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Self-Perception on Women's Fashion Decisions

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SELF-PERCEPTION ON
WOMEN'S FASHION DECISIONS

A Research Paper
Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of STEM Education
and Professional Studies
Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Masters of Science in
Occupational and Technical Studies

By

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December 10, 2014

APPROVAL PAGE

Shannon Marie Cokes prepared this research study under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in SEPS 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Studies, at Old Dominion University. It was submitted to the graduate faculty as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies.

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Shannon Marie Cokes

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
APPROVAL PAGE.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
CHAPTER I	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	2
RESEARCH GOALS.....	2
BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE.....	2
LIMITATIONS.....	4
ASSUMPTIONS.....	4
PROCEDURES.....	5
DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	5
OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS.....	6
CHAPTER II	
REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	7
FASHION AND SELF-ESTEEM.....	8
FASHION AND SOCIETY.....	9
FASHION AND CULTURE.....	10
SUMMARY.....	11
CHAPTER III	
METHODS AND PROCEDURES.....	13
POPULATION.....	13
INSTRUMENT DESIGN.....	13
METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION.....	14
STATISTICAL ANALYSIS.....	15
SUMMARY.....	15

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS.....16
OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES.....16
DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS.....18
DATA ANALYSIS.....19
SELF-ESTEEM AND DRESS.....19
ENVIRONMENT AND DRESS.....21
EFFECTS OF SHOPPING HABITS.....23
ENVIRONMENT AND SELF-PERCEPTION.....24
SUMMARY.....24

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....26
SUMMARY.....26
CONCLUSIONS.....27
RECOMMENDATIONS.....29

REFERENCES.....30

APPENDIX A, INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE.....31

APPENDIX B, SELF PERCEPTION IN FASHION.....32

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
FIGURE 1, RESPONSE RATE.....	17
FIGURE 2, AGE ANALYSIS.....	18
FIGURE 3, SPENDING HABITS.....	19
FIGURE 4, SELF-ESTEEM AND DRESS.....	20
FIGURE 5, ENVIRONMENT AND DRESS.....	22
FIGURE 6, SHOPPING HABITS.....	23
FIGURE 7, ENVIRONMENT AND SELF PERCEPTION	24

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

What women choose to wear plays a major role on marketing and advertising strategies for businesses associated with fashion. American society is bombarded with fashion advertising, with men's and women's clothing being predominant forms of consumption (Crane, 2000). Society takes pleasure in designer clothing and accessories, the latest technology, and the other luxuries in life. The reasons for these indulgences may be brand loyalty, larger disposable income, social pressures, the media, or a combination of these factors. People are prejudged by what they wear, because it is a cultural norm in the United States to groom and dress appropriately for the occasion. But does how a woman feels in regard to her beauty and attitude about oneself contribute to why she dresses the way she does?

The theory of self-perception states, "Individuals come to know their own attitudes, emotions and internal states by inferring them from observations of their own behavior and circumstances in which they occur" (Bem, 1972, p. 22). This theory supports that women base their personal thoughts of themselves from women that are active throughout life, women in the media, and women in their environment. The stronger and more positive these women are, the more likely it is for the woman to have positive feelings toward herself. This information could be of value to marketers of the brands that these women wear.

According to a Department of Labor (2010) study, "Where Does the Money Go", Americans spend about 5% of their annual income on clothing and

appearance. This is fourth to housing and food, transportation, and insurance (Department of Labor, 2010). This study is important in tailoring target markets and further explaining whether or not internal attitudes shape women's daily fashion decisions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to determine if a woman's self-perception affects her fashion choices in order to direct marketing strategies toward the brands she wears.

RESEARCH GOALS

The following are goals that guided this research:

1. Does higher self-esteem cause women to enhance their dress?
2. How does body image perceptions impact fashion?
3. Does environment, based on society and class, dictate the way a woman dresses?
4. How does culture and background influence self-perception?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Clothing, as one of the most visible forms of consumption, performs a major role in the social construction of identity. In earlier centuries, clothing was a dominant way to identify oneself in public. Throughout the nineteenth century various elements of this identity were represented in the United States. Such

elements include occupation, regional identity, religion, and social class. The use of sumptuary laws specified the types, materials, and ornaments that were acceptable for people of different social classes. Some articles of the typical wardrobe were particularly important, such as shoes and hats. Both of these accessories were an indication of social status, or lack thereof (Crane, 2000).

