

Changes in the Outdoor wear Market: Focused on the South Korean Market

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Introduction

Owing to the development of technology in modern society, human beings lead prolonged lives. Now, there is the more important issue of living a healthier life rather than just extending it. Thus, people have become interested in wellness and health, which has led to well-being trends and increased participation in activities. Therefore, the outdoor wear market has shown double-digit growth for more than 10 years. Market sales were 500 million dollars in 2001, but they increased steadily to 5 billion dollars by 2012 (Korea Fashion Association, 2015). However, the outdoor wear market of South Korea is becoming saturated. Moreover, market sales have decreased since 2012. Some fashion opinion leaders are seeking stylish outdoor wear based on functionality that can be worn as casual wear. The sportswear companies are trying to develop “athleisure” products (Kim, 2016). Therefore, it is time to develop outdoor products for not only activity or material but also emotional approach.

Background

Consumers buy the best apparel products by comparing subjective criteria or attributes of product alternatives depending on their needs and ensuring their standards are met before purchasing. Consumers state that their purchase criteria depend on the products and the situations in which they will wear them. Therefore, the selection criteria they consider when they buy products are multidimensional and include practical, implicit, external, and fashion criteria (Lee, 2011; Jang, Hong, & Lee, 2015). Consumers evaluate and select the components of the clothing in order to build the clothing image they pursue (Chung & Rhee, 1992). According to a study by Jeong and Choi (2014), consumers of outdoor wear pursue an elegant, youthful, active, individual, and cute image. Therefore, consumers compare the selection criteria for casual and outdoor wear when purchasing. In addition, the pursuit image of the outdoor to determine the effect of the outdoor wear selection criteria. Through this, it is necessary to propose a new global direction for outdoor products.

Method

In this study, 283 Korean consumers in their 20s–50s, who had previous experience in purchasing outdoor wear products, participated. The data were collected by an online research company in Korea. SPSS 21.0 was used to analyze the data, and the results were as follows.

Results

When consumers purchase outdoor wear, they consider the functionality of the materials ($t=3.02$, $p<.01$) and activity ($t=3.278$, $p<.01$) more than they do when purchasing ordinary clothes.

Outdoor wear consumers' pursued images were classified into three types: urban, minimalist, and active. Outdoor wear selection criteria were classified into two types: instrumental function and expressive function. Pursued images in outdoor wear were examined for the effect of selection criteria. According to the results, the pursuit of minimalist ($B=.121$, $t=2.352$, $p<.05$) and active ($B=.591$, $t=12.028$, $p<.001$) images in outdoor wear affects the instrumental function more than the expressive function ($R^2=.411$, $F=64.819$, $p<.001$). Moreover, the pursuit of urban ($B=.456$, $t=8.000$, $p<.001$) and active ($B=.171$, $t=3.273$, $p<.01$) images in outdoor wear affects the expressive function more than the instrumental function ($R^2=.332$, $F=46.316$, $p<.001$).

Discussion and Conclusion

This means that consumers are more likely to expect two features, functional and active, when they purchase outdoor wear than when they purchase ordinary apparel. For consumers who pursued an active image in outdoor wear, we found that the selection criteria differed from those who pursued an urban image or minimalist image. Therefore, the outdoor wear brands need to segment the images of each brand. To create a minimalist image, they need to focus on the functional aspects of outdoor wear. To create an urban image, they can emphasize design aspects, such as silhouette and color. These results imply that outdoor wear brands need to qualify their products functionally and meet their segmented consumers' demands by developing products depending on their image from the planning stage. Therefore, we suggest that developing products based on images can be a differentiation strategy in the overflowing outdoor wear market, and this strategy might help expand the market.

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