

# **The Relationship between Fashion Consciousness and Self-concept.**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the  
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## **Abstract**

There was a lack of research on the topic of fashion consciousness and self-concept. Previous research on the topic explored the luxury fashion market and found a link between fashion consciousness and self-concept. The researcher wanted to investigate the relationship between fashion consciousness and self-concept. Males and females were examined along with their level of fashion consciousness. There was a mixture of results regarding age and fashion, some research results revealed that old age did not decrease fashion consciousness, and another study showed age had an impact on fashion. The researcher wanted to investigate the relationship of age and fashion consciousness. The type of clothing people chose had an impact on their self-confidence. Overall results showed, 11 out of 15 self-concept variables correlated with fashion consciousness. Women scored higher than men on the fashion consciousness scale. There was no significant relationship between high self-confidence and high fashion consciousness. Fashion consciousness diminished with age, younger people had higher fashion consciousness.

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## **Fashion consciousness and self-concept introduction**

Fashion refers to the clothes that we wear and also to an item that is popular but the popularity is usually short lived (Skov & Melchior, 2008). Clothing is used to cover and keep the body warm, it is also used as a method of self-expression (Tombs, 2010). We wear clothes to make us feel good, change our moods and those emotions can be understood by others (Tombs, 2010). Our choice of clothing can be used to express ourselves or enable communication of information to others for example our nationality, social status or profession, it can serve as a way of identifying our belongingness to a certain group (McCracken & Roth, 1989). The careful choice of luxurious clothing can help identify the ones who belong to a certain social class and the ones who do not (Leung, Yee & Lo, 2015). People of high social class might dress in sophisticated brands to ensure their status is understood by others. Members of different communities would dress in a certain way to display belongingness, and provide easy identification by group members (McCracken & Roth 1989). Even individuals who are not part of the group are able to identify the ones who belong to a certain group, because of their distinct choice of style. For example, in hospitals we are able to distinguish doctors and nurses because of the different uniforms.

Many African countries have a special cloth known as Ankara, which goes by different names in other African countries for example chitenge in Zambia (Taylor, 2006). These cloths are colourful and different countries have their own special cloth, which can be identified by Africans (Taylor, 2006). Clothing choices can have an impact on how we feel and how we deal with our emotional needs (Tombs, 2010). Clothing can have a cognitive impact on the person wearing it. Galinsky (2012), proposed the term enclothed cognition, this comprised of the symbolic meaning and the physical experience of wearing clothes. The term enclothed cognition describes the influence clothing has on a person's psychological process (Galinsky, 2012). People often judge others based on what they are wearing (Keogan, 2013;

Tombs, 2010). If a person's way of dressing does not match ours, we are more likely to judge the person, as humans we like to be around people of similar interest and fashion is no different (Keogan, 2013). Choice of clothing can help fulfil emotional needs, Piacentini and Mailer (2004) have found choice of clothing had some impact on the individuals, they were more confident and able to face challenges. Clothing can affect our self-concept and how we feel about ourselves (Tombs, 2010), it mainly affects our self-concept in a positive way as evident in many researches (Goldsmith, Moore & Beaudoin, 1999; Phau & Lo, 2004).

### **Fashion innovativeness and fashion consciousness**

Fashion innovativeness involves being among the first people to acquire new fashion apparels (Phau & Lo, 2004). A fashion innovator, is sometimes referred to as a fashion leader in other research papers. To avoid confusion, only the term fashion innovator will be used throughout the paper. A fashion innovator is among the first individuals to try new styles of clothing and apparel (Kang & Park-Poaps, 2010). Their opinion is very important for the development of new fashions which may lead to success or failure of the new items (Goldsmith et al., 1999; Muzinich, Pecotich & Putrevu, 2003). The first buyers of fashion contribute and provide the financial means necessary for clothing manufacturers to produce new fashions (Goldsmith et al., 1999). They spread word of mouth about the new upcoming styles, thus influencing later fashion adopters (Goldsmith, et al., 1999).

Innovators are not price sensitive when it comes to acquiring new fashion apparels (Goldsmith et al., 2005). They are willing to spend more on new items, than their less innovative friends (Goldsmith et al., 2005). Fashion innovators' necessity for variety is viewed as a method of mental stimulation (Workman & Johnson, 1993). Innovators are more interested in clothing and how the style suits them, they enjoy testing new pieces of clothing,



this is evidence of a use of mental effort, and different activities relating to clothing such as shopping might show attempts to satisfy some variety of mental stimulation (Workman & Johnson, 1993). Fashion consciousness is similar to fashion innovativeness, they are also interested in fashion (Phau & Lo, 2004), but, they are not among the first acquirers of new apparels, they are interested in new styles of clothing, being aware of what is trending and keeping up to date with the latest evolving styles (Bakewell et al., 2006; Shim & Gehrt, 1996). Being fashion conscious involves incorporating up to date styles into your clothing (Nam et al., 2007; Shim & Gehrt, 1996), and it is also about being aware of what is in style (Bakewell et al., 2006). Fashion conscious individuals prefer dressing in trendy materials and filling their wardrobes with new fashionable items (Nam et al., 2007).