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, and the appearance of machine made textiles, clothing was amongst a person's most valuable possessions. To the lowest class in society, the poor, new clothing was unattainable. They relied on clothes that were handed down through many hands before reaching theirs. A poor man was likely to own only one outfit of clothing. The higher class was rich enough to own very lavish clothing that was usually willed to deserving youth in the family when they died. Clothing was so precious that in times where funds were scarce, clothing presented itself as a form of currency. It replaced gold and sometimes was pawned for money, along with jewels and other valuables (Crane, 2000).

In the early 1600s, sumptuary laws dictated fashion. Americans did not have much input in what they wore, most likely because they could not afford to have more than one outfit. In 2014, this is completely a different age where clothing is not that expensive and the middle class can afford to have a wardrobe that represents many phases of their life. This study is important in understanding whether or not a woman's self-perception drives her fashion decisions, which in turn fuels her buying habits. Since women are more self-conscious, but have a higher spending power, understanding if a woman's

underlying reason for what she wears and how she perceives herself could help focus marketing and advertising strategies, especially for the brands she frequents and the brands that she may not be familiar with due to poor market identification (Foroohar, 2010).

LIMITATIONS

The following were limitations of this study:

1. Self-perception will vary between participants in this study.
2. The participants of this study were women.
3. The women evaluated in this study were from Hampton Roads and Richmond, Virginia.

ASSUMPTIONS

The following were assumptions of this study:

1. The women in this study know how they perceived themselves. They have a basic knowledge of their own interests and tastes.
2. The participants of this study actually shop for their own clothing.
3. The participants in this study interact with the world around them and are active in society.
4. The women in this study have a positive self-esteem.

PROCEDURES

For the collection of data in this study, surveys were used. The survey was given to different women in the Hampton Roads and Richmond areas. The survey reflected the research goals. It was created to measure what factors women used to shape their self-image and determined the factors that drive clothing selection.

The survey was randomly distributed to women at shopping malls, colleges, nightclubs, and churches. It consisted of a short introduction and the presentation of the survey. The women completed the survey and handed it back to the researcher. The researcher further analyzed the data and made conclusions based on the findings.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following words have special meanings and are relevant to this study:

1. Clothing- anything that is used to drape and adorn the body.
2. Fashion- strong norms about appropriate appearances at a particular point in time (includes clothing, shoes, accessories, makeup, jewelry, etc.).
3. Society- an extended social group having a distinctive cultural and economic organization.
4. Self-esteem- the way a person “feels” about himself or herself.
5. Self- perception- the way a person “views” himself or herself.
6. Hegemonic- political, economical or ideological or cultural power exerted by a dominant group over others.

7. Body image- refers to a person's evaluative beliefs, feelings, and behaviors with regard to physical appearance.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter I introduced the problem to be researched, which was to determine if a woman's self-perception affects her fashion choices in clothing. It presented research goals that will provide a framework for the study that concentrated on the factors that make up self-perception, society, and marketing. Chapter I gave a brief background on fashion choices and cultural norms, which provided the reader with the understanding of how fashion choices were decided in earlier times.

In Chapter II a review of the literature will be conducted. This will identify previous research related to this topic to understand what has been written and to become acquainted with the subject matter. In the chapters to follow a survey will be developed and distributed. The findings of this survey will then be analyzed. The findings will be presented and the problem of the study will be answered. The research will then close with summaries, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Fashion is a major element of American society. From media, to the home environment, people are surrounded by fashion, and most make decisions and choices to purchase based on these factors. Studies show that the higher the income, the more people spend on clothing. Fashion is often times viewed as hegemonic, because it sometimes encourages women to be dissatisfied with their personal appearance and to make regular changes in order to conform to dynamic definitions of style (Crane, 2000).

