



# Relationship among emotions, mood, personality and clothing: an exploratory study

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## ABSTRACT

This study tends to investigate the application of psychological research methods in the fashion endeavor. The prospect of this challenge is to quantify, formalize and investigate the causal relationships connecting clothing style, preference, personality factors, emotions and mood with an observation to an improved understanding of the psychological profile of the fashion consumer. The result specifies strong relationships between mood and important relationships among three out of five personality factors and clothing style preference; mood was an important predictor of preference, at the same time as personality was restrained. Personality, emotion and mood were exposed to be managed and reflected through clothing with propositions for assistance in consumer clothing service training, resolution, and strategies for personal shoppers, market segmentation and design. The methodology derivative from a combination of research methods coupled with definite wearing experience, previously not studied collectively. This is a vital demonstration of how important this combination is in order to fully be pleased about the psychological profile of the fashion consumer.

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## Introduction

It is widely accepted that clothing has the potential (and is commonly used) to reflect and convey the inner self, e.g. self image, mood, political affiliations, social aspirations, etc; but also that consumers prefer products that are consistent with their identity. Many studies have investigated mood and personality but are out of date, inconclusive, and do not consider the causal relationships. Experiments have also generally not explored the wearing or trying on experience of clothes, the anticipation stage of the shopping experience, when emotions and moods are heightened. Nor have they investigated these factors in relation to preference for clothing styles. As the fashion market continues to fragment, a deeper understanding of the consumer's psychological profile would help develop more targeted strategies for retailers.

### Clothing preference:

Raunio, identified three factors in the preference of clothing: physical features of clothes including skin response, size and shape of the clothes, thermal comfort, and fit, revealing levels and visual features; the wearers' self-appearance; and associative reasons and memories. All of these factors would generate an emotional response. According to DeLong and Lantz, preferences are composed of two components: cognitive and affective. The affective component is the emotional and overall positive and negative mood response to the object, which due to the very nature of clothing, is a very intimate experience. The cognitive component or schema, are product, aesthetic and social attributes inherent in the object which are evaluated through previous experiences, concepts and situations of use – all components of decision-making rules; e.g. the garment will only be purchased if the jacket is in a particular color or shape and appropriate for one's career. It appears that product attributes are the important factor when deciding what to buy.

Product attributes may be either extrinsic, (e.g. price, brand name, and store image) or intrinsic, (e.g. style, colour, fabric, care, fit and quality); but tend to be style category specific, e.g. casual wear. Eckman et al. demonstrated that only 2.7-10.9 per cent of the variance for preference of clothing is accounted for by aesthetic evaluation.

### Clothing, Emotion and Mood

Clothing, as an aesthetic self and body image management tool and mood altering phenomena for healthy people is not a new idea, but clothing as mediating the relationship between clothing satisfaction with self-perception (of sociability, emotional stability, and dominance), is more recent. It is our contention that clothing, clothing attributes or garment features can affect positive and negative moods and individual emotions, especially during the trying on stage and during wearing because of the multi-sensory aspects, social factors and symbolic associations of clothing. As early as 1949, the link between clothing, emotions and mood revealed that the emotionally and socially maladjusted were more concerned about their clothing choices and appearance than those who were not. Humphrey et al., and Worrell, showed how clothing can be used to express positive emotions or as a coping mechanism to overcome negative self-concepts. Although depression has been linked to a lack of concern for personal appearance, studies have also shown that closer interest in clothing can correlate with increased depression; but also that over even short periods after dressing; clothes can lift or change a low mood. Raunio found that we choose clothing daily to cope with social circumstances and one's feelings. She observed that expressive features of favorite clothes helped to create a feeling of togetherness with other people, to stand out, produce an impression and control feelings, images and impressions of others. She indicated that favorite clothes are important for controlling one's environment

and one's emotions and so may have regulative purposes. Furthermore, Kwon demonstrated the relationships between the perception of mood, self-consciousness and the selection of clothing concluding that females were more sensitive to mood than men, who affected their clothing choices; and that negative moods affected their choices more than positive moods. Kwon also showed how much how one feels about themselves (their emotional baseline), can affect their choices and behavior. These findings therefore indicate the emotional management functions of clothing. Studies demonstrate that positive and negative moods are independent dimensions, and are the most superior level at which emotion can be defined. However they go on to say that a set of basic emotions may have greater explanatory power than overall positive and negative effect. This suggests that research should show the relationships between clothing, mood and individual emotions.

#### **Personality and Clothing:**

Personality traits can be defined as self and interpersonal perception for an individual across situations over time. Personality traits influence personal values and attitudes; predict cognition, emotion and mood affect, and behavioral patterns. Selecting clothing and fashion is about reflecting and managing these factors and so are clearly related to personality. For example Kwon showed that the wearing of suits for women enhances occupational or managerial attributes more commonly associated with men. Dress has been shown to express personality however clothing choice has also been viewed as overt behavior, thereby being influenced by and a reflection of an individual's personality profile. Previous research methods have included drawings, photographs personality traits and factor models, and clothing interest questionnaires. These have generally been conducted on UG students or clinical patients due to access to participants or time constraints. The research methodology for this study was developed from a combination of these studies in addition to two more recent studies: Paek's study about garment styles and its effects on the perception of self and another person's personal traits, (using drawings of clothing); and Feinberg et al. in their use of photographs of actual clothing (wearers own clothes), and drawings of branded jeans.

