

A Study of Korean-American Consumers' Fashion and Shopping Behavior Based on a Bidimensional Model of Acculturation

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이차원적 문화적응이론을 토대로 한 한국계 미국인 소비자들의 패션 및 쇼핑행동에 관한 연구

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Abstract

This study assumes a bidimensional model of acculturation theory in order to understand the acculturation patterns of Korean-Americans and their fashion and shopping behavior. Bidimensional models of acculturation suggest that acculturating individuals may possess the components of both the heritage culture and the new, host culture. A combination of email and paper and pencil surveys was conducted with a convenience sample of Korean-Americans who are living in Seattle and vicinity area ($n=108$). The questionnaire included questions related to the respondents' and their parents' demographic information, the respondents perceived relationship with their parents, self-reported ethnic identification, ethnicity-related behaviors/attitudes, clothing involvement, shopping motivations, and fashion reference groups. The results support the bidimensional models of acculturation process as opposed to the linear model. Three different groups among Korean-Americans based on their ethnic identification pattern were found: a group with dominant Korean identity(Segregation group), a group with dominant American identity(Assimilation group), and a group with dual identity(Integration group). According to the results of MANOVA and subsequent Duncan and Scheffé tests, the Integration group showed distinct characteristics from Segregation group or Assimilation group, in terms of their ethnicity-related behaviors/attitudes, clothing involvement, shopping motivations, and fashion reference group influence.

Key words: Bidimensional acculturation model, Korean-American, Fashion behavior, Shopping behavior; 이차원적 문화적응이론, 재미한국인, 패션행동, 쇼핑행동

I. Introduction

With globalization, more people come into contact with different cultures and take on some of the cultural characteristics of the culture they newly encounter. This process of cultural transition in which "continuous contact between two or more societies causes cultural changes"("Acculturation", 2000, p.1) is called accultur-

ation. Acculturation has become a popular topic among social scientists as well as retailers or marketers who want to cater to the increasing number of migrating population(Kang & Kim, 1998; Shim & Chen, 1996).

Although many consumer researchers have studied acculturation in relation to ethnic minorities' shopping behavior(Kang & Kim, 1998; Lee & Um, 1992; Shim & Chen, 1996), most of these studies assumed

linear perspectives of acculturation. In this linear perspective, it was believed that individuals should relinquish some of the characteristics of their origin culture in order to adopt the new culture. However, evidence exists that consumers are unlikely to fully reject their heritage culture in order to be assimilated into the host culture. In the acculturation studies, bidimensional models in which individuals are allowed to possess the components of both their heritage culture and the new culture, have been accepted increasingly as an alternative and almost replaced the unidimensional conceptualizations since the late 1980s (Ben-Shalom & Horenczyk, 2003). Therefore, this trend calls for an attention of consumer researchers to the applicability of bidimensional perspectives in studying ethnic minorities' shopping behavior.

This study aims a) to apply a bidimensional perspective of acculturation to categorize Korean-American consumers, and b) to examine the difference among acculturation sub-groups in terms of their fashion and shopping behavior. Although Asian-Americans have been recognized as important consumer groups with large purchasing power (Kang & Kim, 1998), Korean-Americans are one of the least studied consumer groups among Asian-Americans despite their size and importance as a consumer group. According to the most recent U.S. census, Korean-American population in the U.S. is over 1 million, which makes it among the largest five Asian-American ethnic groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The majority of Korean-Americans arrived in the U.S. after the Immigration Reform Act of 1965 already well educated and economically established (Huh, 1998; Huh & Kim, 1984). For this reason, they were able to achieve economic success in a relatively short period of time after arrival (Kim & Naughton, 1993). These characteristics suggest Korean-Americans' importance as a consumer segment.

II. Review of Literature

1. Models of Acculturation

Traditional models of acculturation have assumed

a linear or unidimensional perspective, in that acculturation is considered as a linear process with a state of complete acculturation at one end and a state of unacculturation at the other end (Hair & Anderson, 1972). According to this model, the level of acculturation is determined by whether the indigenous culture dominates or the cultural heritage dominates individuals' behavior. This conceptualization assumes that as an individual adopts characteristics of a new culture, they relinquish those of the origin culture. One of the criticisms on this perspective is that many immigrants tend to keep their ethnic characteristics rather than completely assimilate into the host culture, thereby making the host culture diverse.

