A Study on Clothing Consumption Value:
A Qualitative Approach
의복 소비가치에 대한 질적 연구

*Dept. of Fashion Design, Kimpo College
Dept. of Clothing and Textiles, Ewha Womans University
Sun-hee Kim* · Sook-Ja Lim

*김포대학 패션디자인과, 이화여자대학교 의류직물학과
김 선 희* · 임 숙 자
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Abstract

본 연구는 소비자의 실제적인 의복 소비 행동을 설명할 수 있는 가치 개념을 제시하기 위하여 의복 소비가치의 구체적 유형을 밝히고, 적합하고 신뢰성 있는 의복 소비가치 척도를 구성할 수 있는 기초자료를 제시하고자 하였다. 본 연구에서는 Sheth(1991)의 소비가치이론과 의류학 및 소비자 행동분야의 다양한 이론을 토대로 초점집단면접(Focus Group Interview)을 통하여 소비가치에 대한 탐색적 접근을 시도한 결과를 논의하였다.

의복의 구매와 착용의 선택상황에 영향을 미치는 소비가치는 Sheth(1991)의 5가지 소비가치 유형인 기능적 가치, 사회적 가치, 감정적 가치, 진귀적 가치, 상황적 가치 및 의복 제품의 특성에 따른 자기표현적 가치로 분류되었다. 기능적 가치는 물리적 속성, 물리적 기능, 도구적 성과와 관련되었으며, 사회적 가치는 사회계층, 준거집단, 인구통계적 특성집단, 문화-민족적 집단과의 관련성에 대한 가치로 구성되었다. 감정적 가치는 긍정적, 부정적 감정 및 심미성 요인으로 구성되었으며, 진귀적 가치는 다양성추구행동 요인 및 유행성의 새로움 추구 요인과 관련되었다. 또한 상황적 가치는 의복착용상황, 구매상황, 커뮤니케이션 상황으로 구성되었으며, 자기표현적 가치는 성격, 이미지 표현, 개성추구, 유행추구 등의 요인으로 구성되었다. 본 연구의 이러한 결과를 바탕으로 소비가치에 대한 양적 연구를 실시한다면, 보다 객관적인 구조를 파악하고 신뢰성 있는 측정문항을 개발할 수 있을 것이다.

Key words: clothing consumption value, qualitative approach; 의복소비가치, 질적연구방법

I. Introduction

Since value is a persistent belief and plays a role in justifying behavior, it has been perceived as the potential power that can influence the behavior of consumption(Pitts & Woodsides, 1983). Therefore, many studies on value have been performed in diverse areas. However, since these general values were comprised of abstract and universal contents, they had limitations in the prediction of behavior when faced by real life consumption. To solve this problem, Sheth, Newman and Gross(1991a)

published a study on consumption values that are related to human consumption activities. Consumption value has since been considered the most influential factor in the consumers decision making process. The Consumption theory's background of being influenced by diverse studies throughout it' s making, gives it a significant meaning, it can provide a wide and generalized view of the market. But the theory of consumption value has a weakness, because the theory was derived by combining glossaries of diverse disciplines and by integrating study results that used different experiment methods, it is too ambiguous to interpret and divide each single value. Therefore, further research is required for more precise definition and classification.

In the field of clothing & textiles, studies on value have been constantly done. However, these studies demonstrate general values on the relationship between clothing values and clothing behavior variables based on general values, so the effect of value on practical product valuation and purchasing behavior has not been determined precisely. Though there are two kinds of values; one is general value and the other is value associated with specific behaviors(Vinson, Scott & Lamont, 1977), only few studies on specific values related to consumption patterns have been implemented. And even in these kinds of research, the type of consumption values that can vary depending on the quality of the product has been ignored.

Therefore, it can be said that a more specific and precise definition of the concept of consumption values that induces clothing consumption behaviors should be established. It is also necessary to do exploratory research that can derive the diverse and comprehensive meaning embedded in consumers. This kind of study will provide a more useful concept for value by

explaining the consumer' s behavior through the concept of clothing consumption value, and it will specify the customer' s abstract value structure more clearly. Also, by making clear the actual identity of the values associated with clothing consumption behavior, we can utilize this as an appropriate and reliable reference data to determine the criteria of clothing consumption values.

