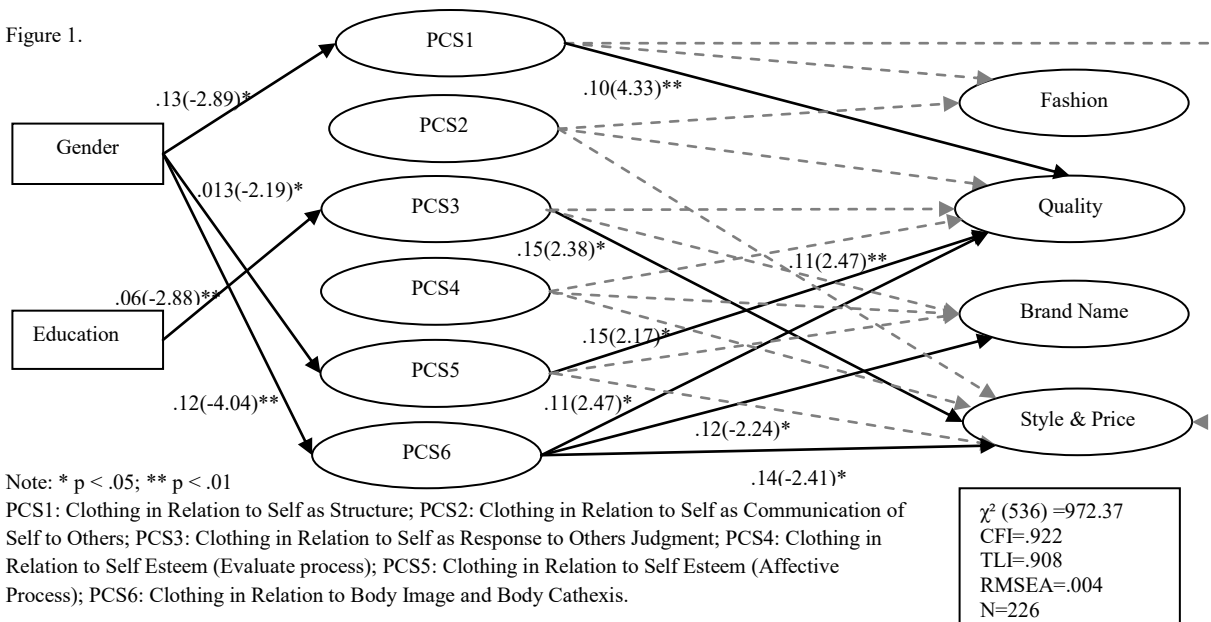How Proximity of Clothing to Self Affects Clothing Purchase Criteria by Taiwanese Older Adults

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Keywords: Chinese, culture, proximity of clothing to self, older adults

<u>Introduction.</u> A global demographic report shows an aging population is occurring in some countries, such as U.S.A. and Northern Europe, and will be pervasive in many developed countries. For example, in Asia especially Japan and Taiwan, the percentage of the aging population is rapidly growing. Aged 65 and older adults in Taiwan will exceed 14% in 2018 and will exceed 20% in 2025 (Chandran, 2015), which means every five people will have one old adult. In the future, the old adults group will be the majority age group and will be seen as a valuable market in Asia. However, most elderly apparel studies have been done in the U.S.A. Rare apparel studies on old adults have been explored in Asia. No research has investigated the relationship between self concept and clothing nor clothing purchase criteria for Asian old adults in general, and Taiwanese old adults in particular. According to the Engel, kollat, and Blackwell (EKB) model of consumer decision-making behavior, individual factors (i.e., self-concept and self-consciousness) contributes to consumers' decision making (Lee & Burns, 1993). Based on EKB model, the purpose of the study is to understand how proximity of clothing to self affects to clothing purchase criteria and behavior. The present study will investigate the effects of 1) demographics (gender and education) on the proximity of clothing to self, and 2) proximity of clothing to self on clothing purchase criteria (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Note: * p < .05; ** p < .01
PCS1: Clothing in Relation to Self as Structure; PCS2: Clothing in Relation to Self as Communication of Self to Others; PCS3: Clothing in Relation to Self as Response to Others Judgment; PCS4: Clothing in Relation to Self Esteem (Evaluate process); PCS5: Clothing in Relation to Self Esteem (Affective Process); PCS6: Clothing in Relation to Body Image and Body Cathexis.

χ² (536) =972.37
CFI=.922
TLI=.908
RMSEA=.004
N=226

Method. A reliable scale of proximity of clothing to self scale is adopted from Sontage (2004). The clothing purchase criteria scale was adopted from Lee and Burns (1993). The survey was translated into Chinese using a "translation and back translation" procedure. A pretest was followed to ensure clarity of the survey. A formal paper survey was distributed to 500 older adults in four urban cities—Taipei, Taichung, Kaohsiung, and Pingtung City.

Results. Confirmatory factor analysis in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was utilized to form factors based on these criteria: eigenvalues ≥ 1, and factor loadings above .50 for a given factor but below .30 on other factors. The SEM structural model presented a fairly good fit (see Figure 1 for fit indices). Demographics (gender and education) were related to proximity of clothing to self. Gender was associated with PCS1, PCS5, and PCS6 of proximity of clothing to self. Older adults who possessed high education had high scores on clothing in relation to self esteem. Also, older adults with high scores on PCS1, PSC5 and PSC6 was associated with Quality. Older adults with high scores on PCS3 were positively related with style and price. Finally, people have high scores on PCS6 were positively related to brand name, but were negatively related to style and price.

Conclusions. The study found female older adults are more likely to express themselves and experience an emotional responses of self-esteem by clothing; they are more likely to modify their body image through clothing. Older adults with high education tend to seek self-worth or self-respects through clothing. Older adults who likes to express themselves by clothing have seen quality as an important factor for the clothing purchase; they who are conscious to how other think about them by their clothing value style and price as important factors when they purchase clothing. Furthermore, older adults who use clothing to have positive feeling about themselves are more likely to stress on the quality of clothing. Finally, older adults who are more likely to use clothing to improve body image evaluate quality, brand name, and style and price as important criteria on purchasing clothing. Based on the results, apparel marketers should stress on quality, brand name, style and price to satisfy the needs of proximity of clothing to self for older adults. Also, marketers may focus on female older adults and those older adults with high scores on PCS1, PCS3, PCS5, PCS6 to develop their marketing mix (product, promotion, place, and price). Based on non significant results and culture differences, marketers should educate older adults how to use clothing to increase their self-esteem and body image to incur a better self-image and to have better quality of life. Furthermore, marketers can create extensive public relations campaigns to help reluctant, risk-averse Taiwanese consumers to develop a positive attitude towards purchase new apparel.

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