Influence of College Students' Gender and Relationship Status on Their Clothing Purchase Process

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Abstract *The purpose of this study is to identify the effects of college students' relationship status on their clothing behavior and purchasing process. The subjects of this study were college students. After a survey, 113 questionnaires were used for the data analysis excluding incomplete ones. Factor analysis, paired t-test, Pearson's correlation, one-way ANOVA, MANOVA and Chi-square test were conducted. The data analysis found that female students had higher levels of clothing interest, and fashion-seeking, impulse buying and individuality-seeking motives than male students. Female students who had boyfriends showed particularly higher levels of fashion-seeking and impulse-buying motives. Throughout the clothing purchase process stages, students were most influenced by girlfriend/boyfriend, especially in the evaluation stage. Students who had girlfriends/boyfriends were significantly more influenced by them. Female students were more influenced by parents at the evaluation stage and their female friends at the information search stage.*

Key words *clothing purchase process, purchase motive, college students, gender, relationship status*

Introduction

With the rapid development of society, people have become engaged in more complex and diversified relationships. The complex society has widened the realm of day-to-day lives that an individual faces, making one have diversified reference groups. An individual may or may not belong to such reference groups that affect his/her attitude, interest and behavior. One person can have multiple reference groups, and concurrently be influenced by different reference groups. When the number of those groups increases, an individual is likely to be influenced by a certain figure and act accordingly. The certain figure is called a "reference person," or a "standard person." In general, society that has influences on an individual can be explained by one's social interactions and reference groups (Rhee Eun-young, 1991).

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This study assumes that one's girlfriend/boyfriend is a reference person, as the girlfriend/boyfriend is expected to wield great influences upon one's clothing behavior. The reference person stimulates purchase motives and affects the entire clothing purchase process. Precedent studies have mostly examined the influences of one's broad interpersonal relationships or the influences of primary reference groups, such as siblings. However, this study views one's relationship with his/her girlfriend/boyfriend as a significant factor in his/her life although it is a narrow interpersonal relationship. Accordingly, this study is to examine the influence of one's relationship with his/her girlfriend/boyfriend on one's clothing purchase behavior and purchase decision-making process.

This study will be investigating the levels of college students' interest in clothing, and whether the interest differs according to their gender and relationship status. This study will also be identifying whether the subjects are affected by participants in each stage of clothing purchase process, and if so, analyzing the effects. Through empirical research, this study aims at providing a comprehensive understanding of how one's motives for and interest in clothing are influenced by reference groups, such as his/her girlfriend/boyfriend.

Theoretical Background

Clothing Purchase Motive

Motive is defined as a consistent tendency that drives consumer behavior toward a certain goal (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 1990), or a state that induces humans or animals to a certain action (Morgan, 1976). Kotler (1984) suggested that consumers' strong desires become motives. Meanwhile, a purchase motive is a motive, among many behavior-inducing motives, that triggers purchase behavior, and a reason why an individual wants to buy certain goods and services to satisfy his/her desires (Yoo Dong-geun, 1983). Purchase motives are influenced by both one's internal factors, such as motives, desires, personality and cognition, and environmental factors, such as brand, economy, culture and family.

A clothing purchase motive can also be understood as a type of purchase motive, and thus is driven by desires or stimuli that occur in the course of understanding problems, and refers to the reason why an individual ultimately buys clothes. (Choi Byeong-ryong, 1986). In other words, a clothing purchase motive is a constant power that drives consumers to act toward clothing purchases. This motive is accumulated in the minds of consumers through repeated experiences and is realized as a tendency with which consumers intend to buy clothes in similar situations (Yoo Yeon-sil, Lee Eun-young, 2001). Arnold and Reynolds (2003) defined a shopping motive as an internal power or drive that induces consumer behavior related to their demands and desires regarding selection and/or use behavior. This motive can be divided into a product-oriented motive, which means consumers go shopping in order to obtain products or product information, and an experience-oriented motive, which means consumers go shopping in order to enjoy the experiences of meeting new people or visiting stores.

Park Hye-jeong and Park Jae-ok (2003) defined purchase motive factors as advertising, self-display, benefit-seeking, economic, individuality-seeking, impulse-buying, peer-influence and trend-seeking motives.

Their study found that different age groups pursued different motives: younger age groups were more likely to depend on advertising, seek trends and be influenced by other people. Based on precedent studies, self-display, individuality-seeking, impulse-buying, peer-influence and trend-seeking motives were chosen in accordance with the objectives of this study. A self-display motive refers to as one's clothing purchase behavior as a means of showing his/her capability, while an individuality-seeking motive means one's clothing purchase behavior regardless of trends or other people's influence. An impulse-buying motive refers to as clothing purchase behavior without previous plans; and a peer-influence motive is one's clothing purchase behavior influenced by and/or due to people other than himself/herself. A trend-seeking motive means one's clothing purchase behavior that blindly follows a trend or fad without maintaining one's own style. We intend to identify whether the five motives are differed by college students' gender and their relationship status.