Lakoff and Scherr (1988) claim:

That fashion photographs generate enormous dissatisfaction among women because they create unrealistic expectations that most women are unable to meet. However, recent changes in the nature of fashion, in the content of fashion magazines, and in the way women perceive fashion and fashion magazines raises questions about the accuracy of this interpretation. (p. 205)

Conducting a review of literature on the topic of self-perception and how it influences fashion must be done before more data can be collected. Research was completed on related information and presents three main categories based on the research goals. These categories are fashion and self-esteem, fashion and society, and fashion in culture and background.

FASHION AND SELF ESTEEM

Self-esteem can be defined as personal feelings, attitudes, or opinions of oneself, usually referred to as high or low. Several studies have shown women reporting a negative body image typically have a low self-esteem. Compared to men, negative body image appears to have a greater effect on women's social and global self-esteem. Body image is a multidimensional construct consisting of perceptions, attitudes, emotions, and behaviors surrounding one's physical appearance and its impact on one's psychological and social functioning. Self-esteem attitudes can be divided into two components: evaluation and affect and investment. Thoughts and beliefs about satisfaction/dissatisfaction with one's body make up the evaluative component. Affect and investment, refers to discrete emotional experiences that occur in response to physical self-appraisals. Lastly, investment deals with the time taken to feel presentable to the public (Williams, 2003).

In 1973, Berscheid and her colleagues conducted a national survey on body image. Using a stratified sample paralleling U.S. census data, these researchers found that 23% of women were not pleased with their overall appearance (Berscheid, Walster, & Bohrnstedt, 1973). Cash, Winstead, and Janda (1986) conducted a similar survey. The results from this study showed in a 13-year span, dissatisfaction had increased with 38% of women and 34% of men being dissatisfied with their appearance. These results have been highly circulated and show that low self-esteem and dissatisfaction with personal body image is dramatically increasing (Cash, Winstead, & Janda, 1986).

In 1984, Hoelter researched the impact of evaluations from friends, teachers, and parents on self-esteem. He found that in women, appraisals from friends had the biggest impact on self-esteem. Peers can have an extremely negative impact on feelings of physical attractiveness through teasing, social comparison, and modeling (Hoelter, 1984).

Body image has a powerful influence on other aspects of life, including overall happiness, mood, social relationships, and self-esteem. The Body Image Quality of Life Inventory is a scale that measures the impact, whether positive or negative, of one's body image on 19 distinct areas of psychological functioning and well-being. Initial results show that, overall, college women felt that body image had a positive effect on their lives. In general, these findings suggest that a positive body image and self-esteem experiences add to the quality of many women's lives (Williams, 2003).

FASHION AND SOCIETY

Society consists of an extended social group having a distinctive cultural and economic organization. Self-esteem and body image development results from an assembly of historical factors and other influences, such as early socialization about one's appearance or interpersonal experiences in adolescence. Over time, people adopt attitudes towards their bodies that, in turn, predispose how they perceive, interpret, and respond to situations. If an individual believes his or her appearance to be unsatisfactory, this may cause that person to believe that it is also socially unacceptable. Women who are

invested in appearance and who feel that their ideal physical self differs from their actual self report significantly higher levels of evaluative social anxiety. A strong purveyor of society is the media, which includes, but is not limited to, movies, magazines, music videos, music, television shows, and commercials (Williams, 2003).

FASHION AND CULTURE

The sociocultural perspective states that one's culture delineates what is considered attractive and perceptions of physical beauty depend on current cultural ideals. As a culture, Americans value physical attractiveness, especially in women.

Families are a strong source through which cultural morals are conveyed. Smetana (1988) found that mothers were seen as enforcers of the family norms about appearance related issues. While families provide support and protection to their members, but, if negative, their influence can be damaging to a person's self-perception. Correlations have been found between daughters' perceptions of their mothers' body satisfaction, weight concerns, and appearance investment (Williams, 2003).

