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Exploring the Role of Sensitivity on Fashion Innovativeness

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the relationships among price sensitivity, brand sensitivity, and fashion innovativeness. The data used in this study were gathered through surveying university students residing in Seoul metropolitan area using convenience sampling method. One hundred thirty eight questionnaires were used in statistical analysis, confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis using structural equation modeling. The results showed that the higher the price sensitivity, the lower the fashion innovativeness and the brand sensitivity.

Key words: price sensitivity, brand sensitivity, fashion innovativeness.

Ⅰ. Introduction

As fashion innovativeness has gained increasing attention from researchers, efforts have been made to identify its relationships with a variety of variables such as conformity[1], clothing attitude[2], opinion leadership[3], and novelty seeking[4] using Korean subjects. This study is an extension of such efforts examining the relationships among fashion innovativeness and price and brand sensitivities.

Fashion innovative consumers are usually on the frontline for a new fashion product, which is in the introduction stage of the product life cycle (PLC) who often become subjects of price and brand sensitivity tests by marketers. Based on such test results, mar-

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1) H. Kim and E. Lee, "Consumer Segmentation of Clothing Products by Fashion Conformity/Innovativeness and their Reference Group," *Journal of the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles* Vol. 25 No. 7 (2001), pp. 1341-1352.

2) J. Hwang, "The Effects of Body Image on Clothing Attitude, Fashion Innovativeness, and Shopping in American Female College Students," *Journal of the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles* Vol. 22 No. 8 (1998), pp. 1069-1078.

3) C. Kim and K. Hong, "Overlap of Innovativeness and Opinion Leadership of Male Consumers across Product Class," *Journal of the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles* Vol. 20 No. 4 (1996), pp. 620-630.

4) K. Park, "Novelty Seeking, Fashion Innovative Behavior and Personal Influence: What Gender Tells," *Journal of the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles* Vol. 24 No. 2 (2000), pp. 257-265.

keters, when targeting fashion innovative consumers, could develop and deploy appropriate strategies for pricing new innovative fashion products and figure out whether they should focus their efforts on stimulating consumers' brand switch tendencies.

No empirical research has been conducted to identify whether price sensitivity influences fashion innovativeness using Korean subjects, except for Goldsmith, Kim, Flynn, & Kim[5]'s study. Regarding the relationship between fashion innovativeness and price sensitivity, Goldsmith and Newell[6] identified the negative relationship using American subjects while Goldsmith, Kim, Flynn, & Kim[7] revealed the same result using Korean subjects. Based on the aforementioned studies, this study attempted to identify the relationship among price and brand sensitivities and fashion innovativeness. In this study, it was hypothesized that price sensitivity directly influences fashion innovativeness and indirectly influences fashion innovativeness through brand sensitivity.

Ⅱ. Hypotheses Development

As fashion innovativeness, the tendency to be innovators for the fashion product category, is a domain-specific innovativeness, this study adopted domain-specific price sensitivity and brand sensitivity. In this study, price sensitivity is 'price sensitivity for new fashion' and brand sensitivity is 'clothing brand sensitivity'.

Consumers who are less price sensitive will not react as strongly to price changes whereas consumers who are highly price sensitive will definitely show much less demand for a product as its price goes up[8]. Regarding the relationship between price sensitivity and fashion innovativeness, Goldsmith and Newell[9] hypothesized and identified the negative direct effect of fashion innovativeness on price sensitivity for new fashion using American college students as subjects. Using Korean adults and college student subjects, Goldsmith, Kim, Flynn, & Kim[10] also found the negative relationship between the two variables. Based on these studies, this study hypothesized that price sensitive Korean consumers are likely to be less fashion innovative.

For brand sensitive consumers, "brands play an important role in psychological process that precedes the buying act"[11]. Consumers who are more brand conscious are likely to be less price sensitive because of the high value they place on the brands they favor. From this perspective, it is reasonable to assume a negative relationship between price sensitivity and brand sensitivity. However, no empirical study has been conducted to substantiate this relation. Adopting clothing brand loyalty instead of brand sensitivity, Park & Rabolt[12] identified its negative relationship with price sensitivity for new fashion using Korean subjects. Even though brand sensitivity is different from brand loyalty in that brand loyalty, a behavioural concept, "can be measured by examining patterns of repeated buying over time"[13], this study hypothesized that price sensitive Korean consumers are likely to be less

5) R. E. Goldsmith, D. Kim, L. R. Flynn and W. Kim, "Price Sensitivity and Innovativeness for Fashion among Korean Consumers," *The Journal of Social Psychology* Vol. 145 No. 5 (2005), pp. 501-508.

6) R. E. Goldsmith and S. J. Newell, "Innovativeness and Price sensitivity: Managerial, Theoretical and Methodological Issues," *Journal of Product & Brand Management* Vol. 6 No. 3 (1997), pp. 163-174.

7) R. E. Goldsmith, D. Kim, L. R. Flynn and W. Kim, *Op. cit.*, pp. 501-508.

