

Personalization Strategies and Apparel Shopping Orientation of College Students

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개인화 전략과 대학생들의 의류제품 쇼핑성향

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Abstract

The fashion apparel industries have demanded to be extremely consumer-oriented. Therefore, the need of personalization arises. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between apparel shopping orientation and various personalization strategies provided in the apparel shopping process. A total of 422 questionnaires were used for statistical analysis. Canonical correlation and ANOVA were conducted. Results indicated that higher level of demand for “sale-promotion personalization” and “personalized customer relationship” were significantly related to high level of fashion innovativeness and price consciousness. Consumers who seek for high level of “personalized advice” and “personalized fit” were likely to be price conscious and conforming to clothing but not innovative in terms of fashion and clothing. Shopping orientation group differences were also reported in the study. In personalizing of apparel products, distinctive but relevant strategies should be implemented according to the need of the consumers.

Key words: Personalization, Shopping orientation; 개인화, 쇼핑성향

I. Introduction

As industrial technique progresses, the desire of consumers has changed. Clothing and fashion products closely relate to the person's needs and wants. Providing unique goods or services for consumers is an apparel firm's ultimate goal of the business practice. Proper and efficient operation strategies that reflect the changing business climate have to be in place. Firms subdivide consumer groups more and more and try to implement variety of strategies each targeted for the segmented consumer groups. In order

to understand each consumer's needs, it is necessary to have systematic information about the consumers.

Due to the industrial communication mechanism and computerized automatic systems consumers can take a part in production process of apparel products. Such technology has implemented to produce mass customized apparel products. With a reasonable range of premium price, the customer is able to get a custom made suit (Schreier, 2006). Not only the personalized products, personalized services can be provided with various customer relationship management programs. Mittal and Lassar (1996) mentioned that providing personalized service was more effective in people-processing services. Huffman and Kahn (1998)

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said that customer satisfaction depends on the way the information was suggested and the way they participated.

In fashion business, personalization strategies can be executed in various aspects. Considering that the popularity of goods last for a short period of time and consumers have individual tastes, a unique approach has to be done in fashion business. Understanding the relationship between customer's quality expectations and specific person's level of aspiration should be very important. This study focused on consumer shopping orientation of apparel products as a relevant variable to personalization strategies. The aim of this study is to understand consumer perceptions toward various ways of personalization strategies and their relationship with consumer shopping orientations. Comprehending such relationships will be helpful for fashion retailers and marketers to make better strategies for their target market in providing personalized experience in apparel shopping.

II. Literature Review

1. Personalization Strategies

Consumers expect high level of services in apparel shopping and at the same time they want to get high monetary values. Due to the remarkable development in fashion business market is micro-segmented and different services are provided. 'Personalization' means not only get 'just mine' but a distinguished thing that 'just for myself'. Therefore, the personalization of apparel shopping reflects various efforts to satisfy customers with goods and services. Prior studies referred only the personalization side of services provided to consumers. Recent studies focus more on product aspect of personalization such as mass customization, customization of product, based on the individual customer's need.

Grubb (2006) mentioned that mass customization maintains the price of the mass-products and still reflects tastes or measures of the individual customer. Hanson (2000) referred that effective mass customization included possible selection of design, style or the details (e.g., sleeve types, collar shapes). Yang

(2004) applied Pine's (1993) work and highlighted the importance of mass customization for apparel products.

In the process of clothing product shopping, making the customers feel unique and special has been often referred as programmed personalization. It could be related to emotional aspects of shopping to enhance customer satisfaction (Suprenant & Solomon, 1987). An et al. (2003), in their empirical study on clothing shopping, suggested the importance of offering styling advices. Personalization services can be provided through new retail channels such as personal browsers of online retailers. Running Online communities of people with similar interests could be another example of providing services that reflect needs of the individual (Allen et al., 1998). A well known retail customer relationship management strategy that relates data management of information on individual consumers can be viewed as personalized service strategy.

The personalization strategies of apparel shopping can be executed in variety of ways. Multidimensional approaches have to be conducted to provide better understanding of the individualized consumer needs in apparel shopping.

2. Apparel Shopping Orientation

Shopping orientations are "unique in shopping attributes and patronage behavior" (Shim & Kotsiopoulos, 1993). It relates to cultural and economical phenomenon of the society. Shopping orientations that relates apparel and fashion product and stores can be referred as apparel shopping orientation.