Being part of a culture or sub-culture that does not endorse thinness protects one from body image disturbances. Several investigations on self esteem among African American women have concluded that compared to White females, African American women are more satisfied with their physical appearance, weight, and shape. Relying on these studies, Altabe (1998) surveyed White, Hispanic, Asian, and African American women on body image

and self-esteem concerns. She discovered that while African American women had the highest self-esteem, Asian American women placed little significance on personal appearance (Altabe, 1998). Crago and colleagues (1996) concluded that this is most likely do to the de-emphasis on Western standards of beauty within certain cultures (Crago, Shisslak, & Estes, 1996).

SUMMARY

Chapter II, the Review of Literature, discussed important variables related to the problem and research goals. These variables were defining self-esteem and body image as they pertain to fashion, how society impacts fashion and self-perception, and the effects of culture on self-perception.

Self-esteem or body image includes personal feelings, attitudes, or opinions of oneself. Self-esteem attitudes were divided into two components: evaluation and affect and investment. The evaluation component is comprised of thoughts and beliefs about satisfaction/dissatisfaction with one's self. Discrete emotional experiences that occur in response to physical self-appraisals make up the affect or investment component.

American culture is significant in fashion. Culture describes the morals and values of a person and the environment and society that one is a part. Influences from family, especially mothers, whether positive or negative, help shape the innate self-perception that is instilled within one's life.

In Chapter III the methods and procedures for the research will be discussed. The topics to be discussed will be population, instrument design, methods of data collection, and statistical analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The goal of this study was to determine if self-perception influenced buying decisions of women. In this chapter, methods and procedures were developed and analyzed to produce data examining self-perception and its effects on women's buying choices. This data will provide ease in understanding if there is a relationship between the two factors. This chapter includes information on population, instrument design, methods of data collection, and statistical analysis.

POPULATION

The population of this study were women located in Richmond and Hampton Roads. These women were estimated to be between the ages of 18 and 35. The surveys were handed out at McArthur Mall, Lynnhaven Mall, TIME nightclub, Abyssinia Baptist Church, Old Dominion University, Norfolk State University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Aurora night club. Fifteen surveys were given out at each location, which was a total of 120 surveys handed out.

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

In order to produce findings for the research a confidential survey was used. The survey was divided into three main sections. The first section was general information, and it asked closed-ended questions to obtain demographics and psychographics of the survey taker. The second section was comprised of forced response questions. The answers in this section were based

upon a Likert scale. Responses were as follows: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. Using the Likert scale, in addition to forced answer choices, allowed the researcher to understand how women personally felt about their appearance and the factors that drive their self-esteem. The last section was comprised of yes or no general questions. Each survey question was based on the literature and the research goals established through this study.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Choosing women in different locations allowed for more of a variety in values of women and also provided a range of data collection. Women shopping in malls and attending nightclubs presented a sampling of one population. Women shopping or heading out to a nightclub to have fun would have fashion on their minds and may possess a higher self-esteem at the moment. Women on college campuses and in church provided another population. Women that are on campus or going to church may have a more reserved mindset. These two separate populations could give a range of opinions in the findings.

The researcher handed out the survey packets in the various locations. She explained to each surveyor the problem of the research. For each woman that participated, a survey packet was given to be completed. The packet consisted of a cover letter, instructions, and a survey. The completed survey was then placed back into the folder and given back to the researcher. See Appendix A, B, and C.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The data collected were reviewed, tabulated, and analyzed. The results for the first section of the survey were represented by percentages. The results for the second part of the survey were calculated to find the mean for the forced answer choices. Doing this will show the relationship between self-perception and fashion. The data collected from the open-ended portion of the survey were analyzed to see if there were any similarities that occurred amongst the answers and conclusions were drawn based on the findings.