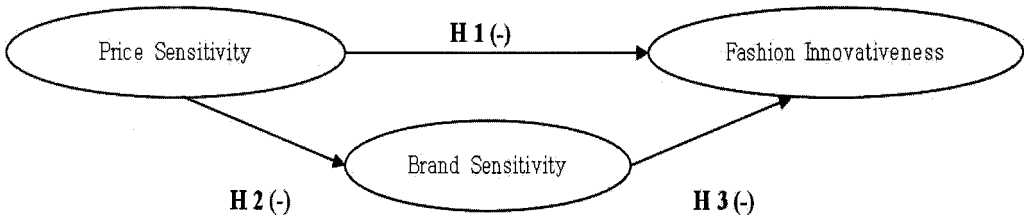
8) R. E. Goldsmith and S. J. Newell, *Op. cit.*, pp. 163-174.

9) *Ibid.*, pp. 163-174.

10) R. E. Goldsmith, D. Kim, L. R. Flynn and W. Kim, *Op. cit.*, pp. 501-508.

11) M. Lachance, P. Beaudoin and J. Robitaille, "Adolescents' Brand Sensitivity in Apparel: Influence of Three Socialization Agents," *International Journal of Consumer Studies* Vol. 27 No. 1 (2003), p. 48.

12) H. Park and N. Rabolt, "Brand Royalty and Price Sensitivity: Moderating Effect of Fashion Innovativeness." *Proceedings of the 62nd Annual Meeting of the International Textile and Apparel Association* (Texas November 2006).



〈Fig. 1〉 Model of Hypothesized Relationship among Price Sensitivity, Brand Sensitivity, and Fashion Innovativeness.

brand sensitivity based on Park & Rabolt[14].

Beaudoin, Lachance, & Obitaille[15], categorizing subjects into five adopters (innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards), found that brand sensitivity significantly increases fashion 'adoptiveness' among Canadian adolescents. Based on this finding, this study hypothesized that brand sensitivity positively influences fashion innovativeness.

〈Fig. 1〉 shows the hypothesized relationship among the variables in the model and hypotheses are as follows.

H 1: The higher the price sensitivity, the lower the fashion innovativeness.

H 2: The higher the price sensitivity, the lower the brand sensitivity.

H 2: The higher the brand sensitivity, the lower the fashion innovativeness.

Ⅲ. Method

1. Measurement

Price sensitivity for new fashion was measured by the scale developed by Goldsmith and Newell[16]. In measuring clothing brand sensitivity, this study used the scale developed by Lachance, Beaudoin, & Robitaille[17] which was originally developed by Kapferer & Laurent [18]. Fashion innovativeness was measured by the scale developed by Goldsmith and Hofacker[19]. The measures used five point Likert-type scales, which ranged from *strongly disagree* (+1) to *strongly agree* (+5), with higher scores indicating higher price and brand sensitivity and fashion innovativeness.

2. Data Collection and Analysis

The data were gathered by surveying university student majoring business in Seoul using convenience sampling method. Out of 165, 138 questionnaires were used in statistical analysis. Regarding gender, 50.7% (70) were males and 49.3% (68) were females.

In analyzing data, confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis using structural equation modeling were conducted. AMOS 4.0 program was used employing maximum likelihood estimation. In evaluating fit of the structural model, this study examined Chi-square statistics, Goodness-of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI). This study also examined Comparative Fit Index (CFI)

13) M. Lachance, P. Beaudoin and J. Robitaille, *Op. cit.*, p. 48.
14) H. Park and J. Rabolt (2006), *Op. cit.*
15) P. Beaudoin, M. Lachance and J. Robitaille, "Fashion Innovativeness, Fashion Diffusion and Brand Sensitivity among Adolescents," *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* Vol. 7 No. 1 (2003), pp. 23-30.
16) R. E. Goldsmith and S. J. Newell, *Op. cit.*, pp. 163-174.
17) M. Lachance, P. Beaudoin and J. Robitaille, *Op. cit.*, pp. 47-57.
18) J. Kapferer and G. Laurent *La sensibilite aux marque*, Paris: Fondation Jour de France pour la recherché en publicite (1983).
19) R. E. Goldsmith and C. F. Hofacker, "Measuring Consumer Innovativeness," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* Vol. 19 No. 3 (1991), pp. 209-221.

because CFI is robust to sample size while other indexes are not[20]. An alpha level of .001 was used for all significant tests.

Ⅳ. Results

Before testing the proposed model, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed for three scales to assess their measurement properties. For the price sensitivity and fashion innovativeness scale, one item and two items, respectively, were deleted because of no significance of their factor loadings. 〈Table 1〉 shows fit measures for the scales.

All fit indexes of price sensitivity were quite acceptable (p = .160, RMR = .047, GFI = .991, AGFI = .943, TLI = .944, CFI = .981). Regarding brand sensitivity, all fit indexes, except chi-square (χ^2) statistics and AGFI, were also quite acceptable. All fit indexes of fashion innovativeness, except for RMR, were also acceptable. These results indicate that all the scales were acceptable for testing the model fit.

In addition, Cronbach's alphas for price sensitivity, brand sensitivity, and fashion innovativeness were .5157, .8782, and .6742, respectively, which suggest that the measures for the scales were internally consistent.