One of the well known apparel shopping orientation is innovativeness in fashion. The fashion progresses as the diffusion of innovation. Introducing new product and diffusion mechanism of such product are inherent aspect of fashion (Sproles, 1979). Innovativeness is indispensable to accept reception rate of new trend among consumer products (Rhee, 1999). Painter and Pinegar (1971) mentioned that fashion innovators were more internality oriented and read more magazines. Workman and Johnson (1993) said that fashion innovators had more and variety of desires than fashion followers. Yang (2004) reported that consumers

who pursued pleasure shopping propensity and fashion leadership had high expectation level of mass customization.

In clothing behavior, conformity is important in explaining collective behavior of consumers. Conformity is the psychological pressure by a group that change in clothing attitude or behavior (Davis & Miller, 1983). Clothing conformity relates to accepting or rejecting information according to the reference group (Kang, 1995). Lee (1996) said that school boys have more desire to be seen as same with peers than girls. Another research done by Kim and Chung (2000) reported that girls are more interested in trends than boys. Consumers who have clothing conformity are interested in clothing as they are interested in information on what to conform.

One of the major aspects of shopping orientation is brand loyalty. It is related to the consistent preference of a consumer (Rhee, 1999) and affection about specific brands (Aaker, 1991). Consumers who are loyal to the brand are not only long-term buyers but also contribute to the extensive amount of retail sales (Reichheld et al., 2000). Kim and Shin (1998) reported that brand loyal consumers are superior to non-loyal consumers in identifying brand power and being sensitive to fashion styles. Personalization strategy may enhance consumers' tendency to loyalty to a brand. Loyal customers are reluctant to switch customized products or personalized services provided by the competitors.

Price is an external cue that directly influences the purchase decision making of consumers. Recently, the competition based on price became intense and consumers tend to buy good products with proper price when they put time and effort to the decision making. In Shim and Kotsiopoulos's shopping orientation research (1993), consumers who were more interested in fashion and clothing were likely to be price conscious at the same time. In addition, consumers who sought hedonic values enjoyed shopping apparel products at discounted price. The price consciousness is critical in terms of personalization of apparel shopping because any personalization strategy may involve extra cost to the product providers. In order to enjoy the benefit of personalized products and ser-

vices consumers should willingly pay somewhat higher price.

III. Methods

1. Research Purpose

The goal of this study was to investigate personalization strategies of apparel shopping and their relationships with consumer shopping orientations. Specifically, group correlations between consumer perceptions on personalization strategies and shopping orientation variables were investigated. In addition, consumers were segmented by their shopping orientations and differences in personalization perceptions across segmented consumer groups were assessed. The research model is depicted in <Fig. 1>.

2. Measures and Data Analysis

A survey questionnaire was developed for the empirical study. Personalization scales of purchasing apparel were developed based on question items used in previous studies (Allen et al., 1998; Park, 2004; Pine, 1993; Surprenant & Solomon, 1987; Yang, 2004). All statements were measured on five-point Likert type scales.

Items measuring personalization of apparel shopping were factor analyzed (Table 1). Principle component analysis using varimax rotation was used for the analysis. Six factors explaining 57.6% of the total variance were extracted. The first factor of the total variance was named as "personalized advice". Items

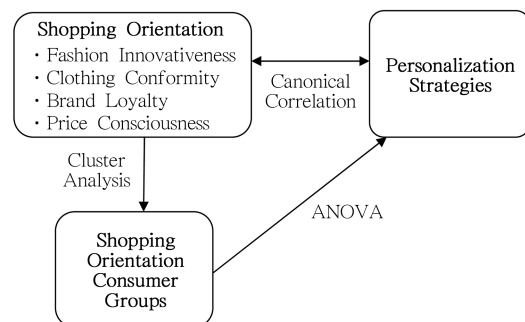


Fig. 1. Research model.

