

Korean and US Female College Students' Clothing Buying Patterns Relative to Personal Self-Concept

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Abstract : This study compares the buying patterns of American and Korean female college students in relation to their self-concept. It was implemented through self-administered questionnaires which were back translated for validity. Respondents comprised 730 female students majoring in fields related to clothing and textiles: 307 U.S. students were located in the Northeast, West, and Southwest, and 423 Korean students were at four universities in Seoul. Likert scales were used for most measures, with 1 = *never or very unimportant*, and 5 = *always or very important*. Personal self-concept was measured on the basis of Won-Shik Jung's Standardized Self-concept the Test and Tennessee Self Concept Scale. Data were analyzed by descriptive statistics and t-tests. Some clear differences between the two countries emerged. Marketers targeting American consumers should pay more attention to practicality and service, and for Koreans, more symbolic meaning of products and store displays, since these are important to them. Self-concept was somewhat related to purchasing behavior, but more study should be done before applying findings to marketing concepts.

Key Words : Buying pattern, Self-concept, College female student

I. Introduction

The international competitiveness of the contemporary fashion industry depends on the quality of information it can gather regarding the characteristics of targeted consumers. A deep understanding of the consumer's buying process, of their criteria for evaluation, and of all variables influencing these factors, is necessary if a company is to successfully penetrate markets on a global level. Consumers' buying patterns are affected by a variety of factors, such as product cues, the level of economic progress, and social, demographic, geographic and cultural criteria. Buying patterns are also subject to consumers' personal situations, interests, preferences, values, self-concept and character, all of which are strongly influenced within a given society. Although an

international fashion trend can rapidly spread worldwide, consumers from different countries can show different acceptance levels.

This lack of consumer unity thus precludes any single marketing strategy; instead, a company must employ a variety of approaches to appeal to consumers in each market, taking into consideration separate cultural backgrounds and characteristics. This marketing theory has been labeled the "emic perspective."

The present study compared clothing buying patterns of American and Korean female college students in relation to their personal self-concept, in order to better grasp differences between the two countries' consumers. It also collected data that will provide fashion marketers with information necessary for establishing effective global marketing strategies. As presented, it is a

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descriptive and exploratory survey.

II. Review of Literature

1. Self-concept and Consumer Behavior

Self-concept is individual's total system of thoughts and feelings about oneself as an object (Hawkins *et al.*, 1989). Self-concept implies perceptions of ability, weakness, personality, value system, appearance, and attractiveness. From these perceptions, the individual forms an attitude or feeling toward oneself, and this attitude or feeling affects his or her behavior (Sproles, 1979). The influence of self-concept on consumer behavior is well shown in that symbolic meanings of merchandise have greater influence on consumer behavior than functions of merchandise (Levy, 1959). Merchandise and brands also have individuality; as with human beings, brand individuality delivers information about the person who has or uses the brand. Therefore, consumers prefer brands or merchandise through which they can express this self-concept most efficiently. This behavior can be explained by the motivations of self-esteem and self-consistency (Engel *et al.*, 1995). That is, the viewpoint of self-esteem, consumers are motivated to purchase merchandise that is helpful in reaching ideal self-concepts or in maintaining real self-concepts. This enables a consumer to maintain consistency between behavior and self-image. Therefore, consumers process information and purchase merchandise to match their self-concept. At the same time, they try to maintain and improve their self-concept through the merchandise they purchase. That is why self-concept plays a role in processing information and related decision-making processes concerning purchases.

2. Self-concept and Clothing

Horn and Gurel (1981) insist that clothing is one of

the very positive means to satisfy one's desire for self-improvement, and is also one of the sources to improve a sense of self-esteem, self-confidence, and stability. Sontag and Schlater (1982) note that clothing is ① a component of self, ② an aspect of appearance by which self is formulated and confirmed, ③ a symbol of individuality, feeling and attitude, ④ an expression of self-value and self-esteem, ⑤ an emotional component of self-evaluation, and ⑥ is related to the satisfaction level of one's physical condition.

