

Investigating Generation Y Men's Clothing Behaviors: The Role of Body Dissatisfaction

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Introduction The recent growth of menswear market suggests that more men have expressed their interests in clothing (Bergl, 2015); however, most studies focusing on body-related issues have examined the body image-clothing relationship among women, with little inclusion of the male population. Further, when looking at clothing behaviors, most quantitative research has focused on examining consumer attitude and purchase intention without specifically understanding how body-related issues might affect men's clothing behaviors. Generation Y consumers have spent considerable money on purchasing clothing, compared to other generations. Thus, this study will investigate the relationship between self-esteem and body dissatisfaction and how body dissatisfaction impacts clothing image avoidance and appearance management among men in Generation Y.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development *Self-esteem* refers to the evaluation of oneself based upon his/her overall feelings (Hobza, Walker, Yakushko, & Peugh, 2007). *Body dissatisfaction* refers to negative feelings caused by a discrepancy between an individual's perceived ideal body appearance and their perceived actual body appearance (Grieve, 2007). *Clothing image avoidance* refers to tendencies that individuals avoid to wear certain clothing which could reveal their body (Rosen, Srebniak, Saltzberg, & Wendt, 1991). *Appearance management* refers to activities individuals engage with to manage their overall appearances. Previous research has suggested that there is a negative relationship between self-esteem and body dissatisfaction (McArdle & Hill, 2009). Previous research has suggested that individuals tend to choose certain types of clothing to either emphasize their attractive body parts or downplay their unattractive body parts in order to feel confident with their overall appearance (Lunceford, 2010). Further, Stapleton, McIntyre, and Bannatyne (2016) suggested that men who were more dissatisfied with their body tend to exercise more, which is a type of activity in appearance management. Thus, three hypotheses are suggested in the study:

H1: *There is a negative relationship between self-esteem of men in Generation Y and their body dissatisfaction.*

H2: *There is a positive relationship between body dissatisfaction of men in Generation Y and their a) clothing image avoidance and b) appearance management.*

Method Using online survey through Amazon Mechanical Turk, data were collected from 277 participants in Generation Y (i.e., born in between 1977 and 1994) in the United States. The survey included questions measuring self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, clothing image avoidance, and appearance management, as well as demographic information. Factor analyses were conducted for multi-item measures. Three factors emerged from the body dissatisfaction measure, including body dissatisfaction-weight (BD-weight), body dissatisfaction-muscle (BD-

muscles), and body dissatisfaction-height (BD-height). All measures were borrowed and/modified from existing scales. Reliabilities of the scales ranged from 0.83 to 0.94.

Results Among the participants ($M_{age} = 32$), 79% were Caucasian. To test the hypotheses, nine sets of simple regressions were conducted due to the three factors of body dissatisfaction. Results showed that self-esteem negatively influenced BD-weight ($\beta = -0.47$, $t = -7.46$, $p < 0.001$), BD-muscles ($\beta = -0.52$, $t = -10.54$, $p < 0.001$), and BD-height ($\beta = -0.28$, $t = -3.71$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, H1 was supported. BD-weight positively influenced clothing image avoidance ($\beta = 0.72$, $t = 18.93$, $p < 0.001$), but not appearance management ($\beta = 0.063$, $t = 1.10$, $p > 0.05$). BD-muscles positively influenced clothing image avoidance ($\beta = 0.61$, $t = 10.56$, $p < 0.001$); and negatively influenced appearance management ($\beta = -0.14$, $t = -2.01$, $p < 0.05$). BD-height positively influenced clothing image avoidance ($\beta = 0.21$, $t = 4.10$, $p < 0.001$) and appearance management ($\beta = 0.17$, $t = 3.27$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, H2a was supported and H2b was partially supported.

Discussion and Conclusion To the researcher's knowledge, this study was the first study investigating the relationships between men's body dissatisfaction with specific body size/shapes and their clothing behaviors (i.e., clothing image avoidance and appearance management). This study confirmed that the higher self-esteem men have, the less dissatisfied they are with their body. Findings also concluded that men have complicated body issues which can be reflected through their clothing behaviors. Participants reported that the more they were unhappy with their overall body, the more likely they are to avoid certain clothing to conceal their body. Also, the more they were unhappy with their height, the more they would try to manage their overall appearance to look better. Limitations of this study included random sampling through online survey system and only conducted sample in the United States. Future research can study men with different sexual orientations and investigate cross-cultural differences.

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