II. Literature Review

1. Study on Values in the Field of Clothing

Researchers in the field of clothing have been interested if values can effect peoples concern, interest and behavior. The study of the relation between value and clothes have been constantly studied since the value measuring method was first developed in the early 1930s. The research can be classified based on its content as the following.

First, there were researches(Dunlap, 1971; Kaigler-Walker & Ericksen, 1989; Yoo Hee, 1995) on the relationship between general values and clothing values. The result showed a positive correlation between the two. Second, there were researches(Creekmore, 1963; Horn & Gurel, 1981) on the relationship between general or clothing values and clothing consumption behaviors. The result showed varying degrees of difference, based on values like consumer' s assimilation desire, self-expression desire and interest in beauty. Third, there were more specific researches(Goldsmith, Heitmeyer & Frieden, 1991; Richards & Hawthorne, 1971) on the relationship between general or clothing values and specific variables. The result showed that variables such as general values, physical satisfaction and fashion leadership have statistical relations.

Considering the research activities so far, it is understood that studies on value in the clothing

field have focused on the general value measures developed by Allport, Vernon and Lindzey(1951) and the clothing value developed by Creekmore(1963). However, these value measures contain abstract and implicit contents, providing limitations on explaining clothing consumption behaviors.

2. Concept and Type of Consumption Value

Sheth(1991a) insisted that, the consumption value is the dominant factor in the consumer's decision making, and classified it into 5 categories.

The functional value means the benefit perceived by consumers on the practical or physical performance of the products. Many researchers have employed function(Kim, 1998), price(Kim, 1994) and quality(Sung, 1998) as the determining criteria of the functional value. The social value means the value associated with the particular group consuming the products, which can represent a sense of belonging and attachment to the group. The social value is affected by social influence variables, such as social class(Gilbert & Khale, 1982) and reference groups(Hirschman, 1985). Also, the emotional value means the benefit of feelings or emotional state generated by owning a specific product compared to owning other products, which is recognized by the consumers. The emotional value plays an influential role in many market choice situations(Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Emotions driving market choice are often positive ones, such as nostalgia and excitement, but negative emotions like fear and guilt also motivate choice. The epistemic value means the benefit associated with the curiosity and novelty provided by the products. The desire for novelty, variety, and exploration are well documented as motivating human behavior (Rogers, 1979). The conditional value means the consumption value associated with the particular circumstances that

induce purchasing. A growing base of empirical research exists relevant to situational effects and consumer choice. In social psychology, Bishop and Witt(1970) examined situational effects as they impact choice of leisure activities.

The previous research that concentrates on the consumption value by Sheth(1991) includes the analysis of the relationship between consumption value and product choice and the analysis of the relationship between the consumption value and specific variables. However, this research did not try to analyze the type of consumption value that can vary, depending on the character of the product. Clothing is a product that has composite and multi-faceted characteristics, so it is necessary to do research considering these properties and consumer decision circumstances.

III. Method

1. Selection of the Research Method

All of the research processes were conducted by using the Focus Group Interview. The qualitative research method has limitations in the generalization of research results. However, since we have no prototype reserch to deal with the concept of consumption value as a clothing consumption value, consumption values embedded in the consumer were approached by using qualitative research method.

2. Research Process

1) Interview Targets

Male and female university students were selected as the interview targets. Participants belonged to a similar age range, but had no acquaintance with each other. And to prevent the occurrence of the peacock effect(the influence by men who dictate with authority over women), the

group was divided by sex. Considering the universality of the research theme, homogeneity of the targets and the theoretical saturation, the interview consisted of 31 people, 3 male groups and 3 female groups respectively. Interviewees were recruited by open application, nominations and snowball sampling.

2) Structure of the Questionnaire

The questions took the form of a semi-structured questionnaire. The content of the questions includes general questions that follow the generalized questionnaire form developed by Sheth(1991b). Specific questions include: What are the deciding factors when buying or wearing clothes? What are the conditions you consider when choosing clothes? In what situations do you choose clothes, because they seem new, different or intriguing? What people group do you consider when selecting clothes? What image do you look for when choosing clothes? What are the benefits and problems with buying and wearing clothes?