According to several empirical studies (Lee, 1979; Lim, 1974; Hong, 1984) on the relationship of self-concept and clothing, there is a tendency that persons having a high sense of self-concept or a high level of self-satisfaction are highly satisfied with their clothing. Alternatively, Kim (1982) reported that the lower the self-acceptance, the higher the dissatisfaction with clothing. The group with the higher sense of self-concept has a lower conformity of clothing behavior (Shin & Lim, 1997). Moreover physical self-concept has a positive relationship with aesthetic behavior, as does social self-concept with the acceptance level of fashion trend (Lee, 1979; Park, 1978; Lee, 1984). There is a positive relationship between personal self-concept and the acceptance level of fashion trend (Yang, 1983).

3. Differences of Clothing Buying Patterns according to Cultural Background

Cultural identities of societies are diminishing due to the influence of highly technical mass communication and delivery systems. Yet this general trend will not be able to fundamentally alter that the consumer's culture is an environmental influence which affects consumer behavior (Kang, 1984). There are cultural characteristics of each society, and they are related to clothing preferences.

Korean society has unique characteristics that may affect consumer behavior. Korean culture is influenced by Confucian ideals and collectivism (group consciou-

ness or totalitarianism), instead of the pragmatism and individualism of the U.S. (Lee, 1994).

According to Lee (1991), Korean students have a tendency to consider clothing as a means of showing off their high status, while American students consider clothing as a means to decorate or to improve their appearance. But Jeon & Kim (1996) reported both Korean and Mexican consumers are generally quality and price conscious. Korean consumers appeared to be more value-conscious than Mexican consumers, while Mexican consumers exhibited high level of brand and prestige conscious behavior.

On the other hand, Chen (1979) indicated a difference between western American culture and Chinese culture: Chinese female college students were more concerned about conformity than American students. Chen & Burns (1998) also indicated significant differences between US' and Taiwanese parent-consumers' evaluative criteria used in purchasing pre-school children's apparel. US respondents reported fabric, fabric print, price, and beings on sale to be more important than Taiwanese respondents. Taiwanese respondents indicated fiber content, character/logo, brand name, and country of origin to be more important than did US respondents. Taiwanese respondents also spent more money on identified clothing items than did the US parent-consumers.

Self-concept therefore has a relationship with many aspects of clothing behavior. Accordingly, it can be inferred that clothing buying patterns will be related to personal self-concept, which is considered as an important component of self-concept. The above also support the observation that culture-bound consumer characteristics vary from country to country, resulting in differences in perceptions of quality, value and purchase intentions for a particular product. Therefore, to establish effective global marketing strategies, it is meaningful to clarify some differences in college female students' clothing buying patterns in Korea and the USA, in relation to their personal self-concept.

III. Methodology

1. Research problems and limitations

The specific research problems of the study were to determine differences, based on personal self-concept, between Korean and U.S. female college students' (1) criteria for clothing selection; (2) criteria for store selection; (3) fashion information sources and (4) expressions of customer dissatisfaction.

It is well known that buying patterns can be investigated in terms of the consumption process, and consumers' consumption process implies motivation, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase intention, and post-purchase dissonance related product performance (Solomon, 1999). But this study is limited to alternatives evaluation regarding clothing products, stores, information sources and product performance. Considering the degree of involvement and risk perception, and information sources and selection criteria are different according to the type of clothing item, the present study is limited to daily outerwear purchase situations only. Motivation for purchasing, the situation at the point of purchase, and communication situations are exempted.

2. Research Instrument

The study was implemented through a descriptive survey method. An English and Korean self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was first developed in Korean and then translated into English. To confirm language equivalence, it was then back-translated into Korean by a third person who was not involved in this study. The questionnaire comprised three sections: personal self-concept, clothing buying patterns, and demographics.