An alternative acculturation model to the linear model is a bidimensional model (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). In this model, the new culture and the previous culture are positioned as two cross-sectional dimensions. According to this model, individuals possess the components of both cultures, rather than rejecting their heritage culture as they adopt the new culture. This new pluralistic orientation has been accepted increasingly and replaced the unidimensional conceptualizations since its introduction (Ben-Shalom & Horenczyk, 2003).

<Fig. 1> shows the four forms of acculturation attitudes that have been identified by scholars who advocate bidimensional models of acculturation (Berry, 2001; Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Lee et al., 2003). When immigrants value their cultural heritage and try to maintain it and seek social interaction with the host culture at the same time, their acculturation attitude is defined as *Integration* strategy. When individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural heritage yet pursue positive relationship with the host society, their acculturation attitude is defined as *Assimilation* strategy. In comparison, if individuals wish to maintain their cultural heritage and do not seek social interaction with the host culture, then their acculturation attitude is called *Segregation* strategy. Finally, *Marginalization* occurs when the immigrants have little interest in maintaining their heritage culture or it is not possible that the cultural heritage can be maintained, yet at the same time they have no

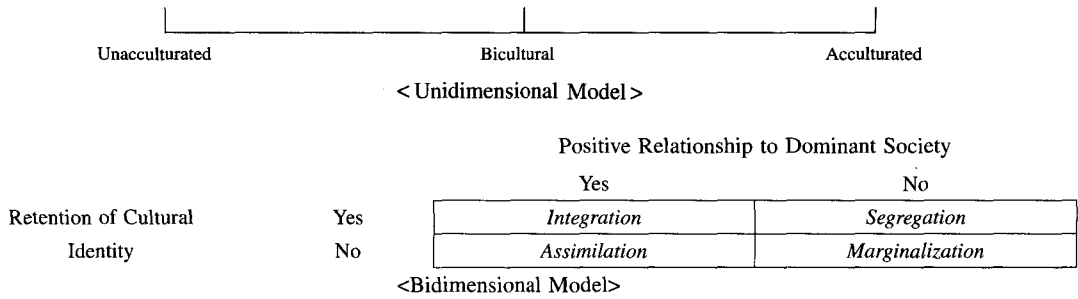


Fig. 1. Two Models of Acculturation (Keefe & Padilla, 1987)

interest in interacting with the host society.

According to Berry(2001), some forms of acculturation attitudes, i.e., integration can occur only when the individuals of the immigrant groups are allowed to choose how to engage in intercultural relations. In a multi-cultural society like the U.S. this condition is usually met. Scholars found modern immigrants to the U.S. show a tendency of keeping their own cultural heritage as they adopt the new culture(Kang & Kim, 1998). When the authors asked Asian-Americans in our preliminary interviews to identify themselves as either one's original ethnic nationality or American, some respondents were reluctant to identify themselves as either of the groups. This seems to support bidimensional model in explaining the acculturation of Korean-Americans.

2. Acculturation and Fashion and Shopping Behavior

Since not enough research has been conducted on Korean-American consumers, the literature reviewed includes studies on Asian-Americans in general. In the acculturation research regarding immigrants from Asian culture, the dominant trend was to compare them with Caucasian-Americans along the dimension of collectivism versus individualism. The collectivist nature of Korean-Americans was demonstrated in their reference groups and clothing involvement. Korean-Americans are more likely to be influenced by word-of-mouth(Lee & Um, 1992) and by family or relatives than remote individuals such as celebrities(Choe, 1984), and value confor-

mity in dress(Cheng, 2000) compared to Caucasians.

Differences in fashion or shopping behavior were found not only in relation to other ethnic groups, but also among Asian-Americans by their levels of acculturation(Kang & Kim, 1998; Shim & Chen, 1996; Tan & McCullough, 1985). In general, the individuals who are more acculturated to the host culture seem to become more confident in shopping and appreciate convenience in shopping. For example, Kang and Kim found that the more acculturated Asian-Americans considered convenience in shopping important. Lee(2001) found that the more acculturated individuals are more self-confident and more catalog oriented. Literature on Chinese-Americans also found that those who are more acculturated in the US culture, were less quality- and price-oriented and more image-oriented(Tan & McCullough, 1985); more involved in shopping(Shim & Chen, 1996); less involved in aesthetics and conformity aspects of dress(Cheng, 2000).