Clothing Interest

Clothing interest refers to one's spending a great deal of time, money and energy on selecting, wearing and taking care of clothes (Rosencranz, 1972). Gurel and Gurel (1979) defined clothing interest as one's attitude to and interest in clothing, and one's paying attention to what is worn by others as well as himself/herself. Horn and Gurel (1983) found that clothing interest varied by individual and by age group; and adolescents were particularly interested in clothing and their appearance and thus the important of clothing and appearance became significant to them. As such, clothing interest varies according to age groups with its highest point in adolescence. Clothing interest is also closely related to one's psychology, and thus differs by one's interest and self-consciousness as well as clothing traits. Therefore, through the symbol of clothing, people can become aware of themselves and are often assessed by others.

This clothing interest has been regarded and studied as involvement in the field of apparel studies. Rhee Young-sun (1993), and Hwang Sun-jin and Jeong Chan-jin (1993) defined trend involvement is the degree of how much consumers' interest in clothing could be realized as clothing behavior in their clothing purchases, demonstrating the similarity between clothing interest and involvement. Consumers have different levels of involvement in a certain goods or services due to their different experiences or self-image, and, accordingly, develop different attitudes, values, purchase experiences, desires and risk assessments (Lee Eun-young, 1991). Lee Woon-hyeon (1997)'s study on the relations between clothing selection and information search of the young generation found that those with higher involvement in trends presented stronger demands for information media and more information-searching behavior, and such tendency was much stronger in female students than their male counterpart. Other studies have also empirically identified that women are more involved in clothing than men (Browne and Kaldenberg, 1997; Gainer, 1993; Tigert et al. 1976).

This study presumes that students have different levels of clothing interest according to their relationship status, i.e. whether they have girlfriends/boyfriends; and examines the differences.

Reference Group Influence

One's status is relatively defined by others' status, and thus people tend to rely on a certain group to determine their own status. This certain group is referred to as a "reference group," and one's evaluation of his/her own status is reminded by the reference group (Robertson et al, 1984). From the socio-psychological perspectives, Kelly (1966) proposed two definitions of reference group by dividing it into relative one and normative one. Firstly, a reference group is a motivated group in which an individual desires to be recognized and to remain as a member of it; and secondly, a reference group is standards or criteria by which an individual evaluates others as well as himself/herself. Therefore, a reference group may be defined as a benchmark group that affects one's forming faith, attitude and behavior. In the field of consumer behavior, a reference group is a group that an individual regards as standards or criteria when he/she identifies his/her own status. As consumers act according to their own faith and criteria, reference groups are particularly important to marketing activities.

Burnkrant and Cousineau (1975) associated consumer behavior with the influences of reference groups, and classified the influence into informative one and normative one. Bearden and Etzel (1982) claimed that the normative function of reference groups in consumer behavior is played by the group to induce an individual to conform to the norm and expectations of the group; and the comparative function is providing standards or criteria by which an individual evaluate himself/herself and/or others. A certain figure who has influences in this evaluation process is called a reference person or a standard person. This reference person is included in the scope of a reference group. Considering one's girlfriend/boyfriend may fall into this category, this study is to investigate the influence of one's girlfriend/boyfriend.

Nah Yoo-mi (1986) insisted that 1) if marketers were able to determine whether consumer attitudes to their products and brand images were affected by reference groups, they could measure the magnitude of the influences and identify the most influential group in order to utilize related information as basic data; 2) marketers might adopt promotion strategies in accordance with the influences of reference groups, and 3) they might also tap into the influences of reference groups in the course of market segmentation (Lee Ok-hee and Kim Yong-sook, 2001).

Purchase Decision Process

Many participants are directly or indirectly involved in one's purchase decision process, and they can be divided into 5 groups: initiator, influencer, decider, purchaser and user (Lee Eun-young, 1991). An initiator refers to as someone who first recognizes the needs for clothing items and proposes a purchase, and influencers who wield specific influences over the purchase decision process may come into the process from many different channels. Family members and reference group members fall into this category. Also included are a style innovator who presents new trends, an opinion leader who provides information and evaluation about trends, as well as parents, siblings and friends. A decider who receives the proposal of the initiator and the influence of influencer makes a purchase decision. This decision may be either a decision of purchase, or more concrete decisions on the purchase, including specific

Influence of
College Students'
Gender and
Relationship
Status on Their
Clothing
Purchase Process

products, brands and stores. After the decision is made, a purchaser undertakes the purchase activity. Purchasers have important roles in selecting purchase locations and products. A user is the one who actually uses and evaluates the items purchased. Users' opinions are valued in the purchase decision process, and their assessments affect future purchases.

