

# 의류웹사이트 특성과 충동구매행동의 상관관계에 관한 연구

## The Role of Website Characteristics on Impulse Buying

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### ◀ 목 차 ▶

I. Introduction	IV. Results and Discussion
II. Literature Review	V. Conclusions and Recommendations
III. Method	References

### <Abstract>

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between online apparel impulse buying behavior and apparel website characteristics. The data were collected using an online survey with a structured questionnaire. To recruit participants, online surveys were collected and a total of 236 college students were used in the study. The results of factor analysis showed that website characteristics consisted of two factors (i.e., promotion, product/policy information). The results of MANOVA and multiple regression showed that the impulse purchase group evaluated the website where they bought the last apparel item significantly better in promotion and product/policy information than the non-impulse purchase group. Based on the results, H1, H2, and H3 were supported. The evaluations of the characteristics of websites where impulse purchases and non-impulse purchases of apparel products were made were significantly different.

본 연구의 목적은 의류판매 온라인 쇼핑몰 상에서의 충동구매행동과 의류판매 사이트의 프로모션, 제품/정책 정보간의 관계를 알아보기 위한 것이다. 인터넷 설문지를 통한 데이터 수집을 통해 236부가 본 연구에 사용되었다. 결과 분석 이전에 웹사이트 특성을 분류하기 위해 요인분석을 실시한 결과 웹사이트 특성이 프로모션과 제품/정책 정보로 구분되었다. 연구결과 충동구매를 한 집단의 의류판매 사이트의 프로모션과 제품/정책 정보에 대한 평가가 그렇지 않은 집단보다 높게 나타났고 충동구매집단의 충동구매성향과 의류판매 사이트의 프로모션, 제품/정책 정보에 대한 평가는 정적인 상관관계를 가지는 것으로 나타났다.

**주제어(Key Words):** 충동구매(impulse buying), 웹사이트 특성평가(evaluation of website characteristics), 프로모션(promotion), 제품/정책 정보(product/policy information)

## I. Introduction

Considering the high competition in the apparel market with the increasing number of websites and young consumers' frequent use of Internet shopping (Seok, 2003), a study on young consumers' Internet shopping behavior is important. The research conducted by Forrest Research Inc. showed that 29% of young consumers purchased apparel products via Internet, with the average spending of \$400 per year. This amount has potential to be increased in the future because the young consumers' buying power is increasing rapidly (Shim & Koh, 1997), and many young consumers are now actively participating in shopping for themselves and their families (Kim, 1993; Stipp, 1993). As more young consumers use Internet shopping, there is a growing need to understand young consumers' online apparel shopping behavior. As a result, website characteristics in Internet shopping have gained much attention from the media as well as researchers. Although numerous studies were conducted related to website characteristics, most of the literature on Internet shoppers only focused on the comparison of demographic, psychographic, and behavioral characteristics between shoppers and non-shoppers (McKinney, 2004). There are few studies on the examination of whether certain apparel website characteristics will trigger impulse buying behavior.

Impulse buying is a pervasive aspect of consumers' behaviors and an important strategy for marketing plans (Rook, 1987). Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that are related to consumers' impulse buying behavior. In the study of Bellanger, Robertson, and Hirschman (1978), between 27% and 62% of department store purchases were found to be unplanned purchases. The Du Pont studies, conducted from 1945 to 1965, reported that the proportion of impulse buying behavior increased from 38.2% to 50.0% of total consumer purchases. In Welles (1986) study, nine out of ten shoppers occasionally bought on impulse, and according to the Point-of-Purchase Advertising Institute (POPAI, 1987), 52.6% of buying behavior was defined as impulse buying.

In clothing and textiles area, there are only a few

studies related to impulse buying of apparel products. Han, Morgan, Kotsiopoulos, and Kang-Park (1991) conducted a study on apparel impulse buying behavior of three groups, which were textiles and clothing students, non-textiles and clothing students, and non-student groups. Piron (1993) compared emotional reactions experienced by planned, unplanned and impulse purchases on clothing items. Chen-Yu and Seock (2002) compared impulse and non-impulse adolescent shoppers of clothing purchase motivation, information sources, and store selection criteria. Although previous studies compared the apparel impulse buying behavior between different consumers, little studies were conducted to examine the relationship between apparel impulse buying behavior and apparel website characteristics. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between website characteristics and online impulse buying behavior of young consumers aged 18 to 22.

