56.47***	
appearance-oriented	ASI-appearance-oriented	.306	5.276***	.347	6.14***	.322	7.89***
	ISI-appearance-oriented	.144	2.480	0.81	1.41	.155	3.80***
	$R^2$	.112		.121		.114	
F		16.59***		37.69***		34.76***	
neatness	ISI-neatness	.250	3.99***	.183	2.85***	.214	4.80***
	ASI-neatness	.167	2.66**	.140	2.17*	.135	2.98***
	ASI-activeness	.140	2.39	.103	1.75	.105	2.53*
$R^2$		.124		.875		.110	
F		18.653***		11.02***		22.22***	
fashion	ASI-fashion	.361	5.837***	.40	7.11***	.388	9.24***
	ISI-fashion	.272	5.079***	.98	1.77	.153	4.00***
	ASI-activeness	.138	2.317*	1.85	3.28**	.159	3.87***
$R^2$		.385		2.47		.311	
F		54.55***		44.72***		80.87***	

\* $p < .10$  , \*\* $p < .05$  , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Because the multi-collinearity conflict could be arisen when using the multiple regression analysis, independencies between the independent variables were tested using the 0 to 4 Durbin-Watson index scales. The results were in the range from 1.86 to 2.08. Thus, each independent variable would not have multi-collinearity conflict problem since results were very close to 2.

The variable 'activeness' in ASI/ISI and 'fashion' in ASI affected 'activeness' in BI. The variable 'activeness' in ASI/ISI affected 'appearance-oriented' in BI. The variable 'neatness' in ASI/ISI and 'fashion' in ASI affected 'neatness' in BI. Finally, the variable 'activeness' in ASI/ISI and 'activeness' in ASI affected 'fashion' in BI. When analyzing the influence of SI on B, both male and female students showed high on a variable 'activeness' in ASI/ISI. However, they consider a variable 'activeness' in BI when the variable 'fashion' in ASI was higher.

Therefore, both male and female students, those who weighed more on the variable 'activeness' in BI, also attached more on the a in ASI/ISI. They are the leading fashion followers. The variable 'appearance-oriented' in ASI also affected the



variable 'appearance-oriented' in BI for both groups. However, the variable 'appearance-oriented' in ISI only affected male students. These finding shows that male student tends to purchase stylish clothes when they think their "*actual*" and "*ideal*" SI appearance would be dandy. However, female students only buy trendy clothes only if when they think that their 'actual' SI appearances are gorgeous.

The variable 'neatness' in ASI/ISI affected the variable 'neatness' in BI and the variable 'fashion' and 'activeness' in ASI affected the variable 'fashion' in BI for both group. However, contrary to female students, the variable 'fashion' in ISI affected the 'fashion' in BI only for the male. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the ISI has stronger influence to the male students' BI than that of female.

### **3. Effects of the brand-image on the Impulsive Buying Orientation**

The Multiple Regression Analysis was executed to understand effects of BI on impulsive buying. It was performed based on the following settings: set 4 independent variables in BI, set 6 dependent variables in the IBO's the sub-category, and separate male and female students. From total 6 IBO variables, 4 variables were influenced by BI, and the variable 'individuality' was the most influencing factor<Tab. 4>. The variable 'activeness' and 'appearance-oriented' showed the positive relationships with variable 'mood-swing' and 'stress-relieving' in BI. Also, the variable 'price-consciousness' showed the positive relationships with variable 'appearance-oriented' in BI. When analyzing the affect of BI on IBO by the gender, variable 'neatness', 'fashion', and 'appearance-oriented' affected the variable 'appearance-oriented' in BI for male.

For female students, all four variables in BI affected IBO. Impulsive purchasing due to the mood swing, male students responded higher on the variable 'appearance-oriented' in BI. On the other hands, females responded higher on the variable 'fashion' in BI. The BI affected more to males than females on the variable 'price-consciousness' in IBO, especially on the variable 'activeness' in BI.

These findings displayed that teens are more leaning toward activeness BI, fashion BI, and appearance oriented BI when their IBO is set for their individuality SI. However, those who like to wear clean-cut looks, i.e., the variable 'neatness' in BI, did not show any IBOs for a particular style clothes. For the IBO due to the mood swings, on the other hands, they preferred activeness or fashionable BI to relieve their stresses. For Male students' IBO, the more were they pursuing for activeness BI, the more were they observant to the price, i.e., a positive relationship between the variable 'activeness', and 'price-consciousness'. For female students' IBO, the more were they pursuing for their fashion BI, the more were they affected by their mood swing, i.e., a positive relationship between 'fashion' and 'mood-swing'.