Few precedents studies have looked into the involvement of each group in each stage of the purchase decision making. If one's gender and relationship status make a meaningful difference in the purchase decision making process, this can be used as marketing data for market segmentation. Therefore, this study is to examine different influences of participants in the clothing purchase process in accordance with one's gender and relationship status.

Study Methodology

Study Topics

Topics of this study are as follows.
1. Examine whether college students' clothing interest differs according to their gender and relationship status.
　　　1-1. Examine whether college students' clothing interest differs according to their gender.
　　　1-2. Examine whether college students' clothing interest differs according to their relationship status.
2. Examine whether college students' clothing purchase motives differ according to their gender and relationship status.
　　　2-1. Examine whether college students' clothing purchase motives differ according to their gender.
　　　2-2. Examine whether college students' clothing purchase motives differ according to relationship status.
3. Examine whether influences of participants in the purchase decision process differ according to the stage (purchase proposal, information search, purchase decision, actual purchase and evaluation) of the process.
　　　3-1. Examine whether influences of participants in the purchase decision process differ according to the stage of the process.
　　　3-2. Examine whether the correlations between respondents' clothing interest and participants' influences differ in each stage of the process.
　　　3-3. Examine whether influences of participants differ by the respondents' relationship status in each stage of the process.
　　　3-4. Examine whether influences of participants differ by the respondents' gender in each stage of the process.
4. Examine whether college students' clothing purchase behavior (purchase frequency and volume, and spending) differs according to their gender and relationship status.

Measurement Tools

This study utilized survey questionnaires with key measuring variables of clothing interest and influences of participants in each stage of the clothing purchase process. Clothing interest was measured by

5-point Likert scales. To measure purchase motives, the scales that were used in the precedent study (Park Hye-jeong and Park Jae-ok, 2003) on self-display, individuality-seeking, impulsive-buying, peer-influence and trend-seeking motives were modified to fit into the traits of the college students. The Modified scales were developed into 7-point Likert scales and applied to 16 questions. Clothing purchase stages were divided, in accordance with the study of Rhee (1991), into purchase proposal, information search, purchase decision, actual purchase and evaluation stages; and one's own influence and the influences of his/her siblings, parents and girlfriend/boyfriend were measured by 5-point Likert scales in order to identify the magnitude of each reference group's influences on individual purchase behavior. Also examined was how the influence of each reference group differed according to respondents' gender and their relationship status.

In regard to clothing purchase motives, socio-economic and benefit-seeking variables were excluded, but the self-display motive was focused on since the subjects were college students. To verify the case validity and the sub-dimensions, Varimax Rotations were introduced to undertake factor analyses. As a result, one out of 17 questions was ruled out due to redundancy and 16 questions were selected for the survey questionnaire (<Table 1>). The number of factors was re-assessed by the Scree test. The five factors identified by precedent studies were all proved suitable for this study with their Eigenvalues over 1, explaining 74.61% out of the total variant of this study. The overall validity was verified by factor analyses, and the reliance of each question was tested by Cronbach's α (alpha). Reliability coefficients ranged between 0.61 and 0.91, demonstrating that the questions were reliably developed in accordance with clothing purchase motives.

Study Subjects and Data Collection

Subjects of this study are college sophomores, juniors and seniors. As the survey was undertaken in spring, freshmen were excluded since they were not considered to have typical characteristics of college students. Gender and relationship status of the subjects were evenly addressed. Data were collected in May 2007 through 120 questionnaires. Among the collected, 113 were analyzed without incomplete questionnaires.

Among the 113 subjects, 54% (n=61) were male and 46% (n=52) female; and 50.4% (n=57) had boyfriends/girlfriends and 49.6% (n=56) did not. Those who answered that they had boyfriends/girlfriends had been in the relationship for 10.7 months on average. Subjects spent 310,000 to 400,000 won per month on average, and purchased clothing items twice or thrice a month with spending 110,000 to 150,000 won on average.

Analysis Methods

For data analyses, SPSS 12.0 was utilized. To identify the validity of clothing purchase motives and the sub-dimensions, factor analyses were undertaken; and to verify the reliance, Cronbach's α was examined. To test the significance of the study topics, t-test ANOVA and MANOVA were conducted. To analyze correlations, the Pearson's correlation was utilized; and to verify the differences of group varia-

bles, Chi-square tests were conducted.