SUMMARY

Chapter III discussed the methods and procedures used to collect data that were important to understanding and answering the problem of this study. The population of this study were women aged 18-35, randomly selected at churches, nightclubs, college campuses, and shopping malls. A survey was created to quantify the relationship between these women, their self-esteem, and its effect on their buying decisions. Chapter IV will explain the conclusions of the study's findings and will explain the relationships that were observed.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine if self-perception affects a woman's buying habits. This study provided information concerning what drives women's self-esteem and how it impacts her purchasing habits. A survey was used with women in the Hampton Roads and Richmond regions to collect data. This chapter describes the findings based upon the data received. The data will be reported in seven sections: An Overview of Responses, Demographic Analysis, Data Analysis, Self-Esteem and Dress, Environment and Dress, and Shopping Habits.

OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES

The participants in this study were women in the Hampton Roads and Richmond regions. Volunteers were identified at McArthur Mall, Lynnhaven Mall, TIME nightclub, Abyssinia Baptist Church, Old Dominion University, Norfolk State University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Aurora nightclub. Data were collected at two different times of the day at McArthur Mall and Lynnhaven Mall. Seven surveys were given out soon after the mall opened and eight were given out two hours before the mall closed. This is a total of 30 surveys at both locations. Fifteen surveys were given out at Abyssinia Baptist Church during the 11:00 a.m. service and all were completed and returned. Time nightclub, located in downtown Norfolk, was visited on a Sunday night. Fifteen surveys were handed out, but only six people were willing to complete the survey. Aurora

nightclub, located in Richmond, Virginia, was visited on a Saturday night. The intent was to hand out 15 surveys, but only eight were handed out and completed. For the nightclub population 14 of 30 surveys were completed and returned to the researcher. Each college campus was visited at random times of the day. At Old Dominion University a total of 11 surveys were completed, at Norfolk State University all 15 surveys were completed and at Virginia Commonwealth University 13 of the surveys were completed. For the college population 39 of the 45 surveys were completed. See Table 1.

Table 1

Response Rate

SURVEY STATISTICS	TOTAL OF SURVEYS COMPLETED
McArthur Mall	15
Lynnhaven Mall	15
Time Nightclub	6
Aurora Nightclub	8
Old Dominion University	11
Norfolk State University	15
Virginia Commonwealth University	13
Abyssinia Baptist Church	15
TOTALS	98 of 120 = 81.6%

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The first section of the survey was used to determine the age range of the participants. Self-perception varies at different ages in women, therefore this information was collected and relevant. From the 98 surveys that were completed, 49 women were between the ages of 18-23, 31 women were 24-29, and 18 were 30-35. See Table 2 for a compilation of the data.

Table 2

Age Analysis

Age Range	Totals
18-23	49
24-29	31
30-35	18
TOTAL	98

Spending habits were also analyzed in this study. It was found that 27 women, or 27.5% of the population, spent less than \$100 per month on average on clothing; 42 women or 43% spent \$100-\$200 per month; 18 women or 18.4% spent \$300-\$400; and 11 or 11.2% spent \$500 or more per month on clothing. This indicated that the majority of women spent between \$100 and \$200 per month on clothing. See Table 3.

Table 3

Spending Habits

Spending Average Per Month	Total	Percentage
Less than \$100	27	28%
\$100-\$200	42	43%
\$300-\$400	18	18%
\$500 or more	11	11%
TOTAL	98	100%

DATA ANALYSIS

In Part II of the survey, 10 responses were given and the participant was asked to rate their feelings about the statement using a Likert scale: 5, strongly agree; 4, agree; 3, undecided; 2, disagree; and 1 strongly disagree. The mean of each statement was calculated and data were further analyzed by number and percentage.

SELF-ESTEEM AND DRESS

Question 1, Your daily mood plays a major role in the clothes you pick to wear.

Forty-one (42%) of the participants strongly agreed that their daily mood plays a major role in the clothes they pick to wear; 34 (34%) agreed; 2 (2%) were

undecided; 18 (18%) disagreed; and 4 (4%) strongly disagreed. The mean score for this statement was 3.90, which indicates that the average response was to agree with the statement. See Table 4.

Question 2, You feel like the clothes you wear define who you are.

Thirty-five (36%) of the participants felt like their clothes define who they are; 31 (32%) agree; 2 (2%) were undecided; 19 (19%) disagreed; and 11 (11%) strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean of this statement was 3.61, which tells that the average response for this statement was to agree. See Table 4.

