The Effects of Body Image on Clothing Attitude, Fashion Innovativeness, and Shopping in American Female College Students

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한국여대생의 신체이미지가 의복태도, 유행혁신성, 쇼핑에 미치는 영향 연구

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요약

본 연구의 목적은 미국 여대생의 의복태도, 유행혁신성, 쇼핑에 신체이미지가 미치는 영향을 규명하는 것이다. 신체이미지는 신체 5 부위(얼굴, 상체, 하체, 신장, 체중) 각각에 대한 신체만족도와 이상적인 신체이미지의 중요성으로 측정하였고, 의복에 관련된 변인인 의복태도, 유행혁신성, 쇼핑(점포내 쇼핑환경과 카탈로그 쇼핑행동)은 실험연구에서 타당성이 입증된 적도를 사용하였다. 결과로 의복태도와 유행혁신성은 신체 각 부위에 대한 이상적인 신체이미지의 중요성과 특정부위에 대한 신체만족도와 유의한 관계가 있는 것으로 나타났다. 즉 신체 각 부위에 대한 이상적인 신체이미지가 중요하다면 할수록 또 신체 특정부위(얼굴)에 만족하면 할수록 의복에 대해 긍정적인 태도를 갖으며 유행혁신성의 정도가 높았다. 쇼핑의 경우 점포내 쇼핑환경은 신체만족도와 이상적인 신체이미지의 중요성과 정적인 상관관계를 보인 반면 카탈로그 쇼핑행동은 이상적인 신체이미지의 중요성과 부적인상관관계를 보였다. 즉 신체에 만족할수록 또 이상적인 신체이미지가 중요할수록 점포 내 쇼핑에 대한 관심은 커지는 반면 이상적인 신체이미지가 중요하면 할수록 카탈로그 쇼핑을 기피하는 것으로 나타났다.

Key words: body image, clothing attitude, fashion innovativeness, shopping;
신체이미지, 의복태도, 유행혁신성, 쇼핑

1. INTRODUCTION

An understanding of self-concept is important for marketers because much product consumption is influenced by consumers' individual self-images (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987). Grubb and Grathwohl (1967) discussed the value of self-concept to individual consumers and the direction of behavior toward the maintenance and enhancement of self-concept. Several researchers stressed the symbolic role of products in human social interactions and addressed the symbolic role in relation to protection and enhancement of one's self-concept.
Kalish (1975) noted that body image is one of the most important components of self-concept; body image is the mental view one has of one’s body (Gergen, 1971). Physical attractiveness is highly valued in American culture, and the media focus on the young and thin body as an important factor of physical attractiveness (Moriarty & Moriarty, 1988). Dissatisfaction with body image appears to be widespread and a major psychological and physical problem of our time (Salem, 1990). In a survey of 33,000 American Glamour readers, 75% of the female respondents considered themselves overweight although fewer than 25% could be categorized as such; only 6% were happy with their bodies (Wooley & Wooley, 1984).

When people are not satisfied with certain aspects of self, the roles of products as symbols and means in social interactions cannot be underestimated (Belk, 1988; Schouten, 1991; Solomon, 1983). Because clothing is an extension of the bodily self (Shim, Kotsiopulos, & Knoll, 1991) and has important symbolic meanings in social interactions (Ericksen & Sirgy, 1989), many studies have concerned the relationship between body image and dimensions of clothing behavior. Yet, very limited studies exist on the relationships between satisfaction of specific body parts and clothing (e.g., clothing attitude, fashion innovativeness, and shopping).

Conflicting findings exist in regard to the relationship between body satisfaction and dimensions of clothing behavior (Davis, 1985; Hwang & Norton, 1994; Shim, Kotsiopulos, & Knoll, 1991). The relative importance of ideal body image to individual consumers may underlie these conflicting results. If consumers do not care about ideal body image regardless of their body satisfaction, they may not care about clothing or other products as means to enhance their body image.