Table 1.
Factor analysis of clothing purchase motives

factor	item	factor loading	eigen value	% of variance explained (cummulative)	Cronbach's α
factor 1 self-display motives	To be perceived as economically affluent	.88	6.04	20.00 (20.00)	.91
	Because it's a typical style of the high-income class.	.92			
	Because the brand is highly recognized.	.82			
	To show off my style to friends or colleagues	.79			
factor 2 individuality-seeking motives	To emphasize my individuality	.75	2.3	16.15 (36.15)	.88
	To make myself more stand out	.84			
	To express myself as elegant	.85			
factor 5 trend-seeking motives	Because it's a hot style of today	.83	1.68	14.80 (50.95)	.81
	Because it's the latest design	.69			
	Because it's a trend-setting style	.76			
factor 3 impulsive-buying motives	To relieve stress	.86	1.47	13.65 (64.60)	.81
	As a retail therapy	.88			
	Because the clothes displayed in a shop were compelling	.66			
factor 4 peer-influence motives	Because the salesperson recommended	.77	1.18	10.01 (74.61)	.61
	Because my friends/colleagues/family recommended	.80			
	Because celebrities wear the clothes	.50			

Findings and Discussions

Differences in Clothing Interest by Gender and Relationship Status

Clothing Interest by Gender

In order to identify the influence of college students' gender on their clothing interest, t-tests were undertaken with gender as an independent variable and their clothing interest as a dependent variable. (<Table 2>). The analysis found a significant difference in clothing interest by gender, with female students' mean values higher than male students'. This result supports the findings of precedent studies that female consumers have higher clothing interest than their male counterpart.

Table 2.
Clothing interest differs according to their gender.

	male (*n*=61)		female (*n*=52)		t-value
	Mean[a]	SD	Mean	SD	
clothing interest	3.61	1.06	4.31	.78	-3.88

[a] Average of the factors measured on a scale of 1 to 5

Clothing Interest by Relationship Status

In order to identify differences in clothing interest of college students by their relationship status (5-point Likert scale), *t*-tests were undertaken with their relationship status as an independent variable and their clothing interest as a dependent variable <Table 3>. Contrary to the previous expectation that college students would have higher clothing interest when they have boyfriends/girlfriends, this analysis found that their relationship status had little impact on their clothing interest. In other words, clothing interest is a matter of individual traits regardless of their relationship status.

Table 3.
Clothing interest differs according to relationship status

	having a girlfriend/boyfriend (*n*=61)		not having a girlfriend/boyfriend (*n*=52)		t-value
	Mean[a]	SD	Mean	SD	
clothing interest	3.79	1.13	4.08	.84	1.88

[a] Average of the factors measured on a scale of 1 to 5

Differences in Clothing Purchase Motives by Gender and Relationship Status

Clothing Purchase Motives by Gender

Individuality-seeking motives were the most widely identified factor among the clothing purchase motives. Impulsive-buying and trend-seeking motives were also high, while self-display and peer-influence motives were low. In order to examine whether clothing purchase motives of college students were differ by gender, *t*-tests were undertaken with gender as an independent variable and their clothing purchase motives as a dependent variable <Table 4>. This analysis found a significant difference in the mean values of impulsive-buying motives by gender, with individuality-seeking, impulsive-buying and trend-seeking motives delivering significant mean values. In other words, female students were more influenced by individuality-seeking, impulsive-buying and trend-seeking motives than male students; and particularly sensitive to impulsive-buying motives. Unlike other motives, self-display motives were higher in male students than their female counterpart although no significant difference was found. Follow-up studies may delve into this regard.

Table 4.
Clothing purchase motives differ according to gender

	male (*n*=61)		female (*n*=52)		*t*-value
	Mean[a]	SD	Mean	SD	
self-display motives	2.61	1.25	2.37	1.28	1.00
individuality-seeking motives	4.62	1.25	5.29	1.21	-2.87**
trend-seeking motives	3.61	1.35	4.29	1.14	-3.47**
impulsive-buying motives	3.46	1.57	5.23	1.10	-6.09***
peer-influence motives	2.41	.98	2.64	1.04	-1.21

[a] Average of the factors measured on a scale of 1 to 7, **$p<.01$, ***$p<.001$

Clothing Purchase Motives by Relationship Status

In order to examine the differences of the five purchase motives by college students' relationship status, ANOVA was conducted. Regardless of relationship status, clothing purchase motives were identi-fied in the order of individuality-seeking, peer-influence, impulsive-buying, trend-seeking and self-display motives <Table 5>. As the respondents were college students who were less likely to be economically independent, it seems that desires for self-display did not encourage their clothing purchase motives. Furthermore, as the generation values individuality and uniqueness, peer-influence motives also had a low impact. Among the five motives, self-display and peer-influence motives of female and male students were not significantly different by their relationship status. In contrast, individuality-seeking, im-pulsive-buying and trend-seeking motives of female and male students differed by their relationship status. (F=4.17, p<.01; F=16.18, p<.001; F=4.38, p<.01). In particular, female students who had boy-friends were significantly influenced by individuality-seeking and trend-seeking motives while female stu-dents who did not have boyfriends were influenced by trend-seeking motives.