## II. Literature Review

### 1. Impulse Buying

Previous studies identified numerous factors that were related to impulse buying. The factors can be divided into three categories: individual, situational, and marketing factors. Individual factors were used mostly on early stage of impulse buying studies, including demographic variables, personality traits, normative influence, hedonic shopping value, individual efforts, and knowledge of shopping environment. Situational factors include time and money availability, mood, and other factors such as the time of shopping (day/evening), nature of shopping trip (major/fill-in), existence of a prepared shopping list, shopping party composition (alone/with adults only/with children), and distance traveled to the store. Marketing factors include type and cost of products, store environment, in-store stimuli, and other marketing factors such as classical conditioning, credit cards, cash machines, online retailing.

In recent study by Kim (2003), the relationship between college students' apparel impulse buying behavior and visual merchandising was examined. The results indicated

that visual merchandising techniques of in-store form/mannequin display and promotional signage were significantly related to college students' impulse buying behaviors. In-store stimuli are promotional techniques used to increase impulse buying of products (Abratt & Goodey, 1990). Youn and Faber (2000) found that high impulsive buyers were more reactive to marketing factors such as advertisements, promotional gifts, and visual elements. Abratt and Goodey (1990) also found that in-store stimuli affected impulse buying significantly. Among the stimuli, sign on shelf, price, special displays, point of sales, end-of-aisles displays were accounted for 70% of stimuli that triggered impulse buying in supermarkets. According to Stern (1962) and Kim (2003), consumers' exposure to in-store stimuli triggers impulse buying because in-store stimuli works as a form of information aid and as a reminder to buy something for consumers who enter the store without any planning. In-store stimuli are most often encountered with in-store browsing which is defined as "the in-store examination of a retailer's merchandise for recreational and informational purposes without an immediate intent to buy" (Bloch, Ridgway, & Nelson, 1991, p.14). Jarboe and McDaniel (1987) found that consumers who browsed more did show more impulse buying behavior than non-browsers. Kim (2003) suggested that the reason for Jarboe and McDaniel's results is that as consumers browse longer, they are likely to encounter more stimuli (e.g., promotion) that would lead them to increase possibility of impulse buying behavior.

## 2. Website Characteristics and Impulse Buying

Companies are quickly moving to use Internet as a way of segmenting markets and reaching consumers across the country and around the world interactively at a reasonable cost (Ainscough & Lucken, 1996). Internet has been used for various purposes such as interactive communication, information search, and shopping for product. Some studies investigated the age of Internet users and found that younger consumers were more likely to purchase goods and services on the Internet than older consumers (Donthu, 1999; Lee & Johnson, 2002; Silverman, 2000; Sultan, 2002; Yoh, 1999). In case of apparel products, several problems in Internet shopping

exist due to unique characteristics of apparel, such as being unable to touch or try on apparel before buying (CyberAtlas Trends & Statistics, 2000), inability to see size or appearance (What Do Women, 2001), inaccuracy of apparel color on the screen (Sonnetech, Inc., 1999).

Similar to traditional offline store settings, where physical store attributes are the main characteristics that draw consumers into the store and affect their purchase (Scott, 1985), website characteristics play an important role in attracting consumers to online stores (Seock, 2003). Several researchers found that consumers would evaluate website characteristics during their online shopping and website characteristics played a crucial role in deciding their future purchase decisions (Geissler, 2001; Jarvenpaa & Todd, 1997; Swaminathan *et al.*, 1999). Various website characteristics were studied and identified as important factors influencing online apparel purchases (Allen, 2000; Park, 2002; Seock, 2003; Then & Delong, 1999; Web Retailers' Brand Recognition, 1999); for example, Seock (2003) found that young college consumers perceived their favorite apparel websites contained website characteristics significantly different from other websites.