Question 6, Your weight dictates what stores you select to shop in.

Ten (10%) of the participants felt like their weight dictates what stores they shop; 27 (28%) agree; 3 (3%) were undecided; 39 (40%) disagreed; and 19 (19%) strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean of this statement was 2.7, which indicates that the average response was undecided. See Table 4.

Table 4

Self- Esteem and Dress

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	MEAN
1. Your daily mood plays a major role in the clothes you pick to wear.	5	4	3	2	1	3.90
Percentage of Responses	42%	34%	2%	18%	4%	
2. You feel like the clothes you wear define who you are.	5	4	3	2	1	3.61
Percentage of Responses	36%	32%	2%	19%	11%	
6. Your weight dictates what stores you shop at.	5	4	3	2	1	2.7
Percentage of Responses	10%	28%	3%	40%	19%	

ENVIRONMENT AND DRESS

Question 4, Your culture influences your dress more than your daily surroundings.

Seventeen (17%) of the participants strongly agree that their culture influences their dress more than their daily surroundings; 11 (11%) agree; 14 (14%) were undecided; 27 (28%) disagreed; and 29 (30%) strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean of this statement was 2.6, which indicates that the average response was undecided. See Table 5.

Question 5, You base your body image on what is acceptable in society.

Thirty-two (33%) of the participants base their body image on what is acceptable in society; 25 (26%) agree; 8 (8%) were undecided; 21 (21%) disagreed; and 12 (12%) strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean of this statement was 3.44, which tells that the average response to this statement undecided. See Table 5.

Question 7, You and your closest friends dress alike.

Twenty-two (22%) of the participants believe that they dress similar to their closest friends; 31 (32%) agree; 13 (13%) were undecided; 23 (23%) disagreed; and 9 (9%) strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean of this statement was 3.34, which indicates that the average response was undecided about this statement. See Table 5.

Question 9, Your morals effect the clothes you wear.

Thirty-eight (38%) of the participants felt that their morals effect the clothes they wear; 33 (37%) agree; 7 (7%) were undecided; 14 (14%) disagreed; and 6 (6%) strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean of this statement was 3.84, which tells that the average response was to agree with this statement. See Table 5.

Question 10, Your musical selection influences your style of dress.

Nineteen (19%) of the participants strongly agree that their personal musical selection influences their style of dress; 26 (27%) agree; 7 (7%) were undecided; 37 (38%) disagreed; and 9 (9%) strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean of this statement was 3.09, which tells that the average response was undecided about this statement. See Table 5.

Table 5

Environment and Dress

STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	MEAN
4. Your culture influences your dress more than your daily surroundings.	5	4	3	2	1	2.6
Percentage of Responses	17%	11%	14%	28%	30%	
5. You base your body image on what is acceptable in society.	5	4	3	2	1	3.44
Percentage of Responses	33%	26%	8%	21%	12%	
7. You and your closest friends dress alike.	5	4	3	2	1	3.34
Percentage of Responses	22%	32%	13%	23%	9%	
9. Your morals effect the clothes you wear.	5	4	3	2	1	3.84
Percentage of Responses	39%	37%	7%	14%	6%	

10. Your musical selection influences your style of dress.	5	4	3	2	1	3.09
Percentage of Responses	19%	27%	7%	38%	9%	

EFFECTS ON SHOPPING HABITS

Question 3, You habitually shop at four or more stores.

Twenty-four (24%) of the participants habitually shop at four or more stores; 18 (18%) agree; 6 (6%) were undecided; 37 (38%) disagreed; and 13 (13%) strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean of this statement was 3.03, which tells that the average response for this statement was undecided.

See Table 6.

Question 8, You shop at stores where the displays mirror your style.

Fifteen (15%) of the participants strongly agree that their clothes define who they are; 36 (37%) agree; 4 (4%) were undecided; 29 (30%) disagreed; and 14 (14%) strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean of this statement was 3.09, which indicates that the average response for this statement is undecided.

See Table 6.