III. Research Questions

As was mentioned above, few studies have adopted bidimensional models in studying the effect of acculturation on ethnic minority consumer behavior. This current study thus aims to:

1. Categorize Korean-American consumers into groups showing different types of acculturation pattern based on a bidimensional perspective of acculturation.
2. Examine the difference among acculturation

sub-groups in terms of fashion reference group influence, clothing involvement, and shopping motivation.

IV. Research Method

1. Research Instrument

A survey questionnaire was constructed based on existing literature on ethnic identity, acculturation, and fashion-related behavior. The questionnaire was approved by Washington State University Institutional Human Subject Review Board. The questionnaire included questions related to the respondents' and their parents' demographic information, ethnic identity, clothing involvement, shopping motivations, and fashion reference groups. All questions were asked in English.

In order to determine the acculturation level of the respondents, questions that measure respondents' association with American culture and Korean culture were included. Based on the previous research (Cheng, 2000; Kang & Kim, 1998; Suinn et al., 1992), five domains of acculturation factors that are considered to be related to fashion and shopping behavior were chosen: ethnic group identification, language usage, media consumption, food consumption, and socializing groups.

The ethnic group identification, or self-designated ethnicity, is a commonly used scale to measure the ethnic identity of individuals (Cheng, 2000; Phinney, 1992). The concept is usually measured by a single item scale with heritage identity and the new identity at either end. However, in our study, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they identify themselves as Koreans on a 7-point Likert scale (7='100% Korean', 1='0% Korean') and also the extent to which they identify themselves as American on another 7-point scale (7='100% American', 1='0% American'). These two items were used to identify the extent to which respondents maintain their cultural identity and the extent to which they want to adopt American identity. For other domains of acculturation, questions were asked on 5-point Guttman type scales.

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with each of the statements related to ethnicity-related behavior or attitude.

Fashion and shopping behavior variables that are found to be related to acculturation in previous research were chosen: fashion reference group, clothing involvement, and shopping motivation. Measure of fashion reference group influence included a series of questions addressing the level of importance that different groups' opinion plays while the individual is selecting clothing or fashion items. The groups included were family/relatives, friends, coworkers, and celebrities. For the group such as friends, coworkers, and celebrities, separate questions were asked based on different ethnicities such as Koreans, non-Korean Asians, and non-Asian Americans.

Clothing involvement was measured using the scales developed by Lee (2000). The clothing involvement measure consisted of five factors: interest, sign, enjoyment, risk importance, and risk probability. The reliability score for this scale, Cronbach's alpha was .92. The shopping motivation measure (Westbrook & Black, 1985) consisted of 17 items that represent seven factors: anticipated utility, role enactment, negotiation, choice optimization, affiliation, power and authority, and stimulation. Respondents were asked to indicate how much satisfaction they receive from each of these aspects of shopping (Cronbach's $\alpha=.81$).

2. Participants

A convenience sample was used. The data were collected through Korean-American organizations based in Seattle, Washington or through the acquaintances of the authors. Data were collected by email, through a website, or in person at the socializing events of the organizations using print-version questionnaires. Respondents received a gift valued about \$3.00 for participating in the survey. Out of 115 questionnaires returned, 108 questionnaires were usable. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are listed in (Table 1). This sample only included younger generation Korean-

Americans, in order to control for the age or cohort effects. The ages of the respondents ranged from 18 to 39, with the mean of 24.4. About 60% of the respondents were undergraduate or graduate students and about 25% held professional jobs(i.e., doctors, dentists, teachers, attorneys, engineers, etc.). The respondents were either first- or second-generation Americans.

3. Data Analysis

Using SPSS version 10.1, Pearson's correlation, one-way analysis of variances(ANOVAs) with Duncan multiple comparisons(Question 1), and multivariate analysis of variances(MANOVAs) with Duncan multiple comparisons(Question 2) were conducted for the analysis.