Table 5.
Clothing purchase motives differ according to gender and relationship status

	male (*n*=61)		female (*n*=52)		
	having a girlfriend (*n*=31)	not having a girlfriend (*n*=30)	having a boyfriend (*n*=26)	not having a boyfriend (*n*=26)	*F*-value
self-display motives	2.26	2.98	2.34	2.40	2.01
individuality-seeking motives	4.31	4.94	5.32	5.26	4.17**
trend-seeking motives	3.32	3.61	4.17	4.41	4.38**
impulsive-buying motives	3.15	4.15	5.35	5.10	16.18***
peer-influence motives	2.22	2.61	2.61	2.67	1.24

[a] Average of the factors measured on a scale of 1 to 7, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Influences of Participants in Each Stage of the Clothing Purchase Process

Influences of Participants in Each Stage of the Clothing Purchase Process

In each stage of the clothing purchase process, characteristics of participants were first identified <Table 6 & Figure 1>. Unlike precedent studies, opposite-sex friends were sub-divided into boyfriend/girlfriend and mere friends of the opposite sex. This analysis found that respondents themselves have the strongest impact on their clothing purchase process, and girlfriends/boyfriends also had relatively strong influences. Meanwhile, siblings had the least impact; and same-sex friends had stronger influences than opposite-sex friends (not boyfriend/girlfriend), but the two groups had similar levels of influences on each stage of the clothing purchase process. Parents' influences were ranked 5th in the purchase proposal stage, but increased from the information search stage and became the 3rd in the actual purchase stage, meaning that college students who are financially dependent on their parents are significantly influenced by their parents, particularly in the actual purchase stage. However, in the evaluation stage, the influen-

ces of both parents and siblings were found low, showing that family influences are not significant in the clothing purchase process. Findings demonstrate that college students value their own opinions the most, followed by their girlfriends'/boyfriends' opinions, in the overall clothing purchase process.

Table 6.
Influences of participants in each stage of the clothing purchase process

clothing purchase process	their own	siblings	Parents	girl-friends/boy-friends	opposite-sex friends	same-sex friends
purchase proposal	4.65 a	2.28	2.50	3.32	2.64	3.03
information search	4.58	2.26	2.71	3.40	2.46	2.87
purchase decision	4.59	2.30	2.71	3.26	2.50	2.83
actual purchase	4.58	2.15	2.81	3.12	2.34	2.44
evaluation	4.41	2.67	2.91	3.98	3.27	3.42

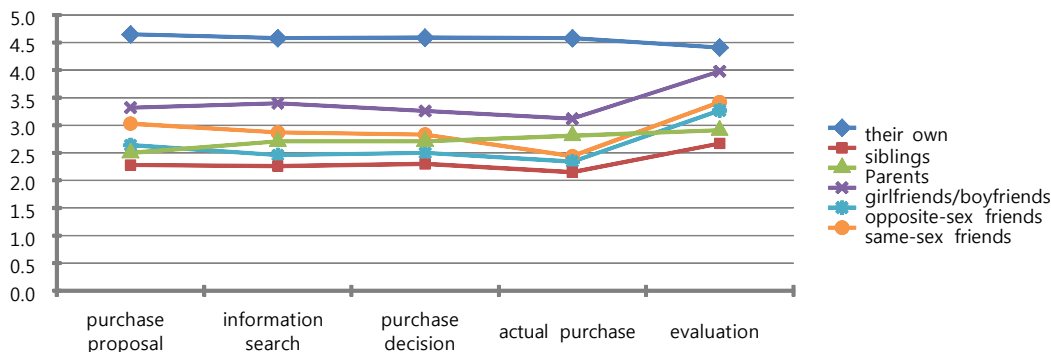[a] Average of the factors measured on a scale of 1 to 5

Figure 1.
Influences of participants in the clothing purchase process

Correlations between Respondents' Clothing Interest and Participants' Influence in Each Stage

In order to identify relations between clothing interest of college students and influences of the participants in the clothing purchase process, correlations between two clothing involvement criteria were examined <Table 7>. This analysis found that correlations between influences of students themselves and their clothing interest were significantly high in all stages of the clothing purchase process, from purchase proposal, information search, purchase decision, actual purchase to evaluation ($r=.45$, $p<.001$; $r=.34$, $p<.001$; $r=.31$, $p<.01$; $r=.27$, $p<.01$; $r=.30$, $p<.01$), meaning that as students have higher interest in clothing, their own influence gets stronger. In particular, significant correlations were found in the purchase proposal and influence-wielding stages, demonstrating that if students have higher interest in clothing and

Influence of
College Students'
Gender and
Relationship
Status on Their
Clothing
Purchase Process

higher awareness of clothing needs, they are more likely to make purchase decisions by themselves. In addition, significant correlations between students' clothing interest and same-sex friends' influences were found only in the evaluation stage (r=.28, p<.01), but not in other stages, showing that when students have higher clothing interest, they are likely to sensitively respond to the assessments of their same-sex friends.