Table 6

Shopping Habits

STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	MEAN
3. You habitually shop at four or more stores.	5	4	3	2	1	3.03
Percentage of Responses	24%	18%	6%	38%	13%	
8. You shop at stores where the displays mirror your style.	5	4	3	2	1	3.09

ENVIRONMENT AND SELF-PERCEPTION

Part III of the survey asked two yes or no questions to supplement the forced answer choices. Question 1 sought to see how much of an effect environment and daily surroundings has in daily clothing choices. Question 2 sought to understand if self-perception is a determining factor of daily clothing choices. The purpose of these questions was to gain an understanding for the influences that play a part in daily dress. Data were reported by frequency and tabulated. See Table 7.

Table 7

Environment and Self-Perception

QUESTION	YES	NO	PERCENTAGE
1. Does your daily surroundings (job, friends, college campus etc.) influence how you dress?	87	11	89%
2. Is self-perception a determining factor of your dress for each day?	91	7	93%

SUMMARY

In this chapter the findings from the women that participated were analyzed and presented. The surveys were used to understand the effects of self-perception and women's buying decisions. The first set of data demonstrated an overview of the responses. The second set of data illustrated a demographic

analysis of the women that participated. The third set of data described the mean and percentage rate of responses to the statements presented in the survey. Finally, the last set of data revealed the most common responses to the yes or no questions. In Chapter V a summary of the research will be presented along with conclusions drawn and recommendations made on the data collected.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the research undertaken in this study. Conclusions will be made based upon the research goals. Recommendations will be made on how the findings should be implemented and what future research should be undertaken.

SUMMARY

The self-perceptions of a woman are how she views herself. There are many factors that play a role in how a woman develops this self-perception and how she uses this perception in her everyday decision making process. American society is a factor because women are portrayed to have a certain body type and tend to dress a certain way. Also, culture plays a role in these decisions because women base their daily dress on the values that have been instilled into them. Environment is a major factor in determining dress because women tend to dress like their friends and the needs of their daily surroundings. The purpose of this study was to determine whether self-perception plays a role in women's buying decisions. In order to study this problem, research goals were established. These included:

1. Does a higher self-esteem cause women to enhance their dress?
2. How does body image perceptions impact fashion?
3. Does environment, based on society and class, dictate the way a woman dresses?

4. How does culture and background influence self-perception?

This research was conducted through surveying women at the following locations: McArthur Mall, Lynnhaven Mall, TIME nightclub, Abyssinia Baptist Church, Old Dominion University, Norfolk State University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Aurora nightclub. In total 98 surveys were completed and used in this study.

The survey was developed to gather data relating to the problem of the study and research goals. The survey used forced answer choices as well as yes or no questions. Each statement and question used was related to for the research goals. The survey was designed to determine if women used self-perception to drive their buying habits.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were made based upon the results of the data collected and were presented by each goal developed.

Goal 1, Does a higher self-esteem cause women to enhance their dress?

According to the data collected, the way women feel about themselves, whether negative or positive, causes them to dress the way they do. When asked if self-perception is a determining factor of everyday dress, 93% of women agree that they use self-perception as a factor in their everyday clothing decisions. Although a higher self-esteem is not a factor that causes women to enhance their dress, when asked, if daily mood plays a major role in the clothes they wear, 42% of women strongly agree.

Goal 2, How does body image perceptions impact fashion?

This research revealed that body image perceptions may impact fashion. Question 2 asked if women feel if their clothing defines who they are, with a mean score of 3.61, 36% percent of women strongly agree. On the other hand, Question 6 asked if weight was a determinant in deciding on places to shop. Forty percent of women disagree that they use weight to dictate shopping. Also, with a mean score of 3.09, 30% of women disagree that they shop in stores where the store displays match their style of dress.

Goal 3, Does environment, based on society and class, dictate the way a woman dresses?