### **Self-Concept**

The image one has of themselves, allows for guidance and gives control to human performances (Malhotra, 1981). Self-concept refers to the value and image one holds of him/herself. It is a collection of attitudes one has of themselves (Pastorino & Doyle-Portillo, 2013). Self-concept is made up of three dimensions, the actual self (how an individual views him/herself), the ideal self (how a person would like to be) and the social self (how an individual believes others see him/her) (Pastorino & Doyle-Portillo, 2013). A person's self-concept can vary according to their surroundings and situations. Self-confidence is a very important factor similar to self-concept, it enhances performance and motivates individuals to maintain high self-confidence (Benabou & Tirole, 2002). Individuals like to dress in a way that matches how they view themselves (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004). Adolescents' clothing consumption behaviour relates to their self-esteem, they purchase and wear clothes that are congruent with their sense of self (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004). Young people use clothing as

a way of letting others know how they feel and they tend to place judgements on others due to their choice of clothing, especially if the clothing is different to what they would chose to wear (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004). People learn about their self-concept through interaction with exterior surroundings, usually with other people (Onkvist & Shaw, 1987). Self-concept is a key aspect to put into consideration when studying consumer behaviour in relation to fashion, because people choose items according to the image they hold of themselves.

Self-concept affects how people view different items (Onkvist & Shaw, 1987), and therefore self-concept may have an impact on our choices and attitudes related to fashion. Since individuals often use clothing choices to express themselves (Tombs, 2010), self-concept may play a role in people's choice of clothing (Goldsmith, Flynn & Moore, 1996). The way humans dress allows them to express their views and opinions of themselves (Morganosky & Vreeman, 1986). What people wear to work influences their self-concept and also the way they behave and perform (Galinsky, 2012), employees described themselves as more authoritative, competent and trustworthy when wearing formal business uniform (Peluchette & Karl, 2007). Consumers would buy items that match their self-concept (Goldsmith et al., 1996). According to Phau and Lo (2004) people with strong self-concept may use symbolic products, for instance luxurious apparels to attain congruence amid the self (Leung et al., 2015; Phau & Lo, 2004).

To test the psychological and social factors of fashion consciousness in the luxury market, researchers carried out a survey on the luxury fashion market in Hong Kong (Leung et al., 2015). Researchers believed self-concept will have a positive impact on fashion consciousness. Results revealed, self-concept positively affected fashion consciousness amongst the young generation 18-23 years old (Leung et al., 2015). Young people with strong self-concept tend to be more aware of their appearances relative to their roles. They are aware of the ideal and actual self, leading them to become more fashion conscious. In this

study, fashion conscious individuals were more likely to depend on luxurious fashion products to improve their appearance (Leung et al., 2015). The study provided some evidence of a link between fashion consciousness and self-concept, yet the sample chosen were consumers within the luxury fashion market only, this may cause a limitation to the generalisability of the results. There is a need for further studies investigating the relationship between fashion consciousness and self-concept in the general population.

Goldsmith and colleagues (1999) studied fashion innovativeness and self-concept because of a lack of research on the topic. The study focuses on the real self-image of women who are fashion innovators, this refers to how they see themselves. This study involved female college students of all backgrounds, however, there was a lack of the general population within the sample (Goldsmith et al., 1999). The results revealed fashion innovators had very unique self-image. Results from the self-concept scale showed that each fashion innovator saw themselves as more comfortable, pleasant, contemporary, formal, colourful, and vain (Goldsmith et al., 1999). Later analysis revealed fashion innovativeness was linked with the adjectives, indulgent and organised. Fashion innovativeness was shown to be related to self-concept, fashion innovators had high self-concept (Goldsmith et al., 1999). The study reveals a correlation between fashion innovativeness and self-concept, but they only investigated female participants. Men are also becoming interested in fashion and more studies of fashion should include male participants (Bakewell, Mitchell & Rothwell, 2006).