From this reasoning, the importance of ideal body image to consumers may be a significant motivator for consumers’ purchase or use of clothing in relation to body satisfaction. Although body satisfaction may partially explain some dimensions of clothing behavior, body satisfaction alone cannot explain all the complexities of clothing behavior. Importance of meeting the ideal body image may provide an understanding regarding the relationships between body satisfaction and clothing behavior; however, almost no research has concerned the influence of the importance of ideal body image on the relationship between body satisfaction and clothing behavior.

Research on this question may provide insight on the complex consumer motivations in clothing behavior that could be a basis for marketers to segment and target consumers and make plans for them (e.g., in clothing design, advertising, and distribution). Research on the importance of meeting the ideal body image has theoretical implications in explaining consumer behavior related to body satisfaction. It has implications for the study of symbolic consumption, for example, why some consumers are motivated to enhance their self-image through symbolic consumption but why others are not.

The purpose of this study is to determine, for a sample of American female college students, the effects of body-cathexis and importance of meeting the ideal body image on clothing attitude, fashion innovativeness, and shopping (in-store shopping interest and catalog shopping).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Body Image

Body image is “a term which refers to the body as a psychological experience and focuses on the individual’s feelings and attitudes toward his [sic] own body” (Fisher, 1968, p.x). It is the mental view one has of one’s body (Gergen, 1971). Kalish (1975)
noted that body image is one of the most important components of the self-concept. Because awareness of the self begins with experiencing one's body, body image can be considered one of the earliest parts and the basis of self-concept (Burns, 1979).

To evaluate body image, researchers have used body-cathexis, the indication of individuals' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their different body parts (LaBat & DeLong, 1990). Many studies have supported the idea that body-cathexis is closely related to a person's global self-image, self-esteem, or self-concept (Kaiser, 1990; Secord & Jourard, 1953).

The current ideal body image in American culture has been expressed as narrow as an arrow or pencil thin (Freedman, 1986). Colburn (1992) noted that Americans' pursuit of thinness has been cultivated during the past three decades, exemplified by fashion models and Miss America pageant contestants becoming steadily thinner. This phenomenon has resulted in side effects such as dieting illness and flourishing diet industries (Stephens, Hill, & Hanson, 1994). Although as many males as females are not satisfied with some parts of their bodies (Cash, 1990), women are more worried about body weight and consider it a more important component of body satisfaction than do men (Brumberg, 1988; Fallon & Rozin, 1985).

Lake (1979) contended that the media influence middle-aged women to diet, stay younger-looking through the use of cosmetics, and disguise "figure flaws" through appropriate selection of clothing.

2. Clothing Related to Body Image

According to Kaiser (1990), one's self-feeling toward the body plays an important role in clothing preferences and attitudes. To investigate the relationship between clothing and body image, researchers have focused on the relationship between body-cathexis and diverse aspects of clothing behavior (e.g., Hwang & Norton, 1994; Shim, Kotsiopoulos, & Knoll, 1991; 고예란, 1983; 이수지, 이인자, 1996; 이영웅, 강혜원, 1982; 혜진숙, 1997).

LaBat (1988) reported that higher body-cathexis was associated with more satisfaction with the physical fit of ready-to-wear clothing among female consumers. LaBat and DeLong (1990) reported a significant relationship between body-cathexis and satisfaction with fit of apparel, especially for satisfaction with apparel fit on lower parts of the body. Hwang and Norton (1994) reported significant correlations between body-cathexis and dimensions of clothing behavior in women aged 55 years and older. Women subjects who had higher satisfaction with their body parts had higher satisfaction with ready-to-wear clothing, had a higher degree of shopping interest, had a higher degree of store patronage, and had higher expenditures on clothing. Shim, Kotsiopoulos, and Knoll (1991) also found that those who were satisfied with their bodies and had a favorable attitude toward clothing were likely to be satisfied with ready-to-wear and with product variety/store quality; to enjoy shopping; to be confident in choosing proper clothes for themselves; and to be heavy purchasers of clothing. In their study for Korean consumers, 이수지 and 이인자 (1996) found that, respondents who were satisfied with their bodies were more likely to wear mini-skirt. Also, middle-aged women who were satisfied with their bodies were interested in fashion and tended to prefer fashionable clothing.(이영웅, 강혜원, 1982).