Regarding studies related to offline store settings, Youn and Faber (2000) found that high impulsive buyers were more reactive to marketing factors such as advertisements and promotional gifts. McGoldrick, Betts, and Keeling (1999) also found that 60 % of respondents did more impulse purchase during seasonal sales. Regarding apparel websites, low price, online promotions, radio or television commercials, and print advertisements were found to be the factors in deciding which website to visit (Web Retailers' Brand Recognition, 1999). Based on these findings and propositions, promotion was proposed to be positively related to online impulse buying behavior in H1.

H1: The evaluation of promotion provided by the websites where impulse purchases and non-impulse purchases of apparel products were made would be significantly different. The websites where impulse purchases were made would provide significantly better deal on promotion than the websites where non-impulse purchases were made.

Park (2002) proposed that detailed online product

description and instruction for product usage can help online apparel consumers to make buying decisions. Detailed product/policy information may help consumers to make immediate purchase decisions. Based on the proposition, product/policy information on a website was proposed to be positively related to online impulse buying behavior in H2.

H2: The evaluation of product/policy information would be significantly different between the websites where impulse purchases and where non-impulse purchases of apparel products were made. The websites where impulse purchases were made would provide significantly more detailed product/policy information than those of the websites where non-impulse purchases were made.

Some of the studies mentioned in the literature review are studies related to offline store settings because there are not many studies focusing on online apparel impulse buying behavior. Although there is no study that examined whether the studies of offline store settings and online store settings are related, it is anticipated that there is a relationship as McKinney (2004) suggested. McKinney proposed that for online shopping, the Internet shopping site in which products are sold is equivalent to the offline retail store because the website shows the merchandise and communicates image to consumers. Based on previous studies, H3 examines how promotion and product/policy information can explain online apparel impulse buying behavior.

H3: Consumers' evaluation of promotion and product/policy information of apparel websites will be significantly related to online impulse buying behavior of apparel products.

### III. Method

#### 1. Instrument Development

A structured questionnaire was developed to collect data on the variables in this study, which are website characteristics and apparel impulse buying behavior. Online shopping experiences were also measured in order to describe general online apparel shopping behavior of the respondents and make sure that they

really had experience in purchasing apparel online.

#### 1) Measure of Website Characteristics

The measure of apparel website characteristics regards respondents' perception of the websites where their last online apparel purchases occurred. Twelve items were first used in the pilot test to evaluate the website characteristics, which represented two dimensions (i.e., promotion, product/policy information). Twelve items were adapted from previous studies on website characteristics (Lohse & Spiller, 1998; Park, 2002; Seock, 2003). Some modifications were made to fit the purpose of this study, such as changing the statements from present tense to past tense to ask respondents' experiences of the website where they made the last online apparel purchases. Website characteristics were measured with a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to neither disagree nor agree (3), to strongly agree (5). Using the responses from the pilot tests, factor analysis was conducted to categorize the items regarding apparel website characteristics. Eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and factor loadings of .50 or greater were set as a criterion. To make sure each item only belonged to one factor, the items that had a factor loading of .50 or greater on more than one factor were also removed (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2004). According to the results, 9 items were included in the final questionnaire and the Cronbach's alpha of the items was .86. Four items measured promotion and five items measured product/policy information.

#### 2) Measure of Online Apparel Shopping Experience and Impulse Buying

In the e-mail prior to seeing the questionnaire, the respondents were asked whether they had experiences in purchasing clothing/accessories from an Internet website, in order to screen out the non-buyers. If the respondents did not have an experience in purchasing clothing/accessories online in the past six months, they were categorized as a non-buyer group and were not included in this study. The measure of impulse buying behavior was used in analyzing the results of H1, H2, and H3. The measurement included five statements adapted from previous studies (Chen-Yu & Seock, 2002;

Han *et al.*, 1991; Jeon, 1990). The response format is a 5-point Likert type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to neither disagree nor agree (3), to strongly agree (5). The Cronbach's alpha was used to measure internal consistency and the results showed a Cronbach's alpha of .70. The average of the five items' scores that measured respondents' impulse buying behavior were used to divide respondents' purchases into impulse purchases and non-impulse purchases. An average score of three was used as the dividing point.