Personal self-concept is defined here as a sense of self-esteem, self-satisfaction as a person, and self-evaluation about characteristics of one's personality. It is represented by the score measured by Jung's (1967)

standardized self-concept test which was developed on the basis of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Fitts, 1965). A high score reflects one's stable and desirable or positive personal characteristics, and a low score means the opposite. The Cronbach's alpha total reliability coefficient of 17 items measuring personal self-concept was 0.85.

Questions regarding buying patterns included clothing selection criteria, store preferences, information sources, motivation for purchasing and frequency, and expressions of customer dissatisfaction. The items measuring clothing buying pattern were developed on the basis of questionnaires used in previous studies (Kim & Rhee, 1988; Jung & Kim, 1988; Kang, 1989; Kim & Rhee, 1992; Kim & Rhee, 1994), and modified appropriately for clarity and length, based on the results of a pre-test.

Five point Likert scales were used for most measures, with 1 = never or strongly disagree, or very unimportant, and 5 = always, strongly agree, or very important.

3. Sample and Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed to 730 college students right before or after classes, in the field of clothing and textiles. Respondents included: 307 American female college students at six colleges and universities located in the West (San Francisco, 171), the Northeast (Cornell, 41) and Southwest (Arizona and Texas, 95); 423 Korean students at four universities located in the Seoul area. All questionnaires were collected by the instructor of each class.

4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by the SAS Package. Descriptive statistics and t-tests were employed to analyze differences between Korean and the U.S. students' responses. To investigate differences in clothing buying patterns according to personal self-concept scores, respondents were classified into two groups: those

below the mean score of total respondents ('low'), and those above the mean ('high').

IV Results

1. Criteria for Clothing Selection

1) Differences Between the two Countries

As shown in <Table 1>, no significant differences

<Table 1> How important to you generally are the following factors when buying clothes for yourself?

N: 730 (Korea 423, US 307)

Variable	Country	Mean	SD	t-value
Quality	Korea	4.32	0.63	-1.45
	US	4.40	0.67	
Price	Korea	4.0284	0.73	-3.61***
	US	4.2426	0.83	
Good fit (proper size)	Korea	4.3762	0.66	-7.55***
	US	4.718	0.57	
Care/maintenance	Koear	3.2643	0.76	-2.66***
	US	3.4474	1.00	
Color	Korea	4.3768	0.67	0.93
	US	4.3257	0.77	
Style/design	Koear	4.6232	0.51	-0.77
	US	4.6557	0.59	
Modesty	Korea	2.9573	0.93	-3.45***
	US	3.2066	0.98	
Expensive look	Korea	3.9384	0.88	9.1***
	US	3.2353	1.09	
Similarity to my friends' choices	Korea	2.4857	1.13	5.74***
	US	2.0395	0.94	
Useful and long life	Korea	3.3524	1.00	-4.53***
	US	3.6863	1.00	
Convenience (comfortable) to wear	Korea	3.8128	0.82	-2.77**
	US	3.9967	0.92	
Originality	Korea	3.6588	0.91	-3.73***
	US	3.9346	1.02	
Fashion (trendy)	Korea	3.4787	0.91	-1.31
	US	3.5803	1.10	
Brand or designer name	Korea	3.4005	0.96	4.89***
	US	2.9967	1.19	
Durability	Korea	3.4071	0.82	-6.31***
	US	3.8105	0.88	
Country of origin	Korea	2.4668	0.99	6.29***
	US	1.9673	1.08	
Fiber content	Korea	3.346	1.03	6.16***
	US	2.8235	1.18	

*** P < 0.001, ** p < 0.01

were found in the level of importance given to quality, color, style, and fashion by students each country. But there were differences for other criteria including price, good fit, care/maintenance, modesty, expensive look, similarity to friends, useful and long life, convenience to wear, originality, brand and designer name, durability,

country of origin, and fiber content.

Price and good fit were considered quite important in both countries, but more important in the U.S. than in Korea. Care/maintenance, useful and long life, convenience to wear, originality, and durability also were considered more important in the U.S. than in

<Table 2> How important to you generally are the following factors when buying clothes for yourself?

