



Consumers with Visual Impairments: Impacts of Self-Efficacy and Public Self-Consciousness on Their Clothing Selection Motivations

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Keywords: *Visual impairments, self-efficacy, public self-consciousness, clothing selection*

Introduction: According to the U.S. Census (2013), approximately 57 million people in the U.S. have at least one form of disability. Because of physical or mental limitations, disabled individuals may engage in behaviors that are unlike those of others in their society (Ittyerah & Kumar, 2009). One such behavior that may be affected by disabilities is dress behavior. For example, if an individual has a visual impairment, she/he may need someone to assist with clothing selection and need clothing with less complicated design. Because consumer behavior research has typically focused on the general population of consumers and assumed consumers' normalcy (Miller, 1997), the population of those with special needs has been largely ignored by researchers. As a result, we have a limited understanding of individuals with visual impairments as consumers, particularly with regard to their behaviors when selecting clothing to wear. Thus, this study is designed to better understand consumers with visual impairments and their clothing selection motivations. Specifically, this study examines the roles of self-efficacy and public self-consciousness on clothing selection motivations for consumers with visual impairments.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development: Consumers' beliefs, feelings, and thoughts, particularly those related to aspects of their self-concept, are known to play a significant role in consumer behavior in general. One key component of one's self-concept is self-efficacy. According to self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977), individual's beliefs about the possession of capabilities are required to accomplish certain goals. It is important to understand an individual's beliefs about his/her own capabilities in order to understand his/her actual behavior (e.g., clothing selection) and corresponding outcomes. Another important self-concept is public self-consciousness, which is related to an individual's self-attention in public (Sontag & Schlater, 1995). Kwon and Shim (1999) revealed that individuals with higher public self-consciousness have lower self-esteem, which in turn, influences their clothing use. According to Kwon and Parham (1994), individuals' clothing selection motivations are influenced by aspects of their self-concept. The dimensions of clothing selection motivations include individuality (i.e., clothing that makes a person distinctive), assurance (i.e., clothing that helps a person to have self-confidence), and camouflage (i.e., clothing that hides the figure).

Therefore, the three hypotheses are as follows: *H₁: The motivation of individuality in selecting clothing will be influenced by a) self-efficacy and b) public self-consciousness. H₂: The motivation of assurance in selecting clothing will be influenced by a) self-efficacy and b) public self-consciousness. H₃: The motivation of camouflage in selecting clothing will be influenced by a) self-efficacy and b) public self-consciousness.*

Methodology and Results: A survey questionnaire was developed based on a review of the existing literature. Existing measurements with satisfactory reliabilities were selected from the literature to assess each construct and test the hypotheses. The survey was disseminated at a community organization that hires individuals with visual impairments. Usable questionnaires were collected from 90 individuals (males=52.8%; females=42.2%; average age=46). Most of the respondents were African Americans (44.4%) and Caucasian/Whites (38.9%) and had household incomes of \$34,999 or less (average household income=\$30,056).

The results of multiple regression analyses showed the impacts of self-efficacy and public self-consciousness on clothing selection motivations. The individuality clothing selection motivation was positively influenced by self-efficacy ($\beta=0.22$, $p<.05$) and public self-consciousness ($\beta=0.37$, $p<.001$). Thus, H1 was supported. Also, the assurance clothing selection motivation was positively influenced by self-efficacy ($\beta=0.20$, $p<.05$) and public self-consciousness ($\beta=0.41$, $p<.001$). Therefore, H2 was supported. The camouflage clothing selection motivation was positively influenced by self-efficacy ($\beta=0.26$, $p<.05$), but not by public self-consciousness ($\beta=-0.04$, $p>.05$). Hence, H3 was partially supported.

Conclusion and Implications: The findings of this study suggest that disabled consumers who have higher self-efficacy and public self-consciousness are more likely to choose clothing that makes a person distinctive and that helps a person to have self-confidence. Interestingly, self-efficacy was related to the camouflage clothing selection motivation. As opposed to findings from previous research (Kwon & Parham, 1994), consumers with visual impairments may choose dark-colored clothing not to hide their figures, but to express their styles.

This study provides a conceptual framework that describes the relationships among self-efficacy, public self-consciousness, and clothing selection motivations for individuals with visual impairments. Results shed light on the social-psychological factors influencing the clothing selection behaviors of consumers with visual impairments, thereby addressing a gap in the literature by considering the use of clothing by this often-overlooked consumer segment. Further research is needed to investigate the impact of disability duration and severity on clothing selection.

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