&lt;Tab. 4&gt; Effects of the brand-image on the IBO

dependent variables(BO)	independent variables(BI)	male		female		total	
		$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t
individuality	activeness	.063	1.089	.154	2.571*	.188	4.270***
	neatness	-.290	-4.277***	-.256	-4.319***	-.286	-6.405***
	fashion	.256	3.570***	.214	3.185**	.248	5.138***
	appearance-oriented	.225	3.431**	.175	2.903**	.111	4.270**
$R^2$		.199		.181		0.185	
F 値		17.106***		15.487***		31.827***	
mood-swing	activeness	.154	2.522	-.019	-.291	.170	3.606***
	neatness	-.040	-.562	-.021	-.327	-.044	-.911
	fashion	.021	.273	.196	2.702**	.084	1.627
	appearance-oriented	.268	3.893***	.048	.729	.106	2.436**
$R^2$		.118		.043		0.066	
F 値		9.194***		3.144*		9.964***	
price-consciousness	activeness	.173	2.783**	.002	.029	.040	.838
	neatness	.020	.273	-.063	-.978	-.021	-.425
	fashion	.021	.272	.126	1.716	.069	1.317
	appearance-oriented	.167	2.377	-.094	-1.430	.109	2.485**
$R^2$		.077		.014		0.024	
F 値		5.753***		.992		3.515**	
stress-relieving	activeness	.114	1.774	.132	1.994	.089	1.835*
	neatness	-.018	-.241	.039	.607	-.001	-.028
	fashion	.090	1.142	.065	.875	.081	1.517
	appearance-oriented	.098	1.349	.100	1.515	.128	2.891**
$R^2$		.045		.051		0.046	
F 値		3.237*		3.671**		6.623***	

\*p&lt;.10 , \*\*p&lt;.05 , \*\*\*p&lt;.001

## V. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine impulsive buying orientation among adolescents; how those purchasing orientation was affected by their brand-image to those teenagers. This study also verified that the particular self-image was the key variable for those teenagers to satisfy their brand-image.

First, self-image and brand-image to the teen consumers were categorized to four image factors. They were activeness, neatness, fashion, and appearance-oriented image. The impulsive buying orientation was categorized to six factors: (1) stress relieving, (2) peer pressure, (3) price consciousness, (4) mood swings, (5) individuality, and (6) compulsive purchasing.

Second, the regression analysis with four factors of the brand-image that were affected by self-image to teens resulted in the following findings. The activeness

brand-image was influenced by the both activeness image factor of the actual and ideal self-image, and the fashion image factor of the actual self-image ( $R^2=0.240$ ). The appearance-oriented brand-image was influenced by the actual self-image and the appearance-oriented factor of the ideal self-image ( $R^2=0.114$ ), and the neatness brand-image was influenced by the neatness factor of actual and ideal self-image and fashion factor of the actual self-image ( $R^2=0.110$ ). The fashion brand-image was affected by the fashion image factor of actual and ideal self-image and the activeness image factor of the actual self-image ( $R^2=0.311$ ). From the above finding, it was concluded that the pursuing brand-images by the teens were equally influenced by both the actual and ideal self images.

Third, how could a self-image influence the impulsive buying orientation was analyzed. From six factors of the impulsive buying orientation, only the individuality, mood swing, price consciousness, and stress relieving factors were affected by the brand-image. The activeness, neatness, fashion, and appearance-oriented image influenced the individuality factor of the impulsive buying orientation ( $R^2=0.185$ ). The activeness and appearance-oriented factors affected the mood swing and stress relieving factors of impulsive buying and the appearance-oriented brand-image affected the price consciousness factor of the impulsive buying. However, their arguments were too weak to discuss. When the results were analyzed according to gender, the neatness, the fashion, and the individuality factors affected teenage boys impulsive buying orientation ( $R^2=0.119$ ). Teenage girls were affected by all four brand-image factors ( $R^2=0.181$ ). However, teenage boys displayed the appearance-oriented brand-image factor for the mood swing impulsive buying orientation while teenage girls displayed the fashion brand-image factor. Brand-image affected more for teenage boys than that of girls on the price consciousness factor of the impulsive buying orientation.

From the results of this study, recommendations for marketing strategies for teens are as follows: For a male teenage group, due the positive relationships between the activeness brand image and the price consciousness impulsive buying, a practical marketing strategies are encouraged, such as promotional events, limited quantity sales, or lower prices. Because the mood swing impulsive buying has positive relationships with appearance oriented factor for male students and fashion brand image for female students, designs that can improve the appearance for male students are to be developed., and new fashionable trends are to be introduced in timely manner for female students. Further, to attract fashion brand image conscious female students, retailers must account the store atmospheres and interiors that overwhelm their rational process.

This study has showed not only the SI and IBO have irrelevant relationships

between each other, but also the abstract image of self, i.e., SI, was the major factor for actual purchasing acts of the merchandise among teens. Therefore, marketing strategists must understand and reflect what are teenagers' most desired clothes, designs, advertisements, or marketing on their merchandise. Understanding the teens' SI can predict when their impulsive buying behaviors are triggered. Also, strategic fashion market planners should develop and redefine their logos, trademarks, brand images, and fashionable clothes for teens from the traditional and conventional consumer group.

Further researches on impulsive buying and unplanned purchasing are recommended study separately. Especially, continual studies for 'self image and brand name' are also recommended if targeted markets are for young adults. To make products appealing to these new consumers, market strategists must choose and consider types of brand images that particularly appeal to the teens.

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