3) Process of the Interview

At the interview, the purpose of the research was explained. It started from general affairs and was extended to the research theme. The questions used daily words and were simple with proper instructions. It was made to make interviewees talk a lot about their experiences. The social interaction and value-neutral gestures and comments were delicately handled. The interview was conducted at the university laboratory, it is considered as a neutral environment.

4) Data Collection and Compilation

The interviewer took a brief summary and the assistant wrote and recorded all of the conversation(kruger, 1994). The condensed account was prepared for compilation of the data and was used as a reference material(Spradley, 1979). The expanded account, which is a written version of the whole interview(Spradley, 1979), was read by the researcher and 3 research assistants to extract the core believes, including the importance and decision criteria concerning individual clothing consumption(kruger, 1994). In the first step, 270 questions were extracted from the compilation results, collecting questions that the interviewees answered more than once. In the second step, if one sentence contained contents that were different in meaning, the appropriate content was classified as a different item and contents that researchers & research assistance couldn' t classify are classified under consultation. Representative words were chosen in the designation of items, and the same or similar items were grouped together. As a result, a total of 159 items were extracted.

IV. Results & Discussion

1. Types of Clothing Consumption Values

The 159 items classified as clothing consumption values were finally reclassified into 6 categories, based on the theory of consumption values by Sheth(1991a) and on preceding researches of related fields. It has been classified to five categories defined by Sheth(1991a), functional value, social value, emotional value, epistemic value and conditional value. Also, 38 items, excluding the items that comply with the consumption theory, were designated as the value of self-expression.

Though the physical properties, including price, brand and design, could be associated with the functional values through theoretical studies, they were classified as a different value based on the their meaning.

Fashion, an important aspect of clothing was classified as a consumption value or separated, based on the Sheth' s theory. And items related to fashion, such as personality expression, fashion pursuit and items related to image expression were all classified as a self-expression value. In addition, items like "Is the design good?" or "Is the design exemplary?" were excluded, because they were too abstract and inclusive.

2. Interpretation of the clothing consumption value by type

1) Functional Value

The functional value is composed of 20 items associated with the physical characteristics of clothing like quality and attributes〈Table 1〉. According to preceding studies in the field of clothing, the physical characteristics of clothing have primarily been related to the concept of

quality. In the concept of quality, the physical function includes the physical attributes that are specific and essential properties clothing have as a product, the physical functions obtained from these elements and the instrumental performance obtained from using the clothing(Lenon & Fairhurst, 1995). Also, the physical characteristics are closely related to the attributes of the product. Since the attributes of the clothing overlaps with the concept of quality, this research focused on the concept of quality.

Traditionally, the functional value has been considered the most important factor for consumers in choosing the brand, and many researchers have employed function, design, price and service as the determining criteria of the functional value. In this research, these physical characteristics are also reflected as important functional value items and constitute more diverse

Table 1. Functional Value Items of the Clothing

Classification		Items	
Physical Characteristics	Physical Attributes	Does the size fit?	Fitness
		Is the design excellent?	Design
		Is the color nice?	Color
		Is the stitching done well?	sewing
		What is the country of origin?	Country of Origin
		What quality are the subsidiary materials?	Subsidiary Materials
	Physical Functions	Is it difficult to launder?	Launderability
		Does it absorb perspiration well?	Hygroscopicity
		Is it flexible?	Flexibility
		Does it provide ventilation and warmth?	ventilation/keep warm
		Does it fluff easily?	Fluffiness
		Does it discolor easily?	Discoloration
		Does the shape transform easily?	Shape Stability
		Is it durable?	Durability
		Is it suitable for activity?	Suitability for Activity
	Instrumental Performance	Is it cheap in comparison with quality?	Economic efficiency
		Does it blend well with existing clothing?	Usefulness
		Does it have an enduring design?	Practical Usefulness/Economics
		Does it complement the weakness of appearance?	Complement our
		Does it strengthen the merits of appearance?	physical weakness

items, due to the product characteristics belonging to the composite clothing.