In regard to the relationship between clothing attitude and body-cathexis, Davis (1985) measured college females' perceived somatotype-self, perceived somatotype-ideal, body-cathexis, and dimensions of clothing behavior (clothing attitude/interest and fashion interest). In examining the relationship between the perceived somatotype and clothing behaviors, the perceived somatotype-self groups did not differ in regard to fashion innovativeness, clothing interest, and clothing atti-
tude. Damhorst and Littrell (1984) also reported lack of correlation between clothing interest and body satisfaction among high school cheerleaders. These findings were contrary to the stereotypic assumptions and to other empirical studies (e.g., Hwang and Norton, 1994) about the positive relationship between body-cathexis and clothing attitude/interest. In Hwang and Norton’s (1994) study, women subjects who had higher satisfaction with their body parts had a more favorable attitude toward clothing and had a higher degree of self-reported fashion opinion leadership.

Based on the research of Damhorst and Littrell (1984) and Davis (1985), Kaiser (1990) suggested that more research is needed to clarify these relationships. Importance of ideal body image to consumers may provide further understanding of clothing attitude and clothing behavior related to body image. If consumers do not care about ideal body image, regardless of their body satisfaction, they may not care about enhancing their body image with clothing or other products because meeting the ideal body image may not be important to them. Therefore, it is important to investigate the effects of body-cathexis and importance of meeting the ideal body image on clothing attitude and clothing behavior (fashion innovativeness and shopping).

III. PROCEDURE

1. Measurement

Drawing from existing instruments, a questionnaire was developed to collect data on the variables. After pilot testing with 23 female college students, each question was examined for its clarity and relatedness to the purpose of the research, which resulted in some modifications in the questions. The final questionnaire and the measures of the research variables are described below. Cronbach alpha coefficients for multi-item scales are reported. Cronbach alpha is a measure of internal consistency, with values greater than 0.60 indicating good reliability (Schuessler, 1971).

Body-cathexis is defined as the scores of subjects after rating their satisfaction with five areas of body parts on a 7-point Likert scale from extremely satisfied (7) to extremely dissatisfied (1). The five areas encompassing 19 body parts are lower body (legs, calves, knees, feet), head/upper body (face, hair, eyes, nose, teeth, voice), height (overall height, leg length), weight (overall weight, waist, hips, thighs), and torso (bust, neck, muscular strength). The measure of body-cathexis is modified from that of Shim, Kotsiopulos, and Knoll (1991). The Cronbach alphas for the five body areas ranged from 0.90 for height to 0.74 for torso.

Importance of meeting the ideal body image is measured by the scores on the importance of meeting the ideal scale. Respondents are asked to indicate how important it is that they meet what they consider the ideal standards for the same 19 body parts as on the body-cathexis scale. The response format is a 7-point Likert scale from extremely important (7) to extremely unimportant (1). The measure is adapted from Salem’s (1990) study. The Cronbach alpha for height was 0.92, indicating high reliability; those for the four areas ranged from 0.90 for head/upper body and weight to 0.64 for torso.

Clothing attitude is defined as scores indicated by subjects’ degree of agreement with five items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The five items were adapted from Shim, Kotsiopulos, and Knoll’s (1991) study, and the Cronbach alpha for the measure was 0.75.

Fashion innovativeness, in-store shopping interest, and catalog shopping measures were adapted from Shim et al. ’s (1991) study. Each measure had three items on a 5-point Likert scale. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the measure was 0.78, 0.84, and 0.88, respectively.
2. Sample and Data Collection

The final sample used in this study consisted of 177 female college students aged from 18 to 25. The researcher distributed 420 questionnaires to the students who took courses offered in a university in Virginia, and the respondents returned the questionnaires by campus mail. There were 182 questionnaires returned, but some questionnaires were not usable because subjects were males or older than 25.