(by personal self-concept)

Variable	Self-concept	Korea(N:423)			US(N:307)		
		Mean	SD	t-value	Mean	SD	t-value
Quality	Low	4.24	0.67	-3.29***	4.27	0.65	-2.41**
	High	4.45	0.59		4.46	0.68	
Price	Low	3.95	0.70	-2.96**	4.15	0.83	-1.44
	High	4.16	0.76		4.29	0.83	
Good fit (proper size)	Low	4.36	0.67	-0.56	4.65	0.62	-1.4
	High	4.40	0.64		4.75	0.52	
Care/Maintenance	Low	3.22	0.69	-1.42	3.33	0.94	-1.47
	High	3.33	0.82		3.51	1.06	
Color	Low	4.32	0.67	-2.32*	4.22	0.77	-1.82
	High	4.47	0.67		4.38	0.76	
Style/Design	Low	4.53	0.60	-4.69***	4.62	0.59	-0.72
	High	4.77	0.42		4.67	0.58	
Modesty	Low	2.95	0.90	-0.32	3.32	0.89	1.52
	High	2.98	0.95		3.15	1.07	
Expensive look	Low	3.86	0.90	-2.15*	3.22	0.98	-0.13
	High	4.06	0.86		3.24	1.19	
Similarity to my friends' choices	Low	2.53	1.06	1.1	2.09	0.85	0.76
	High	2.41	1.19		2.01	1.03	
Useful and longlife	Low	3.31	0.91	-1.01	3.56	1.03	-1.64
	High	3.42	1.09		3.75	0.96	
Convenience(comfortable) to wear	Low	3.77	0.79	-1.29	3.86	0.89	-1.9
	High	3.88	0.85		4.07	0.94	
Originality	Low	3.60	0.88	-1.61	3.84	0.96	-1.16
	High	3.75	0.94		3.98	1.08	
Fashion (trendy)	Low	3.41	0.78	-2.02*	3.73	1.04	1.7
	High	3.60	1.03		3.50	1.16	
Brand or designer name	Low	3.32	0.90	-2.07*	3.13	1.17	1.45
	High	3.52	1.02		2.92	1.20	
Durability	Low	3.31	0.75	-3.07**	3.64	0.84	-2.38**
	High	3.56	0.89		3.90	0.92	
Country of origin	Low	2.39	0.89	-1.88	1.85	0.97	-1.43
	High	2.58	1.08		2.03	1.19	
Fiber content	Low	3.31	0.94	-0.91	2.63	1.11	-2.11*
	High	3.40	1.12		2.93	1.25	

*** P < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Korea. Alternatively, the Korean students' mean score for expensive look, similarity to friends' choice, brand or designer name, country of origin, and fiber content were higher than those of the U.S. students.

This result supports a previous study (Lee, 1991) noting that Korean students have a pronounced tendency to consider clothing as a means of showing off their high social status. The Koreans' higher concern about conformity in clothing can be considered as an influence from Confucian thought. Confucianism is conceived not in terms of happiness of the individuals involved, but in terms of the harmonious integration of individuals within a collective whole. Thus, Koreans are more likely to conform in many ways. Moreover, most are eager to move socially upward (Lim, 1995), so they have the tendency to be concerned about the symbolism of clothing as a way of expressing themselves and their identities.

2) Differences According to Personal Self-concept

Results of t-tests indicated that American respondents with a high personal self-concept consider quality, durability and fiber content more important than the low group. Korean students with high personal self-concept regard quality, price, color, style/design, fashion, brand name, expensive look and durability more importantly than the low group (see Table 2). This result can be considered as partial support for previous studies (Park, 1978; Yang, 1983), which find that personal self-concept is related to the level of concern about economic factors of clothing, such as price and durability.

2. Criteria for Store Selection

1) Differences between the Two Countries

As shown in <Table 3>, no significant difference was found between countries in familiarity, customer services, and the quality/variety of merchandise. However, price, parking facilities, service and store hours were considered as more important to Americans than to Koreans, while fashionable and trendy

<Table 3> How important to you are the following factors when you choose the store where you buy clothes for yourself?