2) Social Value

The social value is related to the specific groups that consume the product, it consists of 33 items associated with social influence variables, such as

social classes, reference groups, demographic groups, cultures⟨Table 2⟩.

The demographic group was classified into age, grade, region, status and the reference group was classified into family, friends, opposite sex, school peer group, circle members and symbolic aspiration groups. The classification also included the social

Table 2. Social Value Items of Clothing

Classification		Items
Social Class		Does it make me look like a person from a good family? Does it make me look like a wealthy person? Does it make me look like a socially successful person? Does it enhance me(in view of social and economic aspects) Is it appropriate for the economic level of my family?
Reference Group	First Unofficial Group	Will friends accept it? Is it favorite style of friends? Will friends consider it appropriate? Will parents like/hate the style? Will it be well suited to the opposite sex? Will the opposite sex like it? Will it give a good impression to the opposite sex?
	First Official Group	Is it similar to the style of fashionable students in my department?
	Secondary Official /Unofficial Group	Does it blend in with the community(hobby circle)? Is it similar to the style of fashionable students in my peer group?
	Symbolic Aspiration Group	Is it similar to the style of popular entertainers(singers, talents)?
	Normative Influence factor	Does it give the impression of courtesy? Will it receive good evaluation(treatment, acceptance, goodwill) from others? Does it score high with society? Does it look old-fashioned? Does it have a universal design not against social values? Does it blend well with people around?
Demo graphic Group		Is it appropriate for a university student? Does it make me look older or younger? Is it suitable for my age? Is it popular among my peer group? Does it have a style that elder people like? In what area(Kangnam or Kangbuk) is it popular? Does it give the impression of Seoul or a rural atmosphere?
Cultural ethnic Group		Does it have any peculiar design representing a particular country? What country's image(style) does it have? (U.S., Japan, Europe) Is it outmoded compared with contemporary culture? Does it make me look like a person of ideal outer appearance(physical shape) in the 21st century?

class, based on social economic criteria and cultural-ethnic groups. The interviewees considered the social value that brings about the sense of belonging and attachment to these groups as a very important value in choosing the clothing.

Many research results from preceding studies related to social influence variables represent how important the social value is in the consumer's decision behavior(Jenkins, 1973; Kotler, 1988). Also, as a group affecting the individual's attitude the reference group turned out to be a factor at influencing diverse behaviors, including the choice of clothing(Vener & Hoffer, 1965), the source of ideas(Kelley, Geiger & Bailey, 1975), evaluating style of the clothing(Davis & Miller, 1983). On the other hand, in the study of Moore(1993), the preferences for the brand, attitude toward shopping and habit depended on the demographic property. Which explained the influence of the cultural factors.

3) Emotional Value

The emotional value is classified into 31 items of positive feelings, 11 items of negative feelings and 2 items of aesthetics ⟨Table 3⟩.

According to the preceding research about feelings, it has been demonstrated that the marketing mix of advertising and the atmosphere provoked an emotional response in consumers,

resulting the purchase of the product(Kotler, 1988; Park & Young, 1986). Also, Kim(1994) proposed that emotional value is the value that provokes the feeling of comfort, excitement, anger, romance and fear and can be applied to music, art, religion and products for self-image construction. So an emotional value on deciding clothes may be a consumption value related with positive or negative emotions from clothing consumption.

This emotional value is not a rational information processing procedure, but it is believed to be related to the experiential view which emphasizes the importance of consumption experiences. Sensual consumption not only has an evaluative aspect of simple liking or dislike, as a consumer's behavior related to individual multi-sensual, fantastic and sentimental aspects on the products, but also shows diverse emotional feelings, including affection, hatred, fun and boredom(Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982).

Researchers in the field of clothing obtained findings, in studies on feeling, that the emotional response affected the intention of the purchase (Kim, 1997). On the other hand, aesthetics which is a variable of clothing importance by Creekmore (1963) gives an experiential and emotional aspect on the clothing, and can be considered as an emotional value.