## 2. Subject Selection and Data Collection

The subjects of this study are college students aged 18 to 22, who have previous experience in buying apparel products online. Subjects of this study were selected from the student directory of Colorado State University, and the systematic cluster sampling method was used to select participants. The data was collected using an online survey and e-mail was used to post the survey link to the sample students. E-mails announcing the survey and asking for participation were distributed twice. The initial e-mail included an explanation about the research and the link to the online questionnaire. Four days after the initial e-mail, a follow-up e-mail was sent to encourage those who had not yet completed the survey to fill out and submit the questionnaire soon.

## 3. Data Analysis

The data gathered from the online survey was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 12.0. The reliability of the measure of variables (i.e., website characteristics, online impulse buying behavior) was measured using Cronbach alpha. The data analysis consisted of both descriptive statistics and inference statistics. The descriptive statistics included means, frequencies, and percentiles for obtaining general information of the sample. The inference statistics included factor analysis, Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) and multiple regression analysis. Factor analysis was used to group the items of website characteristics. Factor analysis used in the pilot test was to categorize the items in the measure of website characteristics and the factor analysis used in the result section was to examine the true

characteristics of the larger sample. MANOVA and multiple regression analysis were used to examine the proposed hypotheses. The significance level used to examine all hypotheses was set at the .05 level.

# IV. Results and Discussion

## 1. Return Rate of the Survey

An online questionnaire with an e-mail announcement was sent through e-mails to a systematic sample of 3,600 students at Colorado State University. A total of 732 surveys were received and out of 732, 236 respondents were used in the study. Because this research focuses on students aged 18 to 22, those who did not meet the age criterion or did not purchase an apparel item online in the past six months were dropped from the final data analysis. Among 236 respondents, some of them did not answer all the questions. Therefore, the number of respondents in each part of analysis may vary.

## 2. Construct of Apparel Website Characteristics

Factor analysis on apparel website characteristics was conducted to categorize 9 items. The anti-image correlation matrix contained the negative values of the partial correlations among variables and anti-image correlations values all smaller than 1.00, implying the existence of true factors in the data. The result of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin MSA test was .74 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at .001 level, indicating that the correlation matrix has significant correlations among at least some variables, and thus data on the apparel website characteristics were appropriate for factor analysis.

The Cronbach's alpha value was .86 and the factor solution, derived by principle components factor analysis with varimax rotation, indicated that the two apparel website constructs explained 53.1% of the total variance (see Table 1). Factor 1 (i.e., promotion), consisting of four items related to whether the website provides a good deal on shipping, promotion, and discount. This factor had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .84 and explained 31.9% of the variance. The five items in Factor 2 (i.e., product/policy information) had an alpha coefficient of .76 and explained 21.2% of the variance. The factor of

Table 1. Factor Analysis Results: Promotion and Product Policy/Information Constructs

Factor	Item	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	% of Variance	Alpha Coefficient
Item Total (9 items)				53.1	.86
Promotion	- The website provided a good deal on shipping.	.86	5.84	31.9	.84
	- The website provided a good promotion (e.g., gift, coupon).	.84			
	- The website provided a good discount.	.78			
	- The website had a good deal on clearance sales.	.67			
Product/ Policy Information	- The website had an effective search function.	.80	4.05	21.2	.76
	- The website provided detailed policies for shipping and handling of the products.	.75			
	- The website gave up-to-date information about newly added products.	.60			
	- The website gave information about the fabrics of their products.	.56			
	- I could get information from personal sales assistance by e-mail of 1-800 phone numbers.				

product/policy information included five items on whether the website has an effective search function and provision of up-to-date product information and detailed policy for shipping and handling.