Phau and Lo (2004) compared fashion innovators to non-innovators, innovators displayed a unique self-image, they were found to be more excitable, indulgent, contemporary, liberal and colourful than the non-innovators (Phau & Lo, 2004). Fashion innovators are willing to expand their fashion knowledge. A study on fashion innovativeness and self-concept, revealed that a relationship existed between fashion innovativeness and

self-concept (Goldsmith et al., 1996). Fashion innovators viewed themselves as contemporary, fun and excitable (Goldsmith, Heitmeyer & Freiden, 1991). Fashion innovators were described as being vain, they view new trends as a way to promote their sense self-worth and their overall appearance, which can be used to impress the people around them (Goldsmith et al., 1996). Fashion innovators have more knowledge than others on the topic of fashion and are likely to spend more time and money shopping for the latest trends (Goldsmith et al., 1996).

### **Fashion consciousness and gender**

Majority of previous studies related to fashion innovativeness and fashion consciousness have been conducted with female participants. This is an important limitation of previous research in this area. There have been significant changes in the past few years, with men and women becoming more fashion conscious (Bakewell et al., 2006). Before fashion and shopping was regarded as of interest to women only (Bakewell et al., 2006). Men's' attitude towards fashion has changed (Bakewell et al., 2006; Lam & Yee, 2014). Many fashion companies have been focusing and targeting men, many have become highly successful (Lam & Yee, 2014). With the launch of men's fashion week, it has raised men's fashion awareness (Bakewell et al., 2006). Technology, self-identity ambiguity, changing work practices and media are the four factors that have influenced men's views towards fashion (Lam & Yee, 2014).

Fashion consciousness plays an important role in men's buying behaviours (Lam & Yee, 2014), men also are willing to spend their money and time shopping (Goldsmith et al., 1999). All the different changes surrounding men's fashion has changed their views and opinions on shopping, before shopping and fashion was deemed feminine (Bakewell et al.,

2006). Women were more interested in clothing and were more aware of different fashion trends. The researcher wanted to focus on fashion conscious males of generation Y (Bakewell et al., 2006). The results revealed males showed some level of fashion consciousness and displayed some level of involvement. The study results showed generation Y males are fashion conscious, this is related to cognitive and affective issues than behaviour (Bakewell et al., 2006). If a person is fashion conscious, this involves knowledge relating to fashion and consumption. This study showed men had the fashion knowledge, but not as much consumption behaviour as women (Bakewell et al., 2006). When someone is not fashion conscious, no attention will be paid to trends and there will be no time devoted to shopping. Overall results revealed men do notice different clothing and are aware of the concept of fashion but, in a more simplistic form than women (Bakewell et al., 2006).

Gould and Stern (1989) study found biological sex as a good predictor of consumer behaviour. Fashion conscious females have a tendency to concentrate more on their external appearance, they are concerned with what people see. While fashion conscious men emphasize on who they are. Men are fashion conscious, but women are more fashion conscious than men (Gould & Stern, 1989). There have not been many research investigating fashion conscious men and also women, and their self-concept. These studies are not recent, there could be a change in results because fashion is not regarded in the same negative way by men as it did before. One study revealed male adolescents adopted fashion trends after female adolescents (Beaudoin, Lachance & Robitaille, 2003). They were aware of fashion trends but it was implemented later, while females noticed it before. They revealed that there were more female innovators than male innovators (Beaudoin et al., 2003). The male adolescents are later adopters of fashion than females. Most studies in fashion focuses only on the female consumers (Goldsmith et al., 1991). There are now men who are interested in fashion, therefore a study on fashion should consider both genders. In the study by Phau and

Lo (2004), they found that the majority of respondents for their research were females. With men's views and opinions of fashion varying, men are becoming fashion innovative and fashion conscious.

### **Fashion consciousness and age**

There seems to be a disagreement on whether age is associated with fashion interest. In the research paper by Goldsmith and colleagues (1991) they discuss how different papers have found different results on the association of age and individuals' interest in fashion. They hypothesized that age would be negatively associated with fashion interest. The results later revealed that age was negatively associated with fashion innovativeness. A study by Goldsmith and colleagues (1999) found that fashion innovators were not only younger women. Older women were amongst the fashion innovators and age did not decrease their interest in fashion (Goldsmith et al., 1999). The participants from the study were between the ages of 18 and 83. Khare, Mishra and Parveen (2012) have found fashion involvement is influenced by age, these results can be argued against due to the limitation of participants as most of the sample were young consumers. There was a lack of older participants, to allow for more generalizable results.