Table 3. Emotional Value Items of Clothing

Classification	Items
Positive Feelings	Does it make me feel(satisfaction, Feeling of being newly-born, Refreshing feeling, Release of stress, Coziness, Euphoria, Thrill, Pleasure, Fun, Pride, Self-confidence, Dignity, Delight, Sense of achievement, Superiority, Merriment, Freedom, Stability, Fantastic Feeling, Gratification, Joy, Expectation, Beating of the Heart, Freshness/Niceness, Vitality/Vivacity, Sense of compensation, Excellence, Reliability, Hope, Favorable impression)
Negative Feelings	Does it make me feel(Sense of isolation/distance, Anger/Worries, Gloominess, Emptiness, Sense of betrayal, Regret, Envy, Fear, Boredom/Monotony, Repugnance, Sense of Retardation)
Aesthetics	Does it make me feel(Prettiness, Stylishness)

Therefore, the emotion of the clothing can be both diverse and ample, and it consists of not just single, but multiple, dimensions of consumer preferences.

4) Epistemic Value

The epistemic value was classified into 11 items, such as focusing on the behavior of variety seeking related to pursuit of novelty, curiosity, boredom, change of taste and fashion factors.

Sheth(1991b) proposed in the theory of consumption values that the epistemic value was formed under the influence of theories like the behavior of variety seeking, searching and marvel pursuit. The result of the interview also showed that consumers cherished these elements as an important value in deciding clothes. This means, consumers motivated by the epistemic value can purchase the corresponding brand without having any desire from other values. A study by Haines(1966) found 15 percent of respondents indicated that they had bought a product simply because it was new.

The curiosity awakening and the development of new products is closely related to fashion. Factors related to fashion can be associated with the

epistemic value as peculiar attributes of the clothing products.

5) Conditional Value

The conditional value deemed important for choosing clothing was classified into 15 items based on 3 circumstances; including the clothing wearing conditions, purchase conditions and communication conditions⟨Table 5⟩.

Researchers in the field of consumer behavior insisted that the type of product purchased depended on the circumstances in which the product is used(Belk, 1975). They also argued that, In the decision making process, the consumption condition and purchase condition had an effect on the product choices(Stanton & Bonner, 1980). Rokeach(1968), in social psychology, maintained that behavior toward an object depends both on attitude toward the object and attitude toward the situation. That is, it can be verified that the conditional value associated with the particular circumstances has an effect on the consumption behavior of the clothing.

On the other hand, a number of authors from various branches of psychology have attempted to provide comprehensive taxonomies of situational

Table 4. Epistemic Value Items of the Clothing

Classification		Items
Behavior of variety seeking	Pursuit of novelty Replacement with unfamiliar alternative	Is it a new style never seen before?
		Is it a new brand?
		Is it made of new material(Hi-tech material)
	Curiosity	Does it provoke curiosity?
		Is its atmosphere esoteric?
		Are the design, material and color peculiar?
	boredom	Do you get bored with the clothing you've already had?
	change of taste	Does it change my style or image?
		Does it free me from everyday monotony?
Fashion	Pursuit of novelty	Is it a new fashion this season?
		Is it leading the new fashion?

Table 5. Conditional Value Items of Clothing

Classification		Items
Clothing wearing condition	Event	Is it suitable for a particular event? (wedding ceremony, meeting, date)
	Meeting	Is it suitable for a particular gatherings? (Family gathering, alumni meeting)
	Place	Is it suitable for a particular place?(Outdoors, church, concert, exhibition)
	Task	Is it suitable for a particular task?(Study, hobby)
	Period	Is it suitable for a particular period?(Examination Period)
	Time	Is it suitable for a particular time?(Day/Night)
	Target	Is it suitable for a particular meeting? (boy/girl friend, acquaintance or stranger)
	Weather	Is it suitable for particular weather?
	Season	Is it suitable for a particular season?
Purchasing condition	Purchasing condition	Current economic ability?
		How is the relationship with the opposite sex?(bad mood, separated)
		Is the price fixed or can it be haggled?
		Is it on sale in a shop?
Communication condition		Is it nicely displayed in the shop?
		Have you seen it in a magazine or TV advertisement?

characteristics. As for the studies on the conditional value, too many wearing or purchasing conditions are derived from the classification criteria of the general conditions. But, consumers are inclined to simplify the many circumstances and show a consistent response pattern toward specific circumstances(Belk, 1975).