N: 730 (Korea 423, US 307)

Variable	Country	Mean	SD	t-value
Parking facilities	Korea	2.23	1.27	-4.73***
	US	2.68	1.25	
Quality of merchandise	Korea	4.34	0.69	-1.11
	US	4.39	0.69	
Price of merchandise	Korea	4.20	0.70	-2.45*
	US	4.33	0.73	
Fashion of merchandise	Korea	4.26	0.72	-3.08***
	US	4.42	0.69	
Variety of merchandise	Korea	4.23	0.79	-1.49
	US	4.32	0.75	
Location of store	Korea	3.68	0.97	2.2*
	US	3.50	1.11	
Store layout	Korea	3.40	0.95	5.87***
	US	2.93	1.13	
Customer service	Korea	3.96	0.87	1.8
	US	3.82	1.16	
Atmosphere of the store	Korea	3.94	0.81	2.64**
	US	3.76	1.00	
Cleanliness of the store	Korea	3.73	0.87	-6.46***
	US	4.16	0.87	
Store image	Korea	4.01	0.79	3.13**
	US	3.80	0.97	
Store hours	Korea	2.94	0.99	-5.35***
	US	3.35	1.04	
Familiarity with the stores	Korea	3.39	1.02	-0.64
	US	3.44	1.17	

*** P < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

merchandise, easiness to reach (location), layout and reputation/image of the store were considered as more important to Koreans. The majority of Korean students utilize public transportation; therefore, they may be concerned more about the convenience of the store's location.

2) Differences According to Personal Self-concept

In the U.S., quality and variety of merchandise were considered to be more important by the high personal self-concept group than the low group. In Korea, all the

<Table 4> How important to you are the following factors when you choose the store where you buy clothes for yourself?

(by personal self-concept)

Variable	Self-concept	Korea (N:423)			US (N:307)		
		Mean	SD	t-value	Mean	SD	t-value
Parking facilities	Low	2.20	1.25	-0.64	2.72	1.16	0.37
	High	2.28	1.31		2.66	1.30	
Quality of merchandise	Low	4.24	0.74	-3.85***	4.24	0.67	-2.96***
	High	4.49	0.59		4.48	0.68	
Price of merchandise	Low	4.12	0.68	-3.03**	4.23	0.75	-1.88*
	High	4.33	0.70		4.39	0.72	
Fashion of merchandise	Low	4.15	0.74	-3.9***	4.37	0.69	-1.02
	High	4.43	0.65		4.45	0.68	
Variety of merchandise	Low	4.15	0.85	-2.74**	4.15	0.81	-2.84***
	High	4.35	0.65		4.41	0.71	
Location of store	Low	3.58	0.97	-2.62**	3.56	1.03	0.71
	High	3.83	0.96		3.47	1.15	
Store layout	Low	3.25	0.97	-4.08***	2.92	1.08	-0.1
	High	3.63	0.88		2.94	1.15	
Customer service	Low	3.84	0.86	-3.62***	3.79	1.09	-0.25
	High	4.15	0.86		3.83	1.20	
Atmosphere of the store	Low	3.81	0.79	-4.21***	3.70	0.95	-0.78
	High	4.15	0.80		3.79	1.02	
Cleanliness of the store	Low	3.57	0.88	-4.94***	4.14	0.80	-0.2
	High	3.99	0.81		4.16	0.90	
Store image	Low	3.94	0.72	-2.42*	3.85	0.86	0.65
	High	4.14	0.87		3.78	1.03	
Store hours	Low	2.90	0.98	-1.16	3.33	0.99	-0.24
	High	3.01	1.00		3.36	1.07	
Familiarity with the stores	Low	3.25	1.01	-3.44***	3.49	1.10	0.55
	High	3.60	1.00		3.41	1.20	

*** P < 0.001, **p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

criteria for store selection, except parking facilities and store hours, were considered to be more important by the high personal self-concept group than the low group <Table 4>. This result supports previous studies (Park, 1978; Yang, 1983; Kim, & Cho, 1988; Jung, 1984; Kim, 1984), which note that personal self-concept has a positive relationship to the level of concern for economic aspects of clothing such as price and durability.