3. Statistical Analysis of Data

Multiple regression was used to investigate the effects of body-cathexis and importance of meeting the ideal body image on clothing attitude and clothing behavior (fashion innovativeness and shopping). The Pearson correlation coefficients were used in investigating the relationships of clothing attitude and clothing behavior to body-cathexis and importance of meeting the ideal body image.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Results of measured variables

Mean values and standard deviations of variables are reported in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, the mean score for importance of meeting the ideal body image is higher than for body-cathexis, for four body areas. The greatest difference is between body-cathexis for weight and importance of meeting the ideal body image for weight. That is, the subjects considered meeting the ideal body image for weight to be important, but they were only moderately satisfied with the weight area of their bodies. In addition, compared to in-store shopping interest, the mean score for catalog shopping is relatively low; female college students demonstrated a higher degree of liking and enjoying in-store shopping than catalog shopping.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body-cathexis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head/upper body</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower body</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torso</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of meeting the ideal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>body image</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head/upper body</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower body</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torso</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing attitude</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion innovativeness</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-store shopping interest</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalog shopping</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Body-cathexis & importance of meeting the ideal body image: 7-point scale
Clothing attitude, fashion innovativeness, & shopping: 5-point scale

2. Results of relationships among measured variables

Multiple regression result and the Pearson correlation coefficients are shown in Tables 2 and 3, respectively. Multiple regression was used in separate analyses with clothing attitude and clothing behavior as the dependable variable. The independent variables were importance of meeting the ideal body image for five body areas and body-cathexis scores for the five areas. The Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to investigate the relationships of clothing attitude and clothing behavior to body-cathexis and importance of meeting the ideal body image variables.

1) Clothing attitude

T-values in Table 2 show that body-cathexis for head/upper body and importance of meeting the
Table 2. The effect of body-cathexis (BC) and importance of meeting the ideal body image (IMI) on clothing attitude, fashion innovativeness, and shopping: Multiple regression result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IMI and BC</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothing attitude</td>
<td>BC for head</td>
<td>0.207</td>
<td>2.15*</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>11.17***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IMI for head</td>
<td>0.253</td>
<td>1.99*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IMI for lower body</td>
<td>0.326</td>
<td>2.44**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IMI for weight</td>
<td>0.481</td>
<td>4.61***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion innovativeness</td>
<td>BC for head</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td>2.49*</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>6.32***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IMI for head</td>
<td>0.347</td>
<td>2.49*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IMI for height</td>
<td>0.203</td>
<td>1.91*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-store shopping interest</td>
<td>BC for head</td>
<td>0.202</td>
<td>1.90*</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>6.00***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IMI for head</td>
<td>0.448</td>
<td>3.18**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IMI for lower body</td>
<td>0.339</td>
<td>2.28**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IMI for weight</td>
<td>0.231</td>
<td>2.00**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalog shopping</td>
<td>BC for head</td>
<td>-0.289</td>
<td>-2.55*</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>3.30**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BC for torso</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>2.76**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IMI for height</td>
<td>-0.241</td>
<td>-2.11*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05   **p<0.01   ***p<0.001

Table 3. The relationships of clothing attitude and clothing behavior to body-cathexis (BC) and importance of meeting the ideal body image (IMI): Pearson correlation coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance of ideal body image</th>
<th>Body-cathexis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HU L H W T</td>
<td>HU L H W T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA 0.47*** 0.33*** 0.37*** 0.52*** 0.21**</td>
<td>0.34*** 0.13 0.12 0.09 0.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FI 0.40*** 0.27*** 0.35*** 0.36*** 0.36***</td>
<td>0.29*** 0.13 0.08 0.07 0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI 0.35*** 0.19* 0.21** 0.32*** 0.10</td>
<td>0.34*** 0.15* 0.22** 0.16* 0.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS -0.23** -0.22* -0.30*** -0.22** -0.07</td>
<td>-0.13 0.06 -0.02 0.07 0.16*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05   **p<0.01   ***p<0.001