In this study, conditions have been identified and classified according to the above mentioned theory. All Classifications, Clothing wearing condition, Purchasing condition and the Communication condition should also conform with those of Hansen(1972).

6) Self-expressive Value

Consumption values related to character and image expressions, personality expressions and fashion pursuits were designated as self-expressive value and was classified into 36 items.

Such close elements in fashion as pursuit of novelty, conformity, personality expression and pursuit of fashion were separately classified,

according to the consumption value theory. That is, the pursuit of the novelty was classified as the epistemic value of utility associated with the novelty provided by the products, and conformity was classified as the social value associated with a particular group consuming the products and represents the value that can evoke a sense of belonging to the group.

Interviewees emphasized that the potential of image, character and ego could be expressed through clothing. These results support previous study results that consumers prefer clothing that provides an identical image with his own notion.(Sirgy, 1982) and that the realistic and ideal self image matches the preferred brand' s image(Dolish, 1969). That is, abstract and idealistic images have an effect on the consumer' s behavior, attitude and value. Looking at the theory of consumption values by Sheth, the items from self-expressive values have no exact matching value but many interviewees referred to this. Therefore, it is necessary to do a quantitative research to ascertain which

Table 6. Self-expressive Value Items of Clothing

Classification	Items	
Expression of character and image	Does it express my image?	Does it express the image I prefer?
	Does it have an intellectual image?	Does it have an active image?
	Does it have a chaste and haughty image?	Does it have a modest image?
	Does it have a progressive or conservative image?	
	Does it have a positive or negative image?	Does it have a clumsy image?
	Does it have a high-class image?	Does it have a crude image?
	Does it have a luxurious image?	Does it have a male or female image?
	Does it have a sexy image(sensational)?	Does it have a stylish image?
	Does it have a sincere image?	Does it represent my way of thinking?
	Does it represent my will?	Does it represent my character?
	Does it represent my attitude toward life(free and conviction-oriented life)?	
	Does it make me look like a person of confidence?	
	Does it make me look like a sociable person?	
	Does it make me look like a narrow-minded person?	
	Does it make me look like a courageous person?	
	Does it make me look like a commanding person?	
	Does it make me look like a versatile person? (study, play)	
	Does it have a style well suited to my character? (calm, liberal)	
	Is it well suited to my countenance(face, physical shape)?	
Pursuit of personality	Is it a new fashion not yet spread to others?	
	Is it hard to imitate?	
	Is it characteristic clothing differentiating me from others?	
	Can it attract the eye of other people?	
	Does it have a uniform design that is too common?	
	Can it represent my personality, though it is very popular?	
Pursuit of fashion	Does it reflect any of the current fashions?	
	Is it the most recent fashion?	

consumption values these items actually belong.

V. Conclusion & Suggestion

The purpose of this research was to clarify the diverse and comprehensive concepts of consumption values embedded in the consumer and to identify the type of consumption values by a qualitative approach.

The 159 item classified as clothing consumption values were reclassified into 6 types. It has been classified to 5 types defined by Sheth(1991a), functional value, social value, emotional value, epistemic value and conditional value. Also, items,

excluding the items that comply with the consumption theory, were designated as the self-expression value. Therefore, it is necessary to do a quantitative research to ascertain which consumption values these items actually belong.

By using the results from the focus group research as a cornerstone for a quantitative research, it can provide reliability and validity to measurement items.

Several suggestions we got from this research for following future studies are as follows.

First, it is necessary to define relationships by expanding the range of research participants to include more diverse age groups and professions.

Second, since this research was confined to consumption values affecting the purchase and use in the first step of the consumer's choice, it is necessary to investigate the consumption values that affect the choice of product type and brand. Third, it is necessary to do a research that clears the path and the relation between clothing consumption values, actual deciding of clothing and purchasing decision of clothing. Fourth, it is necessary to examine related variables that can verify and enhance their usefulness as consumer behavioral variables in clothing consumption values.

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