

Fashion Involvement: An Instrument Validation Procedure

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Abstract

The purchase of apparel items is classified as a high involvement activity. A majority of the involvement research deals with product-specific measures of involvement. Recently, a general measure of involvement, the Personal Involvement Inventory (PII), was developed to be used across a wide variety of product categories (Zaichkowsky, 1985). One objective of this study was to use the PII to determine women's fashion apparel involvement across two fashion-oriented groups. In addition, the measure's convergent validity was investigated by comparing its performance with two product-specific involvement measures. The sample consisted of two groups, women's specialty store customers (n=220), aged 30-50, and female home economics students (n=103), aged 18-20. Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to both groups. Both groups were more highly involved with apparel than the Zaichkowsky groups were with most other products, cars being the lone exception. Despite its more general form, the PII demonstrated convergent validity in that the intercorrelations between the three involvement measures were significant ($p < .01$). Results indicated that the PII is both a reliable and valid measure of the involvement construct.

The assumption that consumers vary across a broad continuum of product involvement is the basic premise of involvement research (Sproles & King, 1973). The concept of involvement has been identified by numerous researchers as a useful variable in explaining consumer behavior (Bloch, 1981; Cohen, 1983; Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984; Kas-sarjian, 1978; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Mitchell, 1979; Sproles, 1981). Its measurement has involved a wide variety of approaches and instruments with the most recent research focusing on the development of product-specific instruments (Bloch, 1981; Mitchell, 1979). Zaichkowsky (1985) presented a standardized, general, valid, multiple-item measure of the involvement construct. She used the Personal Involvement Inventory to measure involvement with a variety of products and presented evidence to substantiate its reliability and its validity (content, criterion-related, and construct). Zaichkowsky (1985) systematically developed, tested, and used the Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) in the context of a variety of products ranging from instant coffee and bubble bath on the low end to automobiles on the high end of the involvement continuum.

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The purpose of the present study was to investigate the application of the Zaichkowsky (1985) involvement measure in the area of fashion apparel. Two objectives of the research were (1) to use the instrument for one product (women's fashion apparel) across two relatively fashion-oriented groups (customers of women's apparel specialty stores and students taking courses in Home Economics) and (2) to investigate the measure's convergent validity.

The present study extends Zaichkowsky's (1985) work in several ways. First, the PII was used with another product class (women's fashion apparel). Second, the instrument's convergent validity was tested. Zaichkowsky did not investigate the instrument's convergent validity, because no other general measure of involvement exists. When we limit the scope of the investigation to a product class (women's fashion apparel) which has received much coverage in the literature, we can find measures available which capture the essence of the involvement construct. While these measures are typically referred to as "fashion awareness" or "fashion consciousness," they are concerned with the respondent's involvement with fashion apparel. Thus, it was likely that the PII would yield values that vary in a similar manner with fashion consciousness scores.

To some extent, a comparison of the performance of a general measure (such as the PII) with instruments

developed for a particular product class would seem to be biased against the general instrument. However, if the general instrument performed comparably with the other measures, its general nature would allow researchers in the apparel merchandising area the flexibility of broadening the scope of their research somewhat (i.e., to compare across generic product choices which may be competing with apparel for the consumer dollar).

A number of "fashion conscious" measures exist. For the purposes of the study, the fashion involvement index developed by Tigert, Ring, and King (1976) was used. The development of the fashion involvement index was based on previous fashion research which suggested that the overall fashion involvement continuum is composed of five behavioral dimensions. Empirical support and accompanying measure development exists for each fashion dimension (Tigert, Ring, & King, 1976). This measure has been tested using identical sampling procedures with over 30 different populations at different points in time and in various geographical regions. The index used for comparison included three items which measured fashion consciousness and were extracted from a comprehensive list of lifestyle statements.

Robertson (1976) suggested that the strength of one's beliefs about product attributes varies directly with the involvement with the product. Given the importance of shopping to the selection of apparel, one would also expect the strength of one's beliefs about store attributes to vary directly with apparel involvement. Thus, in order to investigate construct validity, the various fashion involvement measures were related to the importance of store attributes.