HU: Head/upper body    CA: Clothing attitude
L: Lower body          FI: Fashion innovativeness
H: Height             SI: In-store shopping interest
W: Weight             CS: Catalog shopping
T: Torso

Ideal body image for head/upper body, lower body, and weight are significant predictors of clothing attitude. Among the significant predictors in clothing attitude, standardized regression coefficients show that importance of meeting the ideal body image for weight is the most significant predictor of clothing attitude.

In addition, Pearson correlation coefficients (Table 3) show that importance of meeting the ideal body image for all five areas are significantly related to clothing attitude. While body-cathexis for two areas are related to clothing attitude, importance of meeting the ideal body image for all five areas are related to clothing attitude. This may
imply that clothing attitude is explained better by importance of meeting the ideal body image than by body-cathexis.

Several researchers have suggested that the relationship between body satisfaction and clothing attitude may not be uni-dimensional and that more research is needed to clarify these relationships (Damhorst & Littrell, 1984; Davis, 1985; Kaiser, 1990; Shim, Kotsiopulos, & Knoll, 1991). The finding of this study show that importance of meeting the ideal body image for all five areas are significantly related to clothing attitude, and that body-cathexis for specific areas of body parts (e.g., head/upper body and torso) can partially explain clothing attitude.

Through self-esteem motive, consumers tend to seek products to reduce the gap between actual and ideal image if meeting the ideal body image is important to them. Clothing is a second skin and it is an important means in enhancing one's self image. The more one considers meeting the ideal body image important, the more likely that she will use clothing as a means to reduce the gap between actual and ideal body image and to make her body look like the ideal.

2) Fashion innovativeness

T-values in Table 2 show that the body-cathexis score for head/upper body and importance of meeting the ideal body image for head/upper body and height are significant predictors of fashion innovativeness. That is, the more one is satisfied with her head/upper body and considers meeting the ideal body image for head/upper body and height important, the higher the degree of fashion innovativeness.

In addition to the t-values, Pearson correlation coefficients (Table 3) show that importance of meeting the ideal body image for all five areas is significantly related to fashion innovativeness. While body-cathexis for head/upper body only is correlated with fashion innovativeness, importance of meeting the ideal body image for all five areas is correlated with fashion innovativeness. This may imply that fashion innovativeness is explained better by importance of meeting the ideal body image than by body-cathexis. The finding of this study show that importance of meeting the ideal body image for all five areas is significantly related to fashion innovativeness, and that body-cathexis for one specific body area, head/upper body, can partially explain fashion innovativeness.

The relationship between body-cathexis for head/upper body and fashion innovativeness may be explained by fashion process theory. Fashion innovativeness requires some individuality and feeling of security (Kaiser, 1990). One's satisfaction with head/upper body may provide a feeling of security and individuality, which leads to fashion innovativeness. The relationship between importance of meeting the ideal body image and fashion innovativeness may be explained by self-esteem motive. If meeting the ideal body image is important, the individuals are likely to try new clothing fashions to reduce the gap between actual and ideal image. They may try new ideas and things in clothing to enhance their body image and make their bodies look like the ideal.

3) In-store shopping interest

T-values in Table 2 show that body-cathexis for head/upper body and weight, and importance of meeting the ideal body image for head/upper body, lower body, and weight are significant predictors of in-store shopping interest. In addition to the t-values, Pearson correlation coefficients (Table 3) show that importance of meeting the ideal body image for four areas and body-cathexis for all five areas are significantly related to in-store shopping interest. In-store shopping interest is explained by both body-cathexis and importance of meeting the ideal body image.