The research collected in this study indicates that environment dictates the way a woman dresses. With a mean score of 3.44, Question 5 asked if women base their body image on what society proposes is acceptable, 33% of women strongly agree. Question 10 pondered on the idea of a woman's musical selection and the role it plays on a woman's dress. According to this research, musical selection does not play a role, because 38% disagreed that music influences their dress. Question 7 discussed whether women dressed similar to their closest friends and 32% of women agreed. Eighty-nine percent of women say yes, their daily surroundings, including jobs, friends, or college campus, effects how they dress.

Goal 4, How does culture and background influence self-perception?

Culture and background influence self-perception in different ways. With a mean score of 2.6, Question 4 asked if culture affect their dress more than their

daily surroundings and 30% of women strongly disagree. Meanwhile, Question 9 of the survey asked if morals affect the clothes they wear and 39% of women strongly agree.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher has developed some recommendations based on the conclusions formed from this research. The recommendations are as follows:

1. In this study, the elements that derive self-perception could have been further researched, because if these factors can be identified, self-perception can be more thoroughly defined.
2. Since this study only focused on self-perception, future research will focus on other areas that influence a woman's buying habits such as income, availability, and uniqueness.
3. Since only women were surveyed in this study, further research could study whether self-perception has the same effects on men, because findings could drive marketing for male fashion agencies.
4. Future research should be done on women in other places, other than Hampton Roads and Richmond. Different areas may bring different demographics of women with varying disposable incomes, cultures, and environments.

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APPENDIX A

Dear Consumer:

I am inviting you to participate in a research project of consumers to determine if their self-perception affects fashion choices. This research will be used to direct marketing strategies toward the brands they wear. This research will also determine how cultural values and morals play a part in self-perception. I have attached a survey that will help to develop my research. I am asking you to review the survey and, if you choose to do so, complete it and return it to me upon completion. It should take you about 6 to 7 minutes to complete.

There are no known risks for participating in this survey, and I guarantee that your responses will be kept anonymous. Please do not put your name on the survey when you fill it out.

The results of this project will be used for my graduate research paper. Through your participation I hope to understand how self-perception influences women's fashion choices and how marketers can use this information to appeal more to their customers. I hope you will take the time to complete this survey and return it. Your participation is voluntary and the completion of this research cannot be executed without your assistance.

To receive a summary of my study results, any questions you may have about the survey, or about being in this study, I can be reached at scoke002@odu.edu. The Human Subjects Review Committee at Old Dominion University has approved this study. If you have any concerns about your rights as a participant in this study you may read about human subjects' participation at the Office of Research website at <http://www.odu.edu/ao/research/>.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Shannon M. Cokes
Graduate Student
Old Dominion University

APPENDIX B

Self-Perception in Fashion

Purpose: The purpose of this survey will be to determine if a woman's self-perception affects her fashion choices in order to direct marketing strategies toward the brands she wears.

Directions: Please complete the survey and return it back to the surveyor.

Part 1

What's your age?

18-23

24-29

30-35

What region do you reside?

Hampton Roads

Richmond

How much money do you spend on average per month on clothing?

Less than \$100

\$100-\$200

\$300-\$400

\$500 or more

SA A U SD D

Part 2

Your daily mood plays a major role in the clothes you pick to wear.

You feel like the clothes you wear define who you are.

You habitually shop at 4 or more stores.

Your culture influences your dress more than your daily surroundings.

You base your body image on what is acceptable in society.

Your weight dictates what stores you shop in.

You and your closest friends dress alike.

You shop at stores where the displays mirror your style.

Your morals effect the clothes you wear.

Your musical selection influences your style of dress.

	SA	A	U	SD	D
Your daily mood plays a major role in the clothes you pick to wear.					
You feel like the clothes you wear define who you are.					
You habitually shop at 4 or more stores.					
Your culture influences your dress more than your daily surroundings.					
You base your body image on what is acceptable in society.					
Your weight dictates what stores you shop in.					
You and your closest friends dress alike.					
You shop at stores where the displays mirror your style.					
Your morals effect the clothes you wear.					
Your musical selection influences your style of dress.					

Part 3

Does your daily surroundings (job, friends, college campus etc.) influence how you dress?

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

Is self-perception a determining factor of your dress for each day?

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>