Table 1. Factor analysis of personalization items of apparel shopping

Factor Names and Items	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue (Percentage of Cumulative Variance)	Cronbach's α
Personalized Advice · Product coordination information suggested by the salesperson · Salesperson's personalized advice · Salesperson's easy explanation on products · Product coordination information provided through brand-home-page or catalog	.85 .79 .71 .45	4.93 (23.49)	.76
Personalized Design Choice · Diversity of designs and styles · Selection of product details (e.g., sleeves types, collar shapes) · Customized production reflecting personalized choices such as design or fabrics · Simple point of purchase embroidery or printing-services	.71 .71 .63 .57	1.99 (32.96)	.59
Personalized Fit · Segmented size system of ready-made clothes · Diversity of available sizes · Customized-pattern considering personal measures · Point of purchase alteration services (e.g., pants' length)	.74 .61 .58 .57	1.46 (39.91)	.62
Sale-promotion Personalization · Promotion information (e.g., discount, coupon, reserve, gift) provided when purchasing · Store inventory information available · Purchase incentive system such as customer mileage program available based on purchase history	.74 .73 .61	1.32 (46.20)	.67
Personalized Customer Relationship · Customer data management (e.g., birthday, anniversary) available · Purchase history data management (e.g., purchasing experience) available · New product or sale information provided through e-mail or direct mail	.84 .65 .47	1.19 (51.88)	.62
In-store Personalization · Salesperson's polite attitude · Treated as a special customer in store · Personalization after service provided at the store	.68 .66 .56	1.09 (57.06)	.53

measuring coordination suggestion and easy explanation provided by salespersons were included in the factor. The second factor was named as "personalized design choice". Items measuring diversity of styles, design detail choices, and personalized embroidery or printing-service were included in the factor. The third factor was named as "personalized fit". Items measuring personalized size choices, customized pattern considerations and point of purchase alteration services were included in the factor. The fourth factor was named as "sale-promotion personalization". Items measuring promotion information provided when purchasing, store inventory information available and purchase incentive system were included in the factor. The fifth factor was named as "personalized customer

relationship". Items measuring customer data management, purchasing data management and new product or sale information provided through e-mail or direct mail were included in the factor. The sixth factor was named as "in-store personalization". Items measuring salesperson's attitude, being treated as a special customer and personalization after service were included in the factor. The second and the third factors were related to product aspect of personalization and other factors relate non-product or service related personalization strategies. Reliability of the each dimension of personalization strategies was in the range of .53-.76.

Measures of apparel shopping orientation (fashion innovativeness, clothing conformity, brand loyalty and price consciousness) were adopted from previous stud-

ies on shopping orientation (Kim, 2000; Kim, 2003). All statements were measured on five-point Likert type scales. Four items were assigned to measure each dimension of apparel shopping orientation. Validity of the shopping orientation measure was assessed through principle component analysis with varimax rotation. Four factors with four items each as designated were extracted. Factor loadings of each item for each factor ranged from .63 to .83. The four factors explained 59.18% of the total variance. It is confirmed that the shopping orientation measures were valid. Reliability statistics using Cronbach's α ranged from .65 to .78. Items for each shopping orientation factor were reliable.

The sample of this study was college students who have higher expectation on personalization. In addition, clothing is a relevant product category to them. Data from 422 questionnaires were used for the statistical analysis. Factor analysis, Cronbach's α coefficient, canonical correlation, cluster analysis, one-way ANOVA, and Tukey's-b test was conducted using SPSS 12.0.

IV. Results and Discussion

1. Apparel shopping orientation factors and personalization factors

Canonical correlation analysis was conducted to assess the co-group relationship between shopping orientations and personalization factors. Through canonical correlation analysis multiple comparison between multiple dependent variables and multiple independent variables can be assessed (Lee, 1991). Among the four canonical formula <Table 2>, the first canonical correlation function was statistically significance

(Wilk's Lambda=.68, *Chi-square*=157.99, $p<.001$). Second canonical correlation function was also statistically significance (Wilk's Lambda=.86, *Chi-square*=61.87, $p<.001$). Third and fourth canonical correlation function were not indicated significant because Wilk's Lambda scores were over 0.9 and canonical square root (CR^2) did not show significant increase from the third. Therefore two significant canonical functions were analyzed to be meaningful.

Canonical cross-loadings of two clusters were showed in <Table 3>. According to the canonical correlation function 1, fashion innovativeness and price consciousness were significantly related to sale-promotion personalization and personalized customer relationship. This implies that consumers who are innovative in terms of fashion but price consciousness are likely to be susceptible to purchase benefits or services based personalization strategies such as sale-promotion personalization and customer relationship management strategies.