V. Results

1. Acculturation of Korean-Americans

In order to support a unidimensional model, the respondents' associations with Korean culture and American culture have to have a negative relationship(Lee et al., 2003). Therefore, if the relationship between respondents' Korean identity and American identity is either positive or independent, the bidimensional model is supported. According to the data from the present study, the responses to the two scales did not have any correlation($p=.184$), indicating that these two scales measured different concepts (Table 2). In other words, some respondents who rated themselves to be high on Korean identity rated themselves high on American identity as well, sup-

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Demographic Variables	Valid %	Demographic Variables	Valid %
<i>Age</i>		<i>Education level</i>	
- Under 20	32.4	- completed high school	27.1
- 21-25	29.5	- completed college degree	44.9
- 26-30	21.9	- some graduate school	11.2
- 31-35	11.4	- completed graduate school	14.0
- 35 and above	4.8		
<i>Gender</i>		<i>Annual household income</i>	
- Female	37.0	- 20,000 – 29,999	21.3
- Male	63.0	- 30,000 – 39,999	16.0
		- 40,000 – 49,999	10.6
<i>Occupation</i>		- 50,000 – 59,999	8.5
- Undergrad Students	40.2	- 60,000 – 69,999	7.4
- Graduate students	22.3	- 70,000 and above	36.2
- Professionals	26.0		
- Homemakers	4.8	<i>Religion</i>	
- Other	6.7	- Protestant	85.0
<i>Marital Status</i>		- Catholic	9.3
- Single (Never married)	67.0	- Buddhism	2.8
- Single parent	2.8	- None	2.8
- Married	30.2		

Table 2. Ethnic Group Identification

Measures	Mean	Std. Dev.
<i>How would you identify yourself?</i>		
As 0% Korean = 1; As 100% Korean = 7	5.07	1.63
As 0% American = 1; As 100% American = 7	4.50	1.80
Pearson's Correlation $r = -.135$	$p = .184$	

porting a bidimensional model of acculturation.

The participants were categorized into three groups by the median scores obtained using the two ethnic group identification scales: a) a group that indicated stronger Korean identity($n=50$), b) a group that indicated stronger American identity($n=28$), and c) a group that indicated equally strong Korean identity and American identity($n=28$)(Table 3). Based on Keefe and Padilla's(1987) conceptualization, the group that showed equally strong Korean and American identities was considered *Integration* group. The group with stronger Korean identity and the group with stronger American identity were named *Segregation* group and *Assimilation* group respectively. None of the participants were categorized into the *Marginalization* group.

One-way ANOVAs accompanied by Duncan's multiple comparison tests were conducted with the three groups on demographic characteristics and other ethnic identity factors in order to verify that these groups represent the acculturation attitudes as defined theoretically(Keefe and Padilla, 1987). Corresponding to the theoretical definitions of the groups, the *Assimilation* group interacted least with Koreans compared to *Integration* and *Segregation* groups. They currently have significantly less Korean friends($F=9.435, p=.000$); prefer to have less Korean friends($F=9.235, p=.000$) and more friends from other ethnicities($F=4.955, p=.009$).

The *Segregation* group, which was the largest among the three groups($n=43$), was likely to have come to the US when they were older($m=9.12$) than

Table 3. Demographic and Ethnicity-Related Characteristics of the Three Acculturation Groups

	F	Segregation group	Integration group	Assimilation group
Group Size (n)		50	28	28
Korean Identity	16.500***	3.14 ^a	5.36 ^b	5.77 ^b
American Identity	17.524***	5.85 ^b	5.36 ^b	3.09 ^a
Duration in the US	3.110*	16.86 ^a	21.14 ^b	19.25 ^{ab}
Age at the immigration	8.071**	9.12 ^b	3.50 ^a	3.46 ^a
Parents Marital Status				
Father divorced (%)	[20.245] **	0.00	0.00	19.20
Mother divorced (%)	[13.032] **	0.00	4.00	26.90
Parents Ethnic Identity				
Father Identifies as Korean	2.803	5.54	6.54	5.58
Father Identifies as American	8.912***	2.08 ^a	4.05 ^b	3.27 ^b
Mother Identifies as Korean	3.839*	5.21 ^a	6.51 ^b	5.96 ^{ab}
Mother Identifies as American	9.141***	2.24 ^a	4.14 ^b	3.56 ^b
Korean language proficiency	9.783***	3.21 ^a	2.45 ^b	2.53 ^b
Frequency of eating Korean food				
At home	4.369*	3.98 ^a	3.86 ^a	3.26 ^b
At restaurants	.062	3.05	3.07	2.96
Ethnicity of Friends				
Current: Korean	9.435***	4.21 ^b	3.74 ^b	2.93 ^a
Preferred: Korean	9.235***	3.74 ^b	3.33 ^b	2.67 ^a
Preferred: Other ethnicity	4.955**	2.60 ^a	2.70 ^a	3.35 ^b
Korean Media Consumption				
Listen to Korean Music	2.859*	3.52 ^b	2.60 ^a	2.80 ^{ab}