3. Fashion Information Source

1) Differences between the two Countries

As shown in <Table 5>, among the 15 kinds of

fashion information source investigated, those having a mean score above 4 (used very often) in both countries are fashion magazines, and knowledge acquired by self-experience from buying and using the products. This means fashion magazines and self-experience are the fashion information sources used most often by the two countries' students. Since self-experience plays an important role in fashion information, there is an increasing need for the improvement of customer services during and after purchase.

Those falling between 3 and 4 (used often) in both countries are friends, actors and actresses on TV, fashion ads on TV, printed catalogs, store displays, and

<Table 5> How often have you used the following sources of information about fashion in the past year?

N: 730 (Korea 423, US 307)

Variable	Country	Mean	SD	t-value
Fashion magazine	Korea	4.02	1.00	0.1
	US	4.01	1.15	
Friends	Korea	3.47	0.85	-3.26**
	US	3.72	1.13	
Family members	Korea	2.71	0.99	-0.81
	US	2.78	1.26	
Sales persons in stores	Korea	2.05	0.95	-5.84***
	US	2.50	1.09	
Newspapers	Korea	2.12	0.95	-6.36***
	US	2.64	1.17	
Actors and actresses in movies	Korea	2.88	1.08	-4.25***
	US	3.25	1.23	
Actors and actresses in TV	Korea	3.18	1.13	0.34
	US	3.15	1.29	
Fashion ads on TV	Korea	3.00	1.11	-0.13
	US	3.02	1.25	
Video catalogs or CD-ROM	Korea	1.81	0.93	1.32
	US	1.72	0.98	
Printed catalogs	Korea	3.12	1.07	-1.14
	US	3.22	1.21	
Store displays	Korea	3.81	0.88	4.47***
	US	3.46	1.12	
Internet sites	Korea	1.93	0.94	0.18
	US	1.92	1.13	
Observation of others' attire	Korea	3.55	1.06	-2.87**
	US	3.78	1.09	
Fashion shows	Korea	2.73	1.10	-1.93
	US	2.91	1.38	
Knowledge acquired by self-experience of buying and use of the products	Korea	4.12	0.85	-2.95**
	US	4.31	0.89	

*** P < 0.001, ** p < 0.01

observation of others' attire, meaning that these are also used frequently as information sources. Conversely, the mean scores of family members, salespersons, newspapers, and fashion shows fall between 2 and 3 in both countries, indicating a low frequency of usage. Those falling between 1 and 2 are video catalogs and

Internet sites, meaning that these two are rarely used as fashion information sources by female college students in either country.

No significant differences were found between the two countries in fashion magazines, family members, actors on TV, fashion ads on TV, video catalogs, printed catalogs, Internet sites and fashion shows. However, there were significant differences in salespersons, newspapers, movie actors, store displays, observation of others' attire, and knowledge acquired by self-experience from buying or using the products. Korean students use store displays more often than U.S. students. Alternatively, the U.S. students use self-experience more than the Korean students. Observation of others' attire, movie actors and actresses, newspapers, salespersons, and friends are also used more frequently as a fashion information source by the U.S. students than by the Korean students.

2) Differences according to Personal Self-concept

When the results are analyzed according to respondents' sense of personal self-concept, in the case of the US, video catalogs and Internet sites were used slightly more often by the low personal self-concept group than by the high group. However, knowledge acquired by self-experience was used more often by the high personal self-concept group than by the low group <Table 6>.