According to canonical correlation function 2, fashion innovativeness (negative), clothing conformity and price consciousness were significantly correlated with personalized advice and personalized fit. This implies that consumers who tend to conform in terms of clothing and are conscious with price, are likely to be susceptible to strategies such as personalized advice and personalized fit. According to factor loadings, the influence of brand loyalty, personalized design choice and in-store personalization were relatively weak in the process.

2. Shopping Orientation Consumer Segments and Personalization

Cluster analysis based on mean scores of shopping

Table 2. Testing of canonical coefficients and canonical square root

Canonical Number	Canonical Coefficients	Canonical Square Root	Eigenvalue	Wilk's Lambda	<i>Chi-square</i>	<i>df</i>
1	.46 ^a	.21	.27	.68	157.99***	24
2	.32	.10	.11	.86	61.87***	15
3	.20	.04	.04	.96	17.73*	8
4	.07	.00	.00	.99	2.01	3

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

^astatistically significant canonical function

Table 3. Canonical cross-loading of each variance for canonical function

	Canonical Correlation 1	Canonical Correlation 2
Cluster of the First Variance (Shopping Orientation)		
Fashion Innovativeness	.40	-.16
Clothing Conformity	.09	.11
Brand Loyalty	.06	.09
Price Consciousness	.20	.24
Cluster of the Second Variance (Personalization Strategies)		
Personalized Advice	.22	.23
Personalized Design Choice	.23	.03
Personalized Fit	.19	.11
Sale-promotion Personalization	.37	-.03
Personalized Customer Relationship	.37	.02
In-store Personalization	.23	-.07

orientation factors was conducted to identify consumer segments. Four groups were identified. One-way ANOVA and multiple comparison of Tukey's-b were conducted to find significant differences across groups (Table 4).

Group 1, labeled with "innovative group", including 13% of respondents ($n=54$), had the highest mean scores on fashion innovativeness ($M=3.76$), and the lowest mean scores on clothing conformity ($M=1.97$). The innovative group was interested in the newest fashion and unique styles. They had somewhat high level of brand loyalty but low level of price consciousness. They also do not take clothing norms. Group 2, labeled with "timid group", including 29% of respondents ($n=121$) had the lowest mean scores

on three shopping orientations: fashion innovativeness ($M=2.46$), clothing conformity ($M=2.22$) and brand loyalty ($M=2.55$). Timid group are basically not interested in apparel purchasing with fashion and shopping. Group 3, labeled with "practical group", including 29% of respondents ($n=124$), had the highest means score on price consciousness ($M=4.09$), and had medium level mean scores on fashion innovativeness and clothing conformity. Group 4, labeled with "faithful group", including 29% of respondents ($n=123$), showed the highest mean scores on clothing conformity ($M=3.31$), brand loyalty ($M=3.85$), and had the lowest means scores on fashion innovativeness ($M=3.25$). Consumers in this group are not likely to be interested in innovate styles of fashion but to be sensi-

Table 4. Consumer segmentation using cluster analysis by shopping orientation

Shopping Orientation Criteria	Innovative Group ($n=54$)	Timid Group ($n=121$)	Practical Group ($n=124$)	Faithful Group ($n=123$)	<i>F</i>
Fashion Innovativeness	3.76 ^a A ^b	2.46 D	3.57 B	3.25 C	111.30***
Clothing Conformity	1.97 D	2.22 C	3.06 B	3.31 A	164.41***
Brand Loyalty	3.43 B	2.55 D	3.14 C	3.85 A	107.82***
Price Consciousness	3.11 C	3.38 B	4.09 A	3.27 B	60.93***

*** $p < .001$

^aMean scores of 5-point Likert

^bResults from Tukey's-b multiple comparison of means are indicated as A, B and C. Here, mean scores with notation A is significantly different from mean scores with the notation B.

tive to socially well recognized brands.

In order to investigate the differences in personalization according to shopping orientation groups, ANOVA was conducted (Table 5). Significant differences were found in “personalized advice” ($F=6.81, p<.001$), “personalized fit” ($F=3.53, p<.05$), “sale-promotion personalization” ($F=9.48, p<.001$) and “personalized customer relationship” ($F=9.10, p<.001$).

For the personalized advice strategy, practical group and faithful group showed higher mean scores than innovative group and timid group. The practical group showed the highest level of personalized fit strategy. This group is very price conscious but still wants to get products made to fit their personal sizes, which may require extra production costs. For sale-promotion personalization and personalized customer relationship strategies, all groups besides timid group showed the higher mean scores. Most of the customers want such service related personalization strategies except for those who are not interested in apparel products.

Similar to the canonical correlation results, personalized design choice and in-store personalization strategies were not found to be influential in terms of apparel shopping orientation. However, overall high mean scores indicates that most of the consumes expect such personalization strategies implemented to the retail business practice.

V. Conclusions and Implications

The ultimate goal of any fashion business could not be done without consumer-oriented strategies. Implementing personalization strategies will be critical to fashion retailers who target younger consumers who are prone to have higher level of individualism and are important in terms that they are future buyers of the industry. Examining personalization strategies in apparel shopping and their relationships to apparel shopping orientation is meaningful process. Summary and implications of the research are as follows.

Personalization in apparel shopping was categorized as “personalized advice”, “personalized design choice”, “personalized fit”, “sale-promotion personalization”, “personalized customer relationship”, and “in-store personalization”. Results of the analysis of group correlation with apparel shopping orientation indicated that consumers who are conscious about the price and have high level of fashion innovativeness are likely to react service related personalization strategies such as sale-promotion and personalized customer relationships. Consumers who are price conscious, have high level of clothing conformity but have lower level of fashion consciousness are likely to respond to personalized advices.

Consumers were segmented into four groups based on their apparel shopping orientation tendencies. The

Table 5. Differences of personalization across shopping orientation groups

Personalization Criteria	Innovative Group (n=54)	Timid Group (n=121)	Practical Group (n=124)	Faithful Group (n=123)	F
Personalized Advice	3.57 ^a B ^b	3.56 B	3.88 A	3.85 A	6.81***
Personalized Design Choice	3.98	3.99	4.15	4.03	2.21
Personalized Fit	4.21 AB	4.16 B	4.37 A	4.23 AB	3.53*
Sale-promotion Personalization	4.30 A	3.95 B	4.28 A	4.24 A	9.48***
Personalized Customer Relationship	3.61 A	3.31 B	3.75 A	3.66 A	9.10***
In-store Personalization	4.05	3.86	4.04	3.98	2.08

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

^aMean scores of 5-point Likert

^bResults from Tukey's-b multiple comparison of means are indicated as A, B and C. Here, mean scores with notation A is significantly different from mean scores with the notation B.

innovative group had high level of fashion innovativeness but had lower level of clothing conformity and price consciousness. They were likely to be more sensitive to personalized fit, sale-promotion personalization and personalized customer relationship. The practical group was less likely to be loyal to any brands and more likely to be price sensitive. They showed higher level of personalization appeals in all personalization strategies included in the study. The faithful group had high level of brand loyalty and clothing conformity. They wanted personalized advice, sale-promotion information and personalized customer relationships. The timid group showed low level of all shopping orientation tendencies included in the study. The timid group showed relatively low level perceptions on personalization strategies.

The value chain of apparel products is very complex and providing customized or personalized goods and services may be risky but something that any fashion business cannot avoid in the future. A better and cost-efficient personalization strategy must be in place so the optimal level of consumer satisfaction could be achieved. Future studies should included more clothing consumption related variables. Demographic issues such as gender or age differences should be also investigated.

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요 약

패션산업은 다양한 소비자 욕구를 충족시키면서 고객 만족을 극대화 시켜야 하는 산업이다. 고객 지향적인 마케팅 활동을 위하여 개별 소비자의 욕구를 만족시켜 줄 수 있는 개인화 전략 필요하다. 본 연구는 대학생을 중심으로 설문조사를 하였고, 자료분석을 위하여 요인분석, 정준상관분석, 군집분석, 일원분산분석을 사용하였다. 의복 쇼핑성향과 개인화 변수군과의 관계를 살펴본 결과, 두 개의 유의한 정준상관함수가 도출되었다. 유행혁신성과 가격의식이 높은 소비자들은 판매촉진 개인화와 개인화된 고객 관리를 동시에 높게 요구하는 것으로 나타났다. 가격의식과 의복 동조성향이 높으면서, 유행혁신성이 낮은 소비자들은 개인화된 제안서비스와 사이즈 맞춤 개인화를 동시에 높게 평가하는 것으로 나타났다. 실증적 연구에는 또한 의복 쇼핑성향에 따라 군집화된 집단간 개인화 전략의 선호경향을 분석함으로써 의복 쇼핑성향의 세분집단별로 요구되는 개인화 전략의 차이를 살펴보았다.
