The Role of Information regarding Shapewear's Performance in Female Consumers' Online Purchase Decision

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Shapewear is a type of body-contouring garment which can be used to transform women's bodies to approximate their ideal (Ewing, 1978). Although a major motivation for wearing shapewear among female consumers is to make their body similar to their personal ideal body, online retailers do not present information about how shapewear is effective in decreasing sizes to make the wearer look thinner or better. In the online context, two types of information are usually presented: visual and verbal. Dual coding theory (Paivio, 1971, 1986), which suggested that people process information through two cognitive subsystems of nonverbal and verbal, was used to explain how information regarding the effects of shapewear shown on the website in those two formats was processed for online purchase decision. Thus, the purpose of this study to examine the role that visual and verbal information about the shapewear's performance in consumers' perceived performance risk and perceived physical attractivenesss, which in turn affects their attitudes and purchase intentions toward the shapewear and the e-tailer. As shown in Figure 1, a conceptual model was proposed.
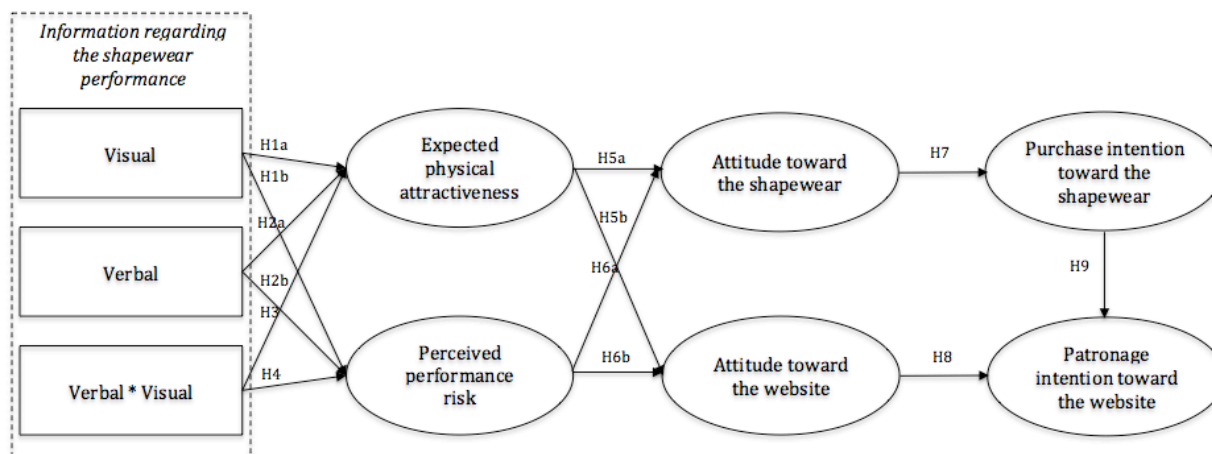

Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model

A two-step of stimulus development was conducted to develop stimuli used for a main study: In Step 1, a total of 525 females in a large Midwestern university participated in a web-based survey. From the results, the most-preferred type of shapewear, high-waist thigh, was chosen for the main study. In Step 2, the visual and verbal stimuli were selected for the main study: For visual stimuli, among the thirteen participants who took part in the 3D body scanning sessions, one participant with a pants size of 8 was selected for visual stimuli (front and side views of the 3D scanned images of the participant with and without the). For verbal stimuli, the

descriptions regarding the shapewear performance were developed based on the changes in body measurements observed in the 3D body scanning data. In the main study, a 2 (visual: absent vs. present) x 2 (verbal: absent vs. present) between subject designs was conducted using a web-based survey. The key aspect of online shapewear presentation examined in this study is both visual and verbal form of information regarding the effects of shapewear using.

A total of 433 female respondents ranged in age from 18 to 70 years old with a mean of 30 years old participated in the main study. The majority of the respondents were White/European American (n = 386, 89.1%), followed by Asian (n = 19, 4.4%), and Hispanic American or Latino (n = 8, 1.8%). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using maximum likelihood estimation confirmed a satisfactory fit of the data, and convergent validity and discriminant validity were achieved. Cronbach's *alpha* coefficients for all six constructs were acceptable, as they ranged form .75 - .95. To test hypotheses, this study contained two parts: (1) Part 1: a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to test main effect and interaction effect (H1-H4) using SPSS and (2) Part 2: confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) were conducted to test H5 to H9 using Using Mplus 7.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2014).

The results of ANOVAs revealed that females who exposed to the written information regarding the shapewear performance expected greater attractiveness (M = 4.63, SD = 1.22) than those who did not see the written information regarding the shapewear performance (M = 4.37, SD = 1.30): H1b was supported. The results from SEM showed that the model had an adequate fit to the data ($\chi2$ = 393.09 df = 174, p = 000, CFI = .94, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .07). The results of a post hoc test using LSD multi-group comparison revealed a significant difference in expected physical attractiveness between participants who exposed to no visual and verbal information and participants who exposed to presence of both visual and verbal information. For H5 through H9, except H8, other hypotheses (i.e., H5a, H5b, H6a, H6b, H7, and H9) were supported: the process by which perceived performance risk and expected attractiveness influences behavioral intentions through its impact on attitudes: perceived performance risk decreases attitudes toward both the shapewear and the website while expected attractiveness increases attitudes toward both the shapewear.

This study provides empirical evidence that specific written information regarding shapewear's effectiveness in decreasing the size of particular body parts can help consumers evaluate how the shapewear will perform if they purchase it. This finding provides empirical support for the importance of performance certainty and assumed attractiveness in online presentation of shapewear in terms of increasing attitudes, purchase intention, and patronage intention.

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