Methodology

The purposive sample consisted of two groups. The Group I sample consisted of consumers in women's apparel specialty stores. Customer mailing lists were obtained from women's apparel specialty store owners, and 1200 questionnaires were mailed. A total of 220 completed questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 18%. A large percentage (44%) of the 220 respondents were in the 30-to-50 year age group. The majority (66%) had attained some college education. All of the female respondents were employed in some capacity.

Group II was drawn from a convenience sample of 113 students in two sophomore-level consumer studies classes in a midwestern College of Home Economics. As 91% of the students were female and all of the respondents in Group I were female, only the female respondents were included in these analyses for a total of 103. Sixty-eight of the sample were between the ages of 18 and 20. The majority (92%) were Home Economics majors. The largest percentage of students lived in either suburbs or small towns. About 31% were employed in some capacity.

While apparel is likely to be a high involvement product for most women, the nature of the two groups in the sample would lead us to expect very high involvement levels.

Appearance on a store's customer mailing list indicates some degree of past purchase behavior. Previous studies have found a strong, positive relationship between fashion involvement and unit and dollar fashion apparel buying behavior (Lumpkin, Allen, & Greenberg, 1981; Tigert, Ring, & King, 1976). College students, especially those in a stereotypically feminine academic discipline, tend to spend a large share of their discretionary income on clothing. Consumers under the age of 25 spend 6.7% of their incomes on apparel items while older age groups spend between 3.9% and 5.5% on clothing (Bloom & Korenman, 1986). Therefore, caution should be exercised in interpreting the results.

Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to both groups. The questionnaire included the Personal Involvement Index (PII), the Tigert, Ring, and King (1976) fashion involvement scale, 45 Lifestyle questions, and an evaluation of eight store attributes.

The PII consists of 20 pairs of bipolar adjectives to which subjects respond using a 7-point scale regarding the perception of apparel in relation to the adjectives. Responses were summed for each individual to yield an overall involvement score.

The Tigert, Ring, and King (1976) fashion involvement index includes questions relating to fashion innovativeness and time of purchase, fashion and interpersonal communication, fashion interest, fashion knowledgeability, and fashion awareness/reaction. Point values for each statement were added to give a total score for each respondent.

Lifestyle characteristics were identified based on a set of 45 lifestyle questions adapted from a comprehensive instrument developed by Wells and Tigert (1971). The formulated list was pretested and then reduced through factor analysis to yield a smaller set of lifestyle variables (Fairhurst, 1985). As suggested by Wells (1975), a limited set of relevant product-related variables can be the focus when lifestyle items are used to study a single product category. Fashion-specific lifestyle variables such as shopping pleasure and fashion consciousness were selected for inclusion due to their application to apparel and to their use in previous fashion-related research. Responses to the lifestyle questions were measured on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Store image research has provided a large number of possible evaluative criteria used by consumers. A comprehensive list of 27 attributes was developed and 58 senior students majoring in apparel merchandising were asked to indicate the items' importance in the selection of a specialty apparel store. Factor analysis was used to reduce the number of items and yielded the eight store attributes given below:

Store Attributes

- convenience of store location
- quality of merchandise
- value for the price
- store services
- brand names of merchandise
- merchandise assortment
- up-to-date fashionable merchandise
- sales information

Respondents measured the importance of the salient store attributes on a scale ranging from 1 (very important) to 5 (very unimportant).

Results

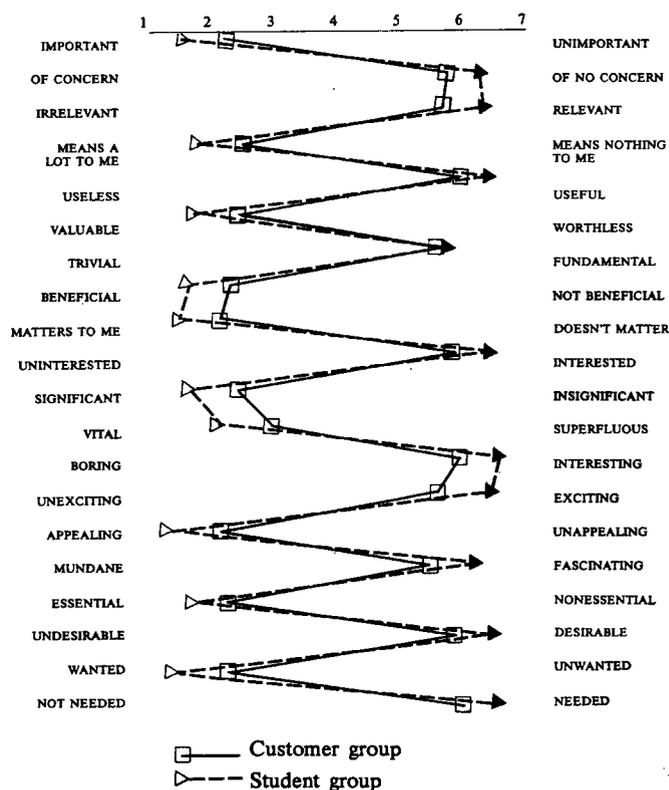
The mean PII score for the 220 apparel store customers was 113.9 while the mean for the 103 Home Economics students was 126.0. Scores ranged from a low of 28 in the customer sample and 80 in the student sample to a high of 140 for each group. Mean scores for each item in the PII scale are presented in Figure 1. Group I and Group II scores are plotted separately so differences between the two groups are visible. The greatest differences between the two groups was on the word pairs Unexcited/Excited, Wanted/ Unwanted, Significant/Insignificant, and Mundane/Fascinating. When compared to the values reported by Zaichkowsky (1985), the student group was more highly involved with apparel than Zaichkowsky's groups were with any product, including cars. The apparel store customers were more highly involved with apparel than were Zaichkowsky's groups except for cars. The sampling approach used in this study was biased toward selecting people highly involved with apparel, and the responses support the existence of that bias. The student sample was significantly more involved ($p < .01$) than was the customer sample, indicating that involvement does vary across groups.

Factor analyses were conducted for all of the fashion involvement measures. Zaichkowsky (1985) noted that a general pattern of results showed one main factor for every product category. The analyses of the PII scales for this study yielded similar results, although the first factor in the groups did not explain as much of the variance (58% to 100%). Further, all of the variables loaded strongly (loading $> .5$) on the first factor for both groups, as was the case in the Zaichkowsky studies. Coefficient alpha was over .91 for the 20-item scale in the customer sample and .91 for the student sample; Zaichkowsky reported alphas in the range of .97 to .99.

The unidimensionality of the Tigert, Ring, and King (1976) fashion involvement index was supported by the finding of a single factor in both groups. Coefficient alpha was .64 in Group I (customer sample) and .78 in Group II (student sample).

The factor analyses of the lifestyle variables yielded less consistency between the two groups, as may be seen in Table 1. The fashion-related factors (F_1 , Shopping for Pleasure, and F_2 , Fashion Consciousness) derived in the first group appear to be similar with those found in most studies; the factors found in the second group indicate that the college students associated general shopping questions and general innovativeness questions with the purchase of apparel. Since the fashion-related factors in the two studies were not comparable for both groups, we used the responses to the items identified originally by Wells and Tigert (1971) as constituting Fashion Conscious (one or more outfits of the latest style; dress for comfort and not fashion; dressing smartly is an important part of life) as the lifestyle measure of Fashion Consciousness. Coefficient alpha for the three-

Figure 1. Comparison of PII means between the two groups.



item scale was .50 in the mail survey and .49 in the student sample.

A comparison of the reliabilities of the three involvement measures strongly favors the PII scale. However, as emphasized by Peter (1979), increasing the number of items in a scale almost always increases the scales's reliability as calculated by Cronbach's alpha measure.

Table 1 shows the interrelationships among the different measures of fashion involvement in the two groups. All three fashion involvement measures were correlated significantly ($p < .01$) among themselves in both groups. In the first group, product-specific measures were more strongly correlated with each other than with the general involvement measure (PII). However, this pattern was not replicated in the second group with Home Economics students. Despite its more general form, the PII appears to have convergent validity since the results indicate that two or more independent methods measured the same construct (Green & Tull, 1978).

Table 2 also shows the correlation between the fashion involvement measures and the store attributes. While most of the correlations were statistically significant, in most cases the involvement measures explained less than 20% of the variance in the importance of the store attribute. The lone exception was the attribute of having up-to-date fashionable merchandise, for which about 20% of the variance was explained by each measure in each group. In Group I, the Tigert, Ring, and King (1976) index appeared to be related more strongly to the importance of the store attributes, but it appeared to be related the least strongly in the second group. These results indicate that the PII performed as well as the more product-specific measures in terms of explaining differences in the importance of store attributes.

Table 1. Factor analyses of fashion-related lifestyle variables

Lifestyle statements	Group I Women's apparel customers (n = 220)		Group II Home Economics students (n = 103)	
	F ₁ Shopping for pleasure	F ₂ Fashion consciousness	F ₁ Fashion innovativeness	F ₂ Fashion importance
I like to shop many different stores.	.73		.73	
I like to go to stores to see what is new.	.73			
I like to shop for clothes.	.63			
I go shopping to get new ideas.	.54			
I read fashion magazines.		.73	.60	
I usually have one or more outfits of the latest style.		.69	.80	
I like to try things just because they are new.		.69	.52	
I am not as concerned with fashion as with modest prices and wearability.			-.59	
I really enjoy being the first to purchase a new product.			.58	
An important part of my life is dressing smartly.				.68
When I must choose between fashion and comfort, I usually dress for comfort.				-.68
I spend a lot of time talking to my friends about product and brands.				.56

Table 2. Correlations among fashion involvement measures and across store attributes.

Involvement Measures	Group I Women's apparel customers (n = 220)			Group II Home Economics students (n = 103)		
	PII	TRK	FC	PII	TRK	FC
Personal Involvement Inventory (PII)	—			—		
Tigert, Ring, and King Measure (TRK)	.43**	—		.52**	—	
Lifestyle Fashion Consciousness Measure (FC)	.40**	.56**	—	.43**	.32**	—
STORE ATTRIBUTES						
Assortment of merchandise	.15*	.25*	.18**	.13	.16	.31**
Quality of merchandise	.18**	.18**	.17**	.06	.08	.07
Value for price	-.01	-.08	-.04	.11	.00	.09
Brand names of merchandise	.17**	.27**	.28**	.21*	.04	.27**
Variety of store services	.13*	.19**	.15*	.19*	.04	.21*
Adequate sales information	.12	.14*	.10	.21*	.04	.20*
Convenience of store location	.03	.03	.09	.14	.03	.27**
Up-to-date fashionable merchandise	.41**	.48**	.43**	.44**	.38**	.36**

**p < .01 *p < .05

Conclusions

The study reported here investigated the applicability of Zaichkowsky's (1985) Personal Involvement Inventory to women's apparel. The instrument was developed to measure the involvement construct. Fashion research has shown that the construct of involvement is relevant to women's apparel. Tests of convergent validity were carried out using two other fashion-related measures of involvement that were already

known to be reliable and valid. Convergent validity of the PII was established in that it was strongly related to more standard fashion involvement measures. In general, the PII performed just as well as the fashion involvement measures in terms of explaining the importance of store attributes. Thus, the scale also demonstrated construct validity. Results of this study, in conjunction with the rigorous instrument development procedures of the PII, indicate that the PII is both a reliable and valid measure of involvement construct.

Future research should continue to test the validity of the Personal Involvement Inventory by testing it along with other product-specific involvement measures. Since the research was conducted, McQuarrie and Munson (1987) modified and extended the Zaichkowsky (1985) PII scale. While the PII measures involvement as a unidimensional construct, some researchers (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; McQuarrie & Munson, 1987) contend that involvement is multi-faceted, consisting of perceived importance, decision risk, psychological risk, and pleasure dimensions. Thus, the McQuarrie and Munson (1987) study modified the PII by deleting four of the original word pairs and adding eight word pairs which tapped these four involvement dimensions.

To date, the modified PII has not been tested relative to fashion apparel. This product category could very well be a product with which involvement is multidimensional. The psychological importance of apparel in the socialization process and the resultant decision risk when making apparel purchases have been explored in previous research (Kwon, 1987; Lubner-Rupert & Winakor, 1985; Miller, Feinberg, Davis, & Rowold, 1982). In addition, the pleasure that apparel can bring to a wearer in terms of self-enhancement and psychological reinforcement sustains the pleasure dimension of involvement.

In addition, future research should compare PII across generic product classification which may be competing with apparel for the consumer dollar. If the validity of the instrument continues to be supported, generalizable norms for product categories may be established.

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