The relationship between body-cathexis and in-store shopping interest may be explained in that
shopping is a search process for clothing for one's body. If a person is satisfied with her bodies, she may prefer in-store shopping since in-store shopping may provide diverse benefits when the individual searches proper clothing for her body. Furthermore, if meeting the ideal body image is important to her, she may tend to shop for proper clothing to reduce the gap between actual and ideal image and to make her body look like the ideal.

4) Catalog shopping

According to Table 2, body-cathexis for head/upper body and torso, and importance of meeting the ideal body image for height are significant predictors of catalog shopping. That is, the more one is satisfied with her torso, the more she will be engaged in catalog shopping. However, the more one is satisfied with head/upper body and considers meeting the ideal body image for height important, the less she may engage in catalog shopping.

In addition, Pearson correlation coefficients (Table 3) show that importance of meeting the ideal body image for four areas is negatively related to catalog shopping while body-cathexis for torso is positively correlated with catalog shopping. Self-esteem motive may explain the effects of importance of meeting the ideal body image on catalog shopping. Consumers may avoid catalog shopping if meeting the ideal body image is important because it may not provide various benefits when searching for proper clothes for their bodies.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine, for American female college students, the effects of body-cathexis and importance of meeting the ideal body image on clothing attitude, fashion innovativeness, and shopping (in-store shopping interest and catalog shopping). Multiple regression and the Pearson correlation coefficient were used as statistical analyses.

In regard to the effects of body-cathexis and importance of meeting the ideal body image, the results showed that importance of meeting the ideal body image and body-cathexis for specific body areas were significant predictors of clothing attitude, fashion innovativeness, and shopping. Clothing attitude and fashion innovativeness are significantly related to importance of meeting the ideal body image for all five areas and body-cathexis for specific body area (e.g., head/upper body). This may imply that clothing attitude and fashion innovativeness are explained better by importance of meeting the ideal body image than by body-cathexis. In regard to shopping, in-store shopping interest is explained by both body-cathexis and importance of meeting the ideal body image. That is, the more one is satisfied with her body and considers meeting the ideal body image important, the more she will be interested in in-store shopping. However, catalog shopping is negatively related to importance of meeting the ideal body image. If one considers meeting the ideal body image important, she may not engage in catalog shopping.

The findings of the study showed that American female college students are concerned about ideal body image and that importance of meeting the ideal body image is an important variable in their clothing attitude, fashion innovativeness, and shopping. The findings have implications by showing that body-cathexis alone may not explain complicated clothing behavior and that importance of meeting the ideal body image is an important variable in explaining clothing attitude and clothing behavior.

Based on the findings of this study, apparel marketers should be concerned to develop marketing strategies for female college students. For example, retailers need to plan how they segment female college students based on body-
cathecism and importance of meeting the ideal body image and make plans for them (e.g., providing products, advertising) to meet the needs of consumers. Specifically, in-store retailers should concern that female college students who are satisfied with their bodies and consider meeting the ideal body image important prefer in-store shopping. The retailers may target this segment and provide items and advertising which can satisfy their target consumers. In the meanwhile, catalog retailers may target the consumers who are satisfied with their torso area. Focusing on underwear items (e.g., bras) which are related to torso area may be appropriate for catalog retailers. Since the subjects who consider meeting the ideal body image important less prefer catalog shopping, the marketing strategies should incorporate this aspect.

The study has a limitation in that the sample was drawn from one university and that the sample was not randomly selected. Although the homogeneity eliminates geographical factors in interpretation of the findings, it may have a generalization problem. Therefore, the interpretations of the findings may not be generalized to the whole female college student population. For future studies, the study about males and other populations may generate useful findings. Comparison of diverse demographic groups may provide further understanding of this study and meaningful information to retailers and apparel manufacturers. Also, more study regarding the measurement of body-cathexis and importance of meeting the ideal body image is needed. There have been very few studies about how to categorize various body parts. In addition, importance of meeting the ideal body image needs to be investigated more. The measurements’ reliability and validity need to be addressed in other studies and other samples.

REFERENCES