### 3. Results and Discussion of the Hypothesis Testing

MANOVA was used to test main hypothesis H1 and H2. Before conducting MANOVA, the homogeneity of the variance-covariance matrices for the dependent variables was tested, using Box's Test of Equality of Covariance. If Box's Test of Equality of Covariance is significant, then there may be severe distortion in the tests. In this case, only Pillai's trace criterion should be used. The result showed that Box's Test of Equality of Covariance was significant, [ $F(10, 228) = 1.671, p < .05$ ], indicating that the observed covariance matrices were not equal, which violated the assumption of

homogeneity of the variance-covariance matrices. Therefore, only Pillai's trace criterion was used.

The multivariate tests under Pillai's trace criterion revealed that the main effect of impulsiveness of last online apparel purchases on the dependent variables was significant, [ $F(10, 231) = 3.06, p < .01$ ] (see Table 2). At least one of the mean scores of apparel website characteristic constructs was significantly different between the impulse purchase and non-impulse purchase groups. Based on the results, univariate F tests were conducted to test the hypotheses.

#### 1) Hypotheses 1

H1: The evaluation of promotion provided by the websites where impulse purchases and non-impulse purchases of apparel products were made would be significantly different. The websites where impulse

Table 2. MANOVA Results: Differences between the Impulse Purchase Group and Non-impulse Purchase Group

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable Website Characteristics Constructs	Group Means		
		Impulse Purchase Group	Non-Impulse Purchase Group	F-value
Online Impulse Buying Behavior	MANOVA-Pillai's Trace criterion			3.06*
	Univariate F tests			
	Promotion	3.16	2.99	1.58**
	Product/policy Information	4.03	3.13	1.09*

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$ .

purchases were made would provide significantly better deal on promotion than the websites where non-impulse purchases were made.

The univariate F test indicated that the evaluation of promotion differed significantly between the impulse purchase group and non-impulse purchase group ( $p < .05$ ). The mean of promotion was significantly higher in impulse purchase group than in non-purchase group ( $M = 3.16, 2.99$ , respectively). Websites where impulse purchases were made were evaluated significantly higher in promotion than websites where non-impulse purchases were made. Based on the result, H1 was supported. This result is consistent with previous studies which found that high impulsive buyers were more reactive to marketing factors such as advertisements and promotional gifts (Youn & Faber, 2000) and respondents did more impulse purchase during seasonal sales (McGoldrick *et al.*, 1999).

**2) Hypotheses 2**

H2: The evaluation of product/policy information would be significantly different between the websites where impulse purchases and where non-impulse purchases of apparel products were made. The websites where impulse purchases were made would provide significantly more detailed product/policy information than those of the websites where non-impulse purchases were made.

The univariate F test indicated that the evaluation of product/policy information differed significantly between the impulse purchase group and non-impulse purchase group ( $p < .01$ ). The mean of product/policy information was significantly higher in impulse purchase group than in non-purchase group ( $M = 4.03, 3.13$ , respectively). Websites where impulse purchases were made were evaluated significantly higher in

product/policy information than websites where non-impulse purchases were made. Based on the result, H2 was supported.

**3) Hypotheses 3**

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between website characteristics and online impulse buying behavior. The research hypothesis is as follows.

H3: Consumers' evaluation of promotion and product/policy information of apparel websites will be significantly related to online impulse buying behavior of apparel products.

Prior to conducting the multiple regression analysis, regression assumptions were tested. The assumption of the normality of residuals was met based on the residuals' normal distributions in the histogram of residuals. Also, normal probability p-p plot showed that the residuals fell in a fairly straight line. The multiple regression analysis showed that 42.3% of the variance in impulse buying behavior is explained by the twp website characteristics factors (i.e., promotion, product/policy information) ( $R^2 = 0.423$ ). The regression model is significant in explaining online impulse buying behavior [ $F(10, 211) = 5.42, p < .001$ ].

The tests of the relative contributions of the two independent variables to explain impulse buying behavior showed significant t-values for all the independent variables (see Table 3). The two variables (i.e., promotion, product/policy information) were positively related, indicating that these variables positively contribute to impulse buying behavior. The Beta results showed that promotion contributed more in explaining online impulse buying behavior of apparel products (Beta = .399).

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis Results for H3

Variables	Standardized Coefficients		t-value
	Beta		
Promotion	.399		4.061**
Product/Policy Information	.134		2.776*

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$ .

The equation of the multiple regression analysis is as follows.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Online impulse buying behavior} \\ = 3.98 + 2.012 (\text{promotion}) \\ + 1.063 (\text{product/policy information}) \end{aligned}$$

From the results, it is concluded that online impulse buying behavior of apparel products can be explained by promotion and product/policy information. Based on the results, H3 was supported.

## V. Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between apparel website characteristics (i.e., promotion, product/policy information) and apparel impulse buying behavior.

H1 and H2 concerned the difference between impulse buyer and non-impulse buyer groups in their evaluation of website characteristics regarding promotion and product/policy information.

The results of hypothesis 1 showed that impulse buyer group evaluated the websites where they purchased their last online apparel product as having a better deal on shipping, promotion, and discount than non-impulse buyer group. Impulse buying behavior related to promotion are explained by the effect of physical proximity on impulsivity in previous studies (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991; Mischel & Grusec, 1967) Mischel and Grusec (1967), which found that impulsive people tended to make a decision to accept an inferior reward rather than wait for a superior reward when the object of the reward was placed in view. Therefore, for online apparel marketers, it is important to provide consumers with inferior promotional rewards such as gifts, buy one get one free promotion, instant discount when consumers purchase more than certain amount, free shipping rather than asking consumers to accumulate certain amount and wait for the reward, in order to increase impulse buying behavior.

The results of hypothesis 2 showed that impulse buyer group evaluated the websites where they purchased their last online apparel product as having a better product/policy information than non-impulse

buyer group. The result is consistent with the findings from the study of Park (2002), who proposed that detailed product description can help online apparel consumers to make buying decisions. Seock (2003) also found that college student consumers perceived their favorite apparel websites as containing sufficient product/policy information. Detailed product/policy information may help consumers to make immediate purchase decisions and may facilitate impulse buying. Therefore, online apparel marketers should make sure that they provide all the sufficient product/policy information on the website, so that when consumers decide to buy something on impulse, the lack of information would not work as a barrier for impulse buying behavior.

Hypothesis 3 concerned the relationship between website characteristics and impulse buying behavior. The results revealed that online impulse buying behavior could be explained by promotion and product/policy information. The results indicated that impulse buyers evaluated the promotion and product/policy information of the website where they purchased their last apparel item more positively than non-impulse buyers. The results regarding promotion are related to the previous study, indicating that low price, online promotions, radio or television commercials, and print advertisements were the factors in deciding which website to visit (Web Retailers' Brand Recognition, 1999). According to the multiple regression results, online apparel marketers should consider the two variables that are related to impulse buying behavior when creating a marketing strategy to facilitate impulse buying. Rather than asking consumers to accumulate a certain amount of purchases and wait for a reward, it is better to provide customers with instant promotions, such as buy one get one free, an instant discount when consumers purchase a certain amount, free shipping, or free gifts to facilitate impulse buying behavior. Providing convenient search functions to assist customers in finding desired products and making product and policy information available are also strategies that may encourage impulse buying.

Based on the results of this study, the following suggestions for further research are proposed.

First, this study developed two dimensions of apparel



website characteristics. Future study is needed to confirm the constructs of apparel website characteristics using different samples, and use factor analysis to confirm the results.

Second, this study only focused on the discount, shipping, promotions (e.g., coupon, gift) aspects of promotion regarding website characteristics. However, the results showed that other promotion aspects such as advertisements could show difference between impulse buyer group and non-impulse buyer group. Future studies that investigate the relationship between other promotional aspects and online impulse buying behavior are recommended.

Third, some studies regarding offline store were used in developing the items of website characteristics. It is possible that some of the information from offline store studies may not be valid for online study. For the future study, it is suggested to do a comparison study between online and offline stores regarding website characteristics and atmospheric factors to examine if there is a relationship between the two retail settings.

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