Note. [] Chi-square statistic. * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$.

^a^b Groups with the same letter have means that are not different statistically.

the other two groups ($m=3.50$ and $m=3.46$) and have lived for a shorter duration of time in the US ($m=16.86$). They were associated more with Korean culture in terms of the language ($F=9.783$, $p=.000$), foods ($F=4.369$, $p=.000$), and music ($F=2.859$, $p=.013$) than the other groups.

An interesting aspect of this ethnic group identification pattern is that the average duration in the US was longest for the *Integration* group ($m=21.14$), and they rated their parents as more Americanized than the other two groups did. The three groups were not significantly different in terms of annual household income, occupations, or the time or money spent on fashion products.

2. Fashion and Shopping Behavior

The three groups were compared in terms of their fashion reference group influence, involvement in clothing, and motivations for shopping. Gender was included as a control variable, because it was considered to influence these factors.

For the fashion reference group influence, a multivariate analysis of variance identified a significant difference among the three groups (Hotelling's $T=6.16$; $F=1.64$, $d.f.=26, 138$; $p=.037$). Resonating the results of previous studies that Korean consumers are likely to be influenced more by personal sources than non-personal sources of information (Kang & Kim, 1998),

the results of one-way ANOVAs with post hoc Duncan multiple comparison test revealed that those in the *Segregation* group were significantly more influenced by their family or relatives and by their Korean friends than the other two groups (Table 4).

The Hotelling's T score was significant for both the ethnic group identification group main effect ($T=1.811$; $F=2.113$, $d.f.=24, 56$; $p=.011$) and gender main effect ($T=1.021$; $F=2.467$, $d.f.=12, 29$; $p=.023$). The interaction effect was not significant. Since gender is included only as a control variable, only the results related to ethnic group identification are reported in the paper. The one-way ANOVA results on the twelve factors showed that there were statistically significant differences among the three groups on two clothing involvement factors and one shopping motivation factor.

The *Segregation* group and the *Integration* group scored significantly higher on risk importance and risk probability factors of clothing involvement as compared to the *Assimilation* group, although the *Integration* group was not significantly different from the *Assimilation* group. The *Integration* group had a significantly higher score on choice optimization factor of shopping motivation than the other two groups. The results in general indicate that the *Segregation* group (or those who are less acculturated) tends to be less confident about their clothing choices than the other groups.

Table 4. Fashion Reference Group Influence by Acculturation Group

	F (d.f.)	Segregation group	Integration group	Assimilation group
Fashion Reference Groups				
Overall	2.252*	3.33 ^a	2.73 ^b	2.74 ^b
Family or Relatives	9.973*	3.55 ^a	1.85 ^b	2.48 ^b
Friends Korean	3.390*	3.61 ^a	2.96 ^{ab}	2.65 ^b
Clothing Involvement				
Risk Importance	4.494*	3.58 ^b	3.19 ^{ab}	2.80 ^a
Risk Probability	10.550*	3.32 ^b	2.72 ^{ab}	2.13 ^a
Shopping Motivation				
Choice Optimization	17.326***	4.27 ^a	5.30 ^b	4.00 ^a

Note. * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$

^a^b Groups with the same letter have means that are not different statistically.

VI. Discussion & Conclusion

The results of this study support the bidimensional models of acculturation process as opposed to the linear model. Three different acculturation groups that are showing distinct characteristics were identified among Korean-Americans based on their ethnic group identification pattern: a group with dominant Korean identity (*Segregation* group), a group with dominant American identity (*Assimilation* group), and a group with dual identity (*Integration* group).

Respondents in the *Segregation* group, who identified themselves as Korean rather than American, was a group with Korean-Americans who arrived in the U.S. relatively recently. This group showed behaviors that are least similar to the U.S. consumers. In comparison, the *Assimilation* group, who identified themselves more as American than Korean, was highly assimilated into American cultures compared to the other two groups in many respects.

The most significant contribution of this study is the identification of the *Integration* group, which is a group that has not been discussed previously in consumer research. This group, who scored high on both Korean and American identification scales, comprised about 30% of the sample and possessed unique characteristics. They tended to have lived longer in the US than the other two groups, but possessed many of the characteristics that the group with dominant Korean identity possessed and maintained social contact with Koreans. Yet their fashion and shopping behavior not just averaged those of the two other groups, but were rather uniquely different. They were most Americanized among the three groups in some respect. They were least proficient in Korean language and were least likely to listen to Korean music. They were least influenced by reference groups in general, least influenced by family or relatives and Korean friends, least likely to perceive risk in clothing shopping or consider the risk important, and showed the highest score on choice optimization shopping motivation.

This study has an implication to the retailers that in order to better serve their market needs retailers

who are trying to cater to ethnic minority consumers should understand the complexity of ethnic minority culture. Without fully understanding the diversity among these people and their diverse origin cultures, marketers cannot successfully serve these populations. The average length of duration in the U.S. for the *Integration* group was the longest among the three groups, which implies that not all immigrants are likely to discard their ethnic identity even after a further exposure to the U.S. culture. Hence understanding the lifestyle, value, and behavior of consumers in a multi-cultural society like the U.S. may become increasingly complex. For the future study, we suggest testing the bidimensional models of acculturation with other ethnic minority populations.

One of the limitations of this study is the representativeness of the sample. Since most of the data were collected through Korean-American organizations, it was unable to reach individuals who do not socialize very much with Korean-Americans. Also, professionals and students were over-represented in the data. This might have caused underestimation of the size of *Assimilation* group and overestimation of the size of the *Integration* group. Caution is required in generalizing the findings of this study.

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요 약

이차원적 문화적응이론은 개인이 새로운 문화를 접했을 때 그 문화를 받아들이기 위해서 모문화를 포기하는 것을 가정하는 기존의 일차원적 문화적응이론에 비하여 개인이 모문화와 새로운 문화를 함께 유지할 수 있음을 인정한다. 본 연구는 (1) 이러한 이차원적 관점의 문화적응이론을 바탕으로 한국계 미국인들을 분류하고, (2) 각 하위집단의 패션 및 관련 쇼핑행동을 살펴보는 것을 목적으로 하였다. 미국 워싱턴주에 거주하는 18-39세의 미국 영주권 또는 시민권을 소지한 미국계 한국인 소비자들을 대상으로 인터넷, 우편, 또는 한인회 행사 등을 통하여 설문조사를 실시하여(n=108), 민족정체감, 미국 체류기간, 한국문화에의 참여도, 한인 또는 타민족과의 접촉도 등과 함께 의복에 대한 관여도, 쇼핑동기, 그리고 패션준거 집단의 영향 등을 측정하였다. 한국인으로서의 정체감과 미국인으로서의 정체감에 대한 점수의 중간값을 이용하여 표본집단을 이차원적 문화적응이론에서 정의하는 격리(Segregation) 집단, 동화(Assimilation) 집단, 화합(Integration) 집단으로 구분하였고, 세 집단의 패션 관련 쇼핑 행동을 다중분산분석과 Duncan 다중비교를 통해 살펴보았다. 두 문화적 특성을 함께 지닌 화합집단은 인구통계적인 면이나 민족관련 행동에 있어서는 한국적인 특성을 유지하고 있었으나 패션 및 쇼핑행동면에서는 미국인에 가까운 특성을 보여 동화집단이나 격리집단과는 구별되었다. 이 결과는 이차원적 문화적응이론을 이용하여 패션 소비자들을 이해하는 것이 유용함을 보여준다고 할 수 있다.