In the case of Korea, no significant differences were found regarding fashion magazine, friends, family members, salespersons and video catalogs. However, the rest of the sources (newspapers, actors and actresses in movies and on TV, fashion ads on TV, printed catalogs, Internet sites, and knowledge acquired through self-experience) were used more often by the high personal self-concept group than by the low group. Here, an interesting result is that Internet site and video catalog usage by American students is higher in the low personal self-concept group than in the high group, while that of Korean students is higher in the high personal self-concept group than in the low group.

<Table 6> How often have you used the following sources of information about fashion in the past year?

(by personal self-concept)

Variable	Self-Concept	US (N:307)			Korea (N:423)		
		Mean	SD	t-value	Mean	SD	t-value
Fashion magazine	Low	4.06	1.14	0.48	3.97	0.97	-1.45
	High	3.99	1.16		4.11	1.05	
Friends	Low	3.73	1.05	0.09	3.47	0.79	0.08
	High	3.71	1.17		3.46	0.93	
Family members	Low	2.82	1.20	0.46	2.70	0.96	-0.03
	High	2.75	1.29		2.71	1.02	
Sales persons in stores	Low	2.45	1.04	-0.53	2.00	0.90	-1.13
	High	2.52	1.11		2.11	1.01	
Newspapers	Low	2.73	1.17	0.97	1.99	0.84	-3.32***
	High	2.59	1.17		2.32	1.07	
Actors and actresses in movies	Low	3.36	1.16	1.12	2.69	1.04	-4.55***
	High	3.19	1.26		3.17	1.08	
Actors and actresses in TV	Low	3.21	1.20	0.55	3.01	1.15	-3.96***
	High	3.12	1.33		3.45	1.04	
Fashion ads on TV	Low	3.12	1.21	1.09	2.87	1.10	-3.2**
	High	2.96	1.27		3.22	1.11	
Video catalogs or CD-ROM	Low	1.89	0.95	2.21*	1.75	0.93	-1.59
	High	1.63	0.99		1.90	0.92	
Printed catalogs	Low	3.27	1.04	0.62	2.98	1.03	-3.26**
	High	3.19	1.30		3.33	1.10	
Store displays	Low	3.36	1.17	-1.2	3.72	0.78	-2.49*
	High	3.52	1.09		3.95	1.01	
Internet sites	Low	2.11	1.11	2.24*	1.78	0.84	-3.85***
	High	1.81	1.14		2.16	1.04	
Observation of others' attire	Low	3.76	0.95	-0.25	3.40	1.03	-3.6***
	High	3.79	1.17		3.78	1.06	
Fashion shows	Low	2.84	1.32	-0.69	2.58	0.97	-3.19**
	High	2.95	1.42		2.95	1.25	
Knowledge acquired by self-experience of buying and use of the products	Low	4.05	0.98	-3.68***	3.98	0.84	-4.12***
	High	4.46	0.81		4.33	0.83	

*** P < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

4. Expression of Customer Dissatisfaction

1) Differences between the Two Countries

It was observed that both countries' students express their dissatisfaction more or less positively in case of

damage found before purchase, for shrinkage and for color loss. In case of dissatisfaction with a product, such as a wrong size or damage that could be observed easily even before purchase, Korean students showed a tendency to express their dissatisfaction more often than American students (Table 7). In the case of

<Table 7> Dissatisfaction Behavior with the Product

N: 730 (Korea 423, US 307)

	Country	Mean	SD	t-value
Ask the retailer before purchase to alter a garment if it does not fit	Korea	3.79	1.18	18.40***
	US	2.12	1.27	
Complain to the retailer before purchase if a new garment is damaged	Korea	4.04	1.00	10.09***
	US	3.12	1.36	
Complain to the retailer if shrinkage or color loss occurs after laundering	Korea	3.38	1.19	-2.41*
	US	3.62	1.21	
Return a garment to the retailer if you don't like it once you get home	Korea	2.41	1.24	-9.90***
	US	3.34	0.95	

*** P < 0.001, * p < 0.05

<Table 8> Dissatisfaction Behavior with the Product (by personal self-concept)