Before examining the hypothesized relationship in the model, this study evaluated how well the model fits the data. According to Modification Indexes (MI) which are over 10, revealing misfit in the model, the causal structure was respecified in the model. 〈Table 2〉 shows the result of model fit. P value was significant and GFI and AGFI were .898 and .841, respectively. However, TLI and CFI in this model were .901 and .927, respectively, indicating a minimally acceptable fit, which is over .90. Thus, it can be concluded that the model fit is acceptable for testing the hypothesized relationship.

Hypothesized relationship was tested by path analysis using structural modeling. Standardized path estimates are shown in 〈Fig. 2〉 Price sensitivity significantly influenced fashion innovativeness negatively (path coefficient = −.53, p<.01), indicating that Hypothesis 1 is accepted. The path coefficient between price sensitivity and brand sensitivity was significantly negative (path coefficient = −.35, p<.01), indicating Hypothesis 2 is accepted. Brand sensitivity did not influence fashion innovativeness significantly, rejecting Hypothesis 3. The results indicate that price sensitivity significantly affects fashion innovativeness directly, but does not influence fashion innovativeness indirectly

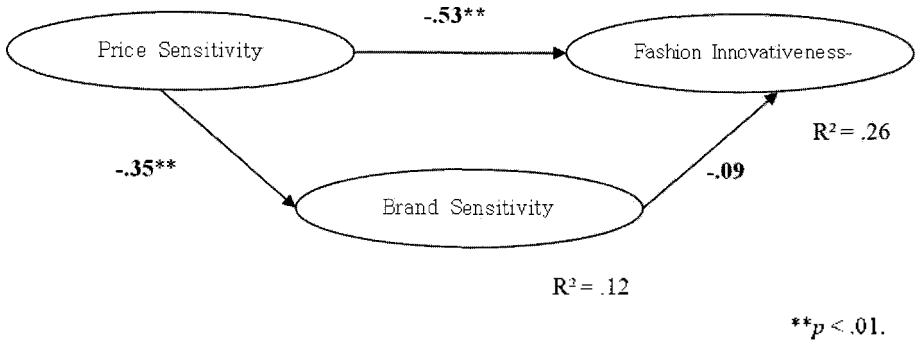
〈Table 1〉 Fit of the Scales

Scale	χ^2	P	RMR	GFI	AGFI	TLI	CFI
Price sensitivity	1.971	.160	.047	.991	.943	.944	.981
Brand sensitivity	27.050	.001	.058	.936	.850	.936	.961
Fashion innovativeness	.076	.963	.005	1.00	.999	1.077	1.00

〈Table 2〉 Fit of the Model

	χ^2	P	RMR	GFI	AGFI	TLI	CFI
Model fit	109.806	.000	.090	.898	.841	.901	.927

20) P. M. Bentler, "Comparative Fit Indexes in Structural Models," *Psychological Bulletin* Vol. 107 No. 2 (1990), pp. 238-246.



〈Fig. 2〉 Path Coefficients in Hypothesized Relationship.

through brand sensitivity. In conclusion, the results of this study showed the significant influence of price sensitivity on fashion innovativeness and brand sensitivity.

Squared multiple correlation (R^2) of fashion innovativeness was .26, indicating 26% of its variance was explained by price sensitivity, and that of brand sensitivity was .12, indicating 12% of its variance was explained by price sensitivity.

Ⅴ. Discussion

This study identified the relationships among price sensitivity, brand sensitivity, and fashion innovativeness suggesting some strategies toward fashion innovative consumers for fashion marketers.

The results of this study offer fashion marketers some understanding about fashion innovative consumers who are often the initial main target in the early product diffusion process. The result showing the negative relationship between price sensitivity for new fashion and fashion innovativeness gives explanation about why fashion innovative consumers purchase new fashion regardless of the lack of information concerning the appropriateness of the price of the product. However, the non-significant relationship between clothing brand sensitivity and fashion innovativeness informs fashion marketers an opportunity to expand their market base beyond their loyal customers. Considering these findings, fashion marketers may consider focusing their marketing and communication efforts of their products in the introduction stage of the product life cycle more on emphasizing the innovativeness of the product rather than the price and brand. The findings contribute to justifying developing innovative fashion product with high price tags.

The result showing negative relationship between price sensitivity for new fashion and clothing brand sensitivity indicates price sensitive consumers are not likely to consider brand as an evaluative criteria. Marketers should note that price sensitive consumers' brand switch tendencies are more likely to be stimulated by price changes.

Some suggestions for future research are discussed based on the limitations of this study. First, this study explored the roles of price and brand sensitivities on fashion innovativeness. Future studies may include other sensitivity variables which could influence fashion innovativeness and identify their roles on fashion innovativeness. Second, this study showed non-significant relationship between brand sensitivity and fashion innovativeness whereas the relationship was significant when using Canadian subjects. Future studies should empirically test the relationship on other countries. Third, the subjects of this study were limited to university students living in metropolitan areas. Future research may examine the relationships among price sensitivity, brand sensitivity, and fashion innovativeness using broader po-

pulations.

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