#### **The Five Factor Model of Personality:**

The Five Factor Model of personality based on traits, derived from Cattell's, 35 bipolar clusters, is currently viewed as the most comprehensive model. It is strongly supported by empirical evidence, and is used in clinical, organizational and other applied research. This model consists of five major dimensions of personality (NEOAC) and each of the five factors consists of six dimensions or facets of behavior.

- (1) Neuroticism (N);
- (2) Extroversion (E);
- (3) Openness (O);
- (4) Agreeableness (A); and
- (5) Conscientiousness (C).

#### **Purpose of Study:**

Questions remain about how personality, emotion and mood impact on clothing preference and choices generally. There are no studies that have investigated together the relationships between the Five Factor Model, clothing preference for different styles, emotion and mood. From the literature review it was observed that research methods had employed the use of UG students or clinical patients due to access and time constraints upon the participants. In most cases the clothing used already

belonged to the participants. A better understanding of how the fashion consumer uses clothing to reflect and manage personality, emotion and mood when making decisions about what to buy, may help us identify causal relationships between these factors. Focus in our study on one stage within the buying experience ("trying on") was important as this is the anticipation stage of the decision-making process where emotions would be more genuine. The buying experience was mimicked by categorizing the clothing into formal, casual and evening wear as displayed in stores using unfamiliar clothing styles. Moreover, unfamiliar compared with familiar/one's own clothing (as used in most studies discussed), would produce heightened emotions which would help clarify the relationship between clothing preference and the management and predictive value of emotion and mood in a consumer's decision making process.

#### **Retail Service Training and Provision:**

This conception is significant in terms of the imperative to understand the need to maintain or induce a positive mood and reduce negative mood whilst making buying decisions. In her study on service quality and emotions, Wong found that emotional satisfaction is positively associated with customer loyalty and relationship quality. In particular, a customer's enjoyment of the shopping experience served as a predictor for loyalty, and happiness as a predictor for relationship quality. Her recommendations were for staff training to develop emotional intelligence as a key component in customer-contact training, to be observant of customer's evoked emotions and to focus on store environment, as well as merchandise on shop floor. This would be especially useful for retailers offering personal shoppers. Market segmentation and design the findings indicate that quantifying emotional response and self perceptions could prove useful for predicting choice in a retail environment. A study by Christensen and Olson created a collective map for groups of customers to gain greater insight into consumer's product knowledge structures and consumer's perceived personal relevance of a product, service or brand. Also, Forney et al. found that major factors to consider about predicting purchase behavior were related to the inner self: the personal shopping experience, personal fashion sensitivity and needs of personal dress. An understanding of the relationship between the design of, consumer needs and fashion functions to the inner self may help in developing personal shopper, market segmentation and brand extension strategies for a retailers target market.

#### **Psychological Management:**

More investigation is needed looking at the full variance for preference. According to Eckman et al. aesthetic evaluation has shown to account for just 2.7-10.9 per cent of preference. Further research needs to investigate how all of the five factors of personality and the individual traits within each of these factors, with mood, interact or influence each other on a sensory and behavioral level with the styling and wearing of clothing. Furthermore, as to whether all these factors are related to the identity of the wearer and these factors are important during decision making when buying or choice of daily attire, which has implications for product development as product attributes will be used by the consumer to make these decisions. Previous researchers have indicated the importance of understanding the meaning of products to consumers in order to understand their behavior. Leigh and Gabel, in discussions about product symbolism suggested that when the consumer lacks knowledge about how to perform a required role, the more complete and

consistent set of product symbols they have for that role, the higher the probability of successful role performance. This has obvious relationships in enhancing and managing personality traits and will help us to continue to understand the impact clothing has on social interaction and effective impression management strategies. In terms of self and other person perceptions it may then be valuable to explore particular sensory variables or product attributes categorized into different seasons, clothing categories, clothing styles, body and appearance perceptions, product range; that may help predict reflection or management of individual emotions, mood and personality. Further research should also explore different demographics and brands and their target consumers. The use of the psychological questionnaires before, during and after the wearing of unfamiliar clothes may be extended to be used by retailers as part of their customer relationship programmes to help them ensure products are targeted uniquely to each customer. A customer management software program may, indeed, be envisaged for independent retailers as part of developing and building upon their competitive advantage. As retail strategies begin to further explore the future of retail, personalization and personal shopper strategies, and their target consumers, it is anticipated that consumer profiling will prove to be of increasing value to retailers in a changing and considerably competitive industry.

#### Conclusions and Implications:

The sample used was small in number and as such cannot be assumed to be representative of the population, for which a much larger research study would be necessary. However, from this small sample, the findings imply that when trying on unfamiliar clothing, clothing is used as an appearance and mood management tool by reflecting or managing positive or negative mood. The results showed the varying levels of emotion an outfit can generate and the power of clothing on individual emotions. Consistently, the results also showed to some degree how much personality is reflected, expressed or managed in clothing choice. The personality trait or mood the wearer wishes to communicate, will affect their behavior, whether it is consistent with the wearer's personality or experimenting with a desired/ideal personality trait. While more research is needed to investigate the remaining variance for preference and build on the current methodology used here, the findings quantified and formalized emotional responses to clothing and the relationships with personality factors. These results have implications on practical applications of a larger scale study in retail service training and provision, strategies for personal shoppers and market segmentation, assistance in consumer clothing decisions, and the potential of predicting choice in a multi-channel retail environment. Through additional development, there is also the potential of developing further understanding between the relationships of design and psychological profiling.

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