It is important to have high self-confidence because individuals with high self-confidence are harder to persuade than individuals who have low self-confidence (Cox & Bauer, 1964). Self-esteem has been proven to influence women's involvement in fashion (Khare et al., 2012). Self-confidence can be enhanced through clothing (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004). The way clothing is worn signals some information to the external environment (Tombs, 2010). Self-confidence is similar to self-concept, both result in motivation (Benabou & Tirole, 2002).

The chosen topic for the study is the relationship between fashion consciousness and self-concept. This topic is of interest to the researcher, due to the lack of research conducted on fashion consciousness and self-concept. It is necessary to study this topic because, people are motivated by their self-perceptions which has been shown to have a positive impact on fashion consciousness in luxury consumers (Phau & Lo, 2004). Clothing styles one chooses has an impact on their self-concept (Keogan, 2013). If clothing styles have an impact on self-concept, then overall, fashion consciousness should correlate with self-concept. Since previous studies have revealed a relationship between fashion innovativeness and self-concept. If fashion innovators have unique self-image (Goldsmith et al., 1999), then being fashion conscious should relate to self-concept. Previous research on fashion consciousness and self-concept in the luxury market also revealed a correlation between fashion consciousness and self-concept. The first question of the study will be, is there a correlation between fashion consciousness and self-concept? This study will expand on previous research related to self-concept and fashion consciousness by studying this relationship among both male and female participants, rather than among females only. Earlier studies on this topic only looked at consumers in the luxury market, this study will investigate fashion consciousness and self-concept among the general population. The study will investigate whether this relationship differs according to gender.

Men are becoming more interested in fashion and are becoming fashion conscious (Bakewell et al., 2006). There needs to be more males involved in studies of fashion. There is a lack of research on men as well as women on the topic of fashion consciousness and self-concept. Since men's views and opinions regarding fashion has evolved. The second question which will be looked at is, does a difference exist in men and women's level of fashion consciousness? Self-confidence, similar to self-concept leads to motivation (Benabou & Tirole, 2002). Self-confidence can be enhanced through the types of clothing we choose to

wear (Piancetini & Mailer, 2004). This leads to the third question of the study, is there a relationship between fashion consciousness and self-confidence? Will individuals displaying high levels of fashion consciousness, have high levels of self-confidence? There are disagreements on whether age is linked with an individual's interest in fashion (Goldsmith et al., 1991). Age was negatively associated with fashion innovativeness in Goldsmith and colleagues (1991). Another study found that older women were also amongst fashion innovators (Goldsmith et al., 1999). Khare and colleagues (2012) study showed age might played a role on a person's involvement in fashion. The fourth question which will be investigated in the study is, will fashion consciousness diminish with age?

Four hypothesis have been developed and will be examined in the study:

1. There will be a positive relationship between fashion consciousness and self-concept.
2. Men compared to women will have high fashion consciousness.
3. High fashion consciousness will result in high self-confidence.
4. Fashion consciousness will not diminish with age.



## **Methods**

### **Participants**

A total of 286 participants took part in the study 119 (41.6%) males and (167) 58.4% females. Several early research mainly focused on females (Bakewell et al., 2006), the current study decided to examine both males and females to see if there was a difference in their levels of fashion consciousness. One participant did not meet the inclusion criteria, therefore had to be deleted from the data because he/she was under the age of eighteen, leaving the researcher with 285 participants. Participants' age ranged from 18 to 61. The mean age of participants was 25 years old ( $SD= 7.253$ ).

### **Design**

The research was a quantitative design, using cross sectional methods to investigate the relationship between fashion consciousness and self-concept. Within a correlational design, independent and dependent variables do not exist, instead there were criterion and predictor variable. Fashion consciousness was the predictor variable and self-concept was the criterion variable. Since this was a correlational study, no variables were manipulated. Descriptive statistics were run to define normality before proceeding onto data analysis. A spearman rho was used on non-normally distributed self-concept variables to observe if there was a correlation. A Pearson correlation was conducted on the rest of the items on the self-concept scale that were normally distributed. An independent samples T test was used to compare differences in males' and females' scores on fashion consciousness. A Pearson correlation was computed to establish if high fashion consciousness was related to high self-confidence. The researcher wanted to investigate if

fashion consciousness diminished as the age increased, a spearman rho was conducted on age and fashion consciousness. A non-parametric test was used on this question because the age variable was not normally distributed.

## **Materials**

The study measured three different concepts, fashion consciousness, self-concept and self-confidence. The questionnaire was composed of the self-concept scale, the fashion consciousness scale and the Rosenberg self-esteem scale which was used to measure self-confidence. These scales are described in more detail below. Participants were also asked to state their age and gender (whether they were male or female) at the beginning of the questionnaire.

### **The Self-Concