



A Comparative Study between Athletic and Non-Athletic Consumers:
Consumer Decision-Making Styles, Shopping Channel Choices, and Purchase Intentions

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Introduction: In 2012, athletic apparel drove sales of more than US \$66 billion with a five-year growth rate of over 32% from 2007 to 2012 (Euromonitor, 2013). While there is limited research in this area, Smith (2008) contends that athleticism has become commercialized, influencing consumption of fitness related goods. However, there is not a clear understanding of *how* consumption differs between athletic and non-athletic consumers. To this end, the purpose of this study is to compare athletic and non-athletic consumers in terms of consumer decision-making styles, shopping channel choices, and purchase intentions of athletic apparel. Furthermore, this study also investigates the interrelationships among consumer decision-making styles, shopping channel choices, and purchase intentions related to athletic apparel.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development: The study's conceptual framework was developed by incorporating Sproles and Kendall's (1986) consumer styles inventory (CSI) that includes eight CSI dimensions: i) price/value conscious (PV), ii) quality conscious (QF), iii) brand conscious (BC), iv) novelty/fashion conscious (NF), v) brand-loyalty (BL), vi) recreation shopping (RS), vii) impulsiveness (I) and viii) confusion due to over choice (CO). It is expected that athletic and non-athletic consumers differ on CSI, shopping channel choices, and purchase intentions (Ohl & Taks, 2008). Research also showed a relationship between CSI styles and shopping outcomes and shopping channel choices (Choi & Park, 2006). Yet these studies lack a specific focus on athletic apparel consumers. Thus,

H1: Athletic consumers will differ from non-athletic consumers related to CSI styles.

H2: Athletic consumers will differ from non-athletic consumers related to shopping channel.

H3: Athletic consumers will differ from non-athletic consumers related to purchase intention.

H4: CSI styles will influence purchase intention.

H5: Shopping channel choices will influence purchase intention.

Methodology and Results: Centered on athletic wear consumers, data were collected over a three-month period through a survey-intercept method at three running road races (e.g., 5km/10km races) and at a college campus recreation facility in a southeastern city in the U.S. Among the participants in the final sample (n=293), 53% were female, 58% were aged between 18-25 years old, and the majority (60%) held at least a bachelor's degree. CSI scales were adopted from Sproles and Kendall (1986) and measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Participants were asked to indicate the shopping frequency related to athletic clothing in the past three months in a number of shopping channels (e.g., online, department stores, off-price retailers) and measured on 5-point Likert-type scale. Participants were also asked to what extent they view themselves as athletic. Those who rated themselves as "athletic" or "very athletic" were classified as athletic consumers (n=191), and those who rated themselves as "not athletic at all," "not very athletic," or "somewhat athletic" were classified as non-athletic consumers (n=102). Exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on eight items of CSI.

Items with factor loadings greater than .50 were retained and the minimum of eigenvalue of 1.0 was used as a criterion, resulting in four factors, i.e., PQ ($\alpha=.90$), NF ($\alpha=.82$), BC ($\alpha=.77$), and CO ($\alpha=.79$). The four factors accounted for 54.3% of the total variance. In testing H1, ANOVA results revealed significant differences in the groups for BC ($F=18.11^{***}$: $M_{Athletic}=2.99$ vs. $M_{Non-athletes}=2.58$), PQ ($F=7.00^{**}$: $M_{Athletic}=3.66$ vs. $M_{Non-athletes}=3.17$), and CO ($F=19.98^{***}$: $M_{Athletic}=2.53$ vs. $M_{Non-athletes}=2.83$). However, athletes and non-athletes did not differ on NF styles. Thus, H1 was partially supported. In testing H2, ANOVA results showed significant differences in the groups for shopping online ($F=14.71^{***}$: $M_{Athletic}=2.65$ vs. $M_{Non-athletes}=2.04$), sports warehouse shopping ($F=6.40^*$: $M_{Athletic}=2.84$ vs. $M_{Non-athletes}=2.46$), specialty apparel stores ($F=21.27^{***}$: $M_{Athletic}=3.18$ vs. $M_{Non-athletes}=2.49$), and off-price retailers ($F=5.78^*$: $M_{Athletic}=2.50$ vs. $M_{Non-athletes}=2.91$). There were no group differences in department store shopping; thus, H2 was partially supported. Related to H3, ANOVA results revealed significant differences for purchase intention for athletic apparel ($F=33.68^{***}$: $M_{Athletic}=4.27$ vs. $M_{Non-athletes}=3.72$), supporting H3. In testing H4, multiple regression was performed and results revealed that CSI influenced purchase intention ($F=15.70^{***}$) related to BC ($\beta=.15^*$), PQ ($\beta=.28^{***}$), and CO ($\beta=-1.88^{**}$), but not NF. Hence, H4 was partially supported. In testing H5, multiple regression was performed and results showed that shopping channel choices influenced purchase intentions ($F=8.10^{***}$) related to online ($\beta=.22^{***}$), and sports warehouse ($\beta=.20^{**}$) channels. Therefore, H5 was also partially supported.

Discussion and Conclusion: This study successfully examined differences between athletic and non-athletic consumers related to CSI, channel choices and purchase intentions and provides a better understanding of the role that CSI styles and channel choice plays in predicting purchase intentions for athletic apparel. Athletes exhibit BC and PQ CSI styles and prefer shopping on-line, at sports warehouses and specialty retailers and are more likely to purchase athletic apparel as compared to non-athletes. However, non-athletes exhibit CO CSI style and prefer to shop at off-price retailers. Moreover, BC, PQ, and CO CSI styles and the on-line and sport warehouse shopping channels influence purchase intentions. Findings provide academic contributions by extending the literature on consumer purchase decisions related to athletic apparel. Practically, the study's findings provide deeper consumer insights that can be used to prescribe a tailored marketing strategy for these consumer segments. Future research may apply this framework in other product contexts.

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