Variable	Self-concept	Korea (N:423)			US (N:307)		
		Mean	SD	t-value	Mean	SD	t-value
Ask the retailer to alter a garment before purchase if it does not fit	Low	3.84	1.09	1.12	2.20	1.32	1.23
	High	3.74	1.31		2.04	1.25	
Complain to the retailer before purchase if a new garment is damaged	Low	4.01	0.95	-0.85	3.10	1.34	-0.33
	High	4.07	1.08		3.14	1.37	
Complain to the retailer if shrinkage or color loss occurs after laundering	Low	3.30	1.20	-1.86	3.36	1.24	0.15
	High	3.46	1.29		3.61	1.34	
Return a garment to the retailer if you don't like it once you get home	Low	2.36	1.20	-1.28	3.42	1.17	1.18
	High	2.46	1.17		3.26	1.24	

dissatisfaction with a product such as shrinkage or color loss, which could be observed only after purchase, American students complained more frequently than Korean students. These results support a previous study (Kim & Lee, 1999) indicating that Korean consumers, in general, are more apt to hesitate in seeking redress when they have found problems in the process of use. According to Day (1984), those who do not seek redress show exit behavior or third party complaining behavior. Kim and Lee (1999) report that consumers having positive attitudes toward complaining behavior showed a higher repurchase intent. Therefore, there is a need for marketers to promote Korean consumers' positive complaining behavior through customer services after they make a purchase.

2) Differences according to Personal Self-concept

As shown in <Table 8>, no significant difference was

found in relating to the expression of dissatisfaction in either country.

V. Conclusion and Implications

According to personal self-concept, significant differences were observed in criteria for clothing selection, store selection, fashion information sources, and store preference.

American students with high personal self-concept consider practicality-related criteria for clothing selection, including quality, durability and fiber content to be more important than the low group. Korean students with high personal self-concept regard economy, practicality and design-related criteria for clothing selection, including quality, price, design/style, and durability, to be more important than the low group.

The price of merchandise was considered as more important by each country's high self-concept group than its low group.

Design factors, including color/style and size, were regarded as the most important criterion for clothing selection among both countries' students. American students had more concern for practicality and economic factors of clothing, while conformity and psychological exhibition factors were considered as more important by Korean students.

Both countries' students regarded the merchandise factor, including product quality, assortment, and price, as the most important criterion for store selection. Fashionability, location, store display and store atmosphere/reputation were considered by Koreans to be more important, whereas Americans considered price, parking facilities, and service hours to be more important.

Major fashion information sources for both countries' students include not only those led by consumers, including self-experience, friends and observation, but also those led by the industry, including magazines, printed catalogs and store displays. Korean students use store displays more often than American students, while the observation of others' attire, actors and actresses, newspapers, salespersons, and friends, are used more often by American than by Korean students.

Students in each country express their dissatisfaction more-or-less positively in case of damage found before purchase, shrinkage, and color loss. In case of dissatisfaction with a product, such as the wrong size or damage that could be observed easily even before purchase, Korean students showed a tendency to express their dissatisfaction more often than American students did. In case of dissatisfaction with a product that could be observed after purchase, such as shrinkage or color loss, American students complained more often than Korean students.

Based on the above, the following recommendations are suggested:

Marketers targeting Americans should pay more

attention to the practicality of the products; those targeting Koreans ought to consider more the psychological and symbolic meaning of the products.

Marketers targeting Korean more than American students should pay more attention to store display and the location of the store, and try to maintain a good store reputation through efficient ads and a good quality of services after purchase.

Korean stores should try to secure a facility to make partial adjustments for size differences, such as shortening sleeve lengths, etc.

Marketers targeting Korean students more than American students should try more to promote consumers' positive complaining behavior through the customer services after they make a purchase.

This study considered only daily outdoor wear. The situation at the point of purchase, and communication situations were not explored in this survey of motivation for purchasing. More comprehensive and detailed studies of consumers' personal self-concepts should be made before marketers apply it to apparel markets.

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