Table 7.
Correlation between influences of participants and clothing interests in each stage of the clothing purchase process

clothing purchase process	their own	siblings	parents	girl-friends/boy-friends	same-sex friends
purchase proposal	.45***	-.04 [a]	-.04	-.04	.13
information search	.34***	-.06	.07	-.01	.10
purchase decision	.31**	.09	.06	-.03	.11
actual purchase	.27**	-.02	.15	-.02	-.9
evaluation	.30**	.04	.18	.08	.28**

[a] pearson's correlation coefficient, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Influence of Participants by the Respondents' Gender and Relationship Status in Each Stage

In order to examine the influences of participants in each stage of the clothing purchase process by college students' gender and their relationship status, MANOVA was conducted with gender and relationship status as independent variables <Table 8>. This analysis found that both gender and relationship status had significant effects on the influence of participants in each stage of the clothing purchase process. However, the interactions between the two factors failed to deliver any statistical significance, and thereby the interactive effects between gender and relationship status were deemed immaterial.

Table 8.
MANOVA of influence of participants by gender and relationship status

	Wilks' Lambda value	*F-value*	Hypothesis df	Error df
Intercept	.008	415.72***	25	85
gender	.513	3.22***	25	85
relationship status	.558	2.69***	25	85
gender * relationship status	.784	.93	25	85

Influence of Participants by the Respondents' Relationship Status in Each Stage

According to the results of MANOVA, ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of students' relationship status on the influence of participants in each stage of the clothing purchase process <Table 9>. This analysis found that students' relationship status had no impact on the influences of themselves, and their parents, siblings and same-sex friends. This may be because their relationship status is subject

to change, while their parents, siblings and same-sex friends are constant and consistent. The only significant finding was the influences of boyfriends/girlfriends on the overall clothing purchase process <Figure 2>. In other words, college students who have boyfriends/girlfriends are more influenced by them over the entire clothing purchase process; and the influence is particularly strong in the data collect stage.

Table 9.
Influence of participants by relationship status in each stage of the clothing purchase process

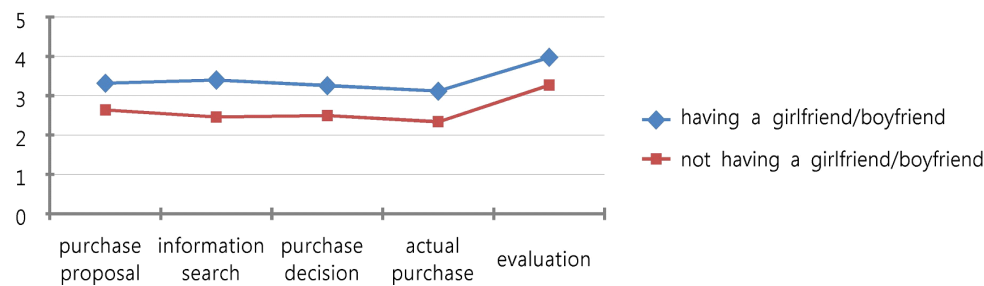|		having a girlfriend/boyfriend (n=61)	not having a girlfriend/boyfriend (n=52)	F-value
their own	purchase proposal	4.54	4.77	2.84
	information search	4.54	4.63	.37
	purchase decision	4.53	4.66	.84
	actual purchase	4.44	4.73	4.00
	evaluation	4.28	4.54	2.25
siblings	purchase proposal	2.39	2.18	1.17
	information search	2.14	2.38	1.06
	purchase decision	2.19	2.41	.90
	actual purchase	2.05	2.25	.56
	evaluation	2.61	2.73	.17
parents	purchase proposal	2.51	2.48	.00
	information search	2.70	2.71	.00
	purchase decision	2.70	2.71	.00
	actual purchase	2.88	2.75	.29
	evaluation	2.95	2.88	.12
girlfriends/ boyfriends	purchase proposal	3.32	2.64	9.11**
	information search	3.40	2.46	17.76***
	purchase decision	3.26	2.50	11.52**
	actual purchase	3.12	2.34	11.00**
	evaluation	3.98	3.27	9.78**
same-sex friends	purchase proposal	3.11	2.95	.75
	information search	2.88	2.86	.04
	purchase decision	2.72	2.95	1.06
	actual purchase	2.37	2.52	.28
	evaluation	3.30	3.54	.86

**p<.01, ***p<.001

Figure 2.
Influence of girlfriends/boyfriends by relationship status in clothing purchase process

Influence of Participants by the Respondents' Gender in Each Stage

According to the results of MANOVA, ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of students' gender on the influences of participants in each stage of the clothing purchase process <Table 10>. This analysis found that students' gender had no impact on the influence of their siblings and boyfriends/girlfriends; but did have impact on the influences of themselves, and their parents and same-sex friends. Female students were highly influenced by themselves in the initial phase, i.e. purchase proposal and information search states (F=6.23, p<.05; F=4.39, p<.05). This can be interpreted as women's higher interest in clothing interest than men's. Furthermore, parents had significant influences on female students throughout the purchase process, except the purchase proposal stage (F=9.05, p<.01; F=8.61, p<.01; F=11.77, p<.01; F=29.23, p<.001). This may be because female students tend to have closer ties with their parents than male students do. Same-sex friends also had significant influences over the purchase process, except the actual purchase stage (F=8.67, p<.01; F=22.32, p<.01; F=12.12, p<.01; F=18.61, p<.001). This is attributable to the fact that most college students have to be financially dependent on their parents, and thus same-sex friends are not materially influential in the actual purchase stage, whereas students tend to sensitively respond to the opinions of their same-sex friends in other stages.

