



Effect of Social Capital on Attitude toward Fitness Apparel in Online Shopping

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Fitness apparel is not only one of the most prominently trending and highly regarded products in the fashion industry in the promotion of health and well-being, but is also expected to continue to grow globally reaching \$231.7 billion by 2024 (PR Newswire, 2017). Growth in the apparel market is driven by the increasing population, which is now interested in living a healthy life and participating in leisure sports and fitness activities (e.g., yoga, hiking, jogging). Also, as social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) evolves, fitness apparel companies have enhanced their communication with consumers, shared social capital, and increased sales in e-commerce based on social relationships (Zhang et al., 2017). However, companies in fitness apparel or sportswear industry are currently struggling to incorporate social interactions into their marketing strategies, due to lacks of knowledge about consumers' interactions in social media and its impact on consumption as it relates to perceptions of body satisfaction and the culture. The United States and South Korea have housed the largest active social network sites in the world (Statista, 2018) and both young populations in the two countries are attracted to online shopping and engage in health awareness (Lee et al., 2014). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of social capital on web service quality and attitude toward fitness apparel through a comparison of U.S. and South Korean college students' body satisfaction. The following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: Social capital has a positive influence on website service quality differently according to body satisfaction in U.S. and South Korean students.

H2: Website service quality has a positive influence on attitudes towards fitness apparel differently according to body satisfaction in U.S. and South Korean students.

H3: Social capital has a directly positive influence on attitude toward fitness apparel differently according to body satisfaction in U.S. and South Korean students.

A total of 1,144 usable online surveys were obtained from U.S. ($N_{\text{female}} = 490$; $N_{\text{male}} = 117$) and Korean college students ($N_{\text{female}} = 406$; $N_{\text{male}} = 131$). Participants were enrolled either at a large southeast university in the United States and three universities in South Korea. Social capital, website service quality, attitude toward fitness apparel, and body satisfaction were assessed on a seven-point Likert-scale.

There were three main steps to the statistical analyses, using SPSS and AMOS. First, discriminant analysis was used to classify four clusters (satisfaction, dissatisfaction, the United States, and South Korea). Second, confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the overall factor

structure and construct validity of the scales ($\chi^2 = 23.8$, $df = 6$, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.051, SRMR = 0.025). Factor loadings ranged from 0.84 to 0.93. Third, structural equation modeling was used to examine the causal relationship hypothesized. With acceptable model fit ($\chi^2 = 23.8$, $df = 6$, $p < 0.001$, GFI = 0.99, CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.051, SRMR = 0.025), the social capital significantly affected the website service quality ($\beta = .54$) which in turn significantly influenced attitude toward fitness apparel ($\beta = 0.88$). Also, the direct path from the social capital to attitude was significantly positive ($\beta = 0.11$) at $p < 0.001$. The website service quality, thus, mediated the influence of the social capital on the attitude toward fitness apparel. In addition, website service quality plays an important role in enhancing social capital and attitude toward fitness apparel in online shopping among both student groups' body satisfaction or dissatisfaction and culture (See Table 1). Also, there was no direct effect on the U.S. body-satisfied students and Korea body-dissatisfied students regarding social capital on attitude toward fitness apparel.

Consequently, we found that the samples of both college students are significantly different in their designations of being satisfied or dissatisfied with their bodies, and online shopping and improving web service quality may be able to bridge the gap between these cultural differences. The implications of this study suggest that fitness apparel e-tailers and marketers should continue to develop and implement improvements to website quality and communicate with consumers to provide information regarding fitness apparel, thus, increasing e-consumers' attitudes toward the products on their websites. Successful marketing strategies in fitness apparel market requires the identification of target consumers and understanding of a marketing mix that can satisfy consumers' needs in the fitness or sports apparel industry. Further studies should examine comparisons (e.g., genders) with similar body size on the causal relationship proposed.

Table 1. Results of Hypotheses Testing.

| Hypothesis | The United States (N=607) | | South Korea (N=537) | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| | Satisfaction (n=337) | Dissatisfaction (n=270) | Satisfaction (n=396) | Dissatisfaction (n=141) |
| H1: SC → WSQ | supported*** | supported*** | supported*** | supported*** |
| H2: WSQ → Attitude | supported* | supported** | supported*** | supported* |
| H3: SC → Attitude | not supported | supported* | supported** | not supported |

Notes. SC=social capital; WSQ=website service quality; * means $p < 0.05$; ** means $p < 0.01$; *** means $p < 0.001$.

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