On average, male students were found to be more affected, than their female counterpart, by their girlfriends throughout the purchase process, except in the actual purchase, although no significant difference was verified. Follow-up studies may focus on this regard.

Clothing Purchase Behavior

Respondents' Clothing Consumption, Purchase Frequency and Volume by Gender

To investigate differences in students' monthly clothing consumption by gender, *Chi*-Square tests were conducted. This test found significant differences in the monthly clothing consumption by gender (*Chi*-Square=8.46: p<.05: <Table 11>): male students were likely to spend 100,000 won or less, while female students were 110,000 to 200,000 won. In other words, female students are likely to spend more on their clothing than male students.

Table 10.
Influence of participants by gender in each stage of the clothing purchase process

		male (n=61)	female (n=52)	F-value
their own	purchase proposal	4.51	4.83	6.23*
	information search	4.46	4.73	4.39*
	purchase decision	4.54	4.65	.62
	actual purchase	4.52	4.65	.72
	evaluation	4.33	4.50	1.06
siblings	purchase proposal	2.11	2.48	3.08
	information search	2.11	2.42	1.84
	purchase decision	2.18	2.44	1.40
	actual purchase	2.05	2.27	.90
	evaluation	2.52	2.85	1.70
parents	purchase proposal	2.36	2.65	1.60
	information search	2.36	3.12	9.50**
	purchase decision	2.39	3.08	8.61**
	actual purchase	2.41	3.29	11.77**
	evaluation	2.39	3.52	29.23***
girlfriends/ boyfriends	purchase proposal	3.13	2.81	2.01
	information search	2.95	2.92	.01
	purchase decision	2.97	2.79	.53
	actual purchase	2.72	2.75	.01
	evaluation	3.66	3.60	.05
same-sex friends	purchase proposal	2.75	3.35	8.67**
	information search	2.44	3.37	22.32**
	purchase decision	2.51	3.21	12.12**
	actual purchase	2.34	2.56	.84
	evaluation	2.98	3.92	18.61***

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

To investigate differences in students' monthly clothing purchase frequency by gender, *Chi*-Square tests were conducted. This test found significant differences in monthly clothing purchase frequency by gender (*Chi*-Square=16.58: $p<.0$: <Table 12>): male students were likely to buy clothes once a month or less, while female students were 2 to 5 times a month. In other words, female students are likely to go shopping more frequently than male students.

To investigate differences in students' monthly clothing purchase volume by gender, *Chi*-Square tests were conducted. This test found significant differences in monthly clothing purchase volume by gender (*Chi*-Square=9.20: $p<.05$: <Table 13>): male students were likely to buy 1 to 3 clothing items a month, while female students were 2 to 7 items a month. In other words, female students are likely to purchase more clothing items than male students.

Influence of
College Students'
Gender and
Relationship
Status on Their
Clothing
Purchase Process

Table 11. Differences in students' monthly clothing consumption by gender

	Less than $50	$60-$100	$110-$150	$150-$200	Chi-Square
male	11 (6.4)[a]	15 (15.4)	14 (16.4)	14 (15.9)	8.46*
female	1 (5.6)	14 (14.6)	17 (14.6)	16 (14.1)	

a: expected frequency, *p<.05

Table 12.
Differences in students' monthly clothing purchase frequency by gender

	less than once	once	2 to 3 times	4 to 5 times	Chi-Square
male	9 (4.7)[a]	18 (14.0)	22 (26.0)	4 (8.8)	16.58**
female	0 (4.3)	9 (13.0)	28 (24.0)	12 (7.7)	

a: expected frequency, **p<.01

Table 13.
Differences in students' monthly clothing purchase volume by gender

	1	2 to 3	4 to 5	6 to 7	Chi-Square
male	14 (9.8)[a]	28 (26.5)	5 (10.6)	2 (2.5)	9.20*
female	6 (10.2)	26 (27.5)	16 (10.7)	3 (2.6)	

a: expected frequency, *p<.05

Respondents' Clothing Consumption, Purchase Frequency and Volume by Relationship Status

To identify differences in students' monthly clothing consumption, purchase frequency and volume by their relationship status, *Chi*-Square tests were conducted. This analysis found no significant difference in any of the variables according to students' relationship status. In other words, college students demonstrate constant patterns of clothing behavior, regardless of their relationship status.

In sum, students' monthly clothing consumption, purchase frequency and volume differ by gender, but not by their relationship status.

Conclusion

In the global apparel market, young people in their 20s have increased their spending. As they are newcomers in the market and have two income sources (from their part-time job and their parents), they are less likely to be hit hard by weak consumer confidence. Therefore, this study is designed to examine factors affecting college students' clothing purchase behavior: clothing purchase motives, clothing interest and influences of their gender and relationship status on the clothing purchase process, so that it can suggest marketing strategies targeting college students whose market share is rapidly growing.

This study has reached the followings conclusions. First, levels of clothing interest differ between

male and female college students, but their relationship status has little impact on their clothing interest. Regardless of relationship status, female students have higher clothing interest overall, suggesting that women-oriented marketing strategies may be more effective. As men are less interested in clothing, more aggressive and/or longer-term marketing strategies may be more effective to draw their attention.

Second, clothing purchase motives differ between male and female college students regarding individuality-seeking, impulsive-buying and trend-seeking motives. It turns out that women are more influenced by individuality-seeking, impulsive-buying and trend-seeking motives, and among them the impulsive-buying motive wields much greater influences on women than men.

A study on the tendency correlations by Park Sang-mi and Lee Eun-hee (2007) found that college students had relatively strong tendencies for self-display or status-display; and the researchers interpreted such tendencies that students considered their clothing to reflect their social status and tried to be highly recognized by other people for what they wear, which also mirrors the social atmosphere in which people are evaluated by their appearance. Park Hye-jeong and Park Jae-ok (2003) found that younger consumers were more likely rely on advertising, more influenced by other people and more trend-seeking. However, this study found that male and female college students were not much influenced by either self-display motives or peer-influence motives in their clothing purchases, demonstrating that students buy clothing items to express themselves and their style, not to be recognized by other people. This finding shows that marketing strategies should focus more on differentiation to maximize the effects of purchase.

College students' relationship status has significant correlations with their individuality-seeking, impulsive-buying and trend-seeking motives; and particularly female students who have boyfriends are more driven by individuality-seeking and impulsive-buying motives, and female students who do not have boyfriends are influenced by impulsive-buying motives.

Third, in the clothing purchase process, college students were influenced by themselves the most, followed by their boyfriends/girlfriends. Throughout the entire clothing purchase process, college students regarded their own opinions as the most important; other than that, they were highly sensitive to the opinions of their boyfriends/girlfriends. In the actual purchase stage, parents' influences were found to be higher than other stages, which may be attributable to the fact that college students are financially supported by or dependent on their parents. These results suggest two marketing strategies as follows. One is that marketing strategies appealing to not only the targets but also their boyfriends/girlfriends may be effective. The other is that when companies devise marketing strategies targeting trend-sensitive students, they should not overlook the quality issue that parents generation consider important, since parents wield strong influences in the actual purchase stage.

Fourthly, students who have higher clothing interest are more influenced by themselves throughout the clothing purchase process, and sensitively responding to the evaluation of their boyfriends/girlfriends. This finding suggests that when companies try to encourage consumers with high clothing interest to spend more on clothing, they can aggressively target reference groups to which those consumers belong.

Fifthly, both gender and relationship status have significant impact on the influences of participants in each stage of the clothing purchase process, but the two factors have no correlations. Over the entire

purchase stage, boyfriends/girlfriends have the strongest influences regardless of students' relationship status. What is noticeable is that boyfriends/girlfriends have similar levels of influences on students whether students have boyfriends/girlfriends or not. This shows that boyfriends/girlfriends have relatively weak but constant influences over the entire purchase process; and thus companies may develop effective marketing strategies appealing to boyfriends/girlfriends of target consumers to encourage their consumption.

Sixthly, influences of their own, their parents and same-sex friends were all found to be significant in each stage of the purchase process, regardless of the respondents' gender. Women turned out more likely to be affected by people around them. In particular, women are influenced by their same-sex friends, while men are more influenced by their girlfriends than other participants. Therefore, companies are advised to develop dual-track marketing strategies; when they target female consumers, they appeal to the same-sex friends of the consumers; and when they target male consumers, they appeal to the girl-friends of the consumers.

Seventhly, women are likely to more frequently purchase clothing items than men. Their purchase spending and volume are likely to be greater than those of their male counterpart. However, students' relationship status had little impact on their clothing purchase behavior, demonstrating that boyfriends/girl-friends have little influences on the actual purchase though they have great influences through the overall purchase process.

Lastly, this study verified college students' gender and relationship status have statistically significant relationships with their clothing interest, clothing purchase behavior and the influences of participants in the clothing purchase process. This study proposed marketing directions that target college students, by understanding their clothing-related lifestyle. In addition, this study delved into the traits of college students who are in the period of forming their social identities to be fully integrated into society, and provided possibilities to predict college students' clothing behavior, which established the foundation of marketing strategies to promote college students' consumption. However, as this study only examined college students and most subjects were in their early 20s, follow-up studies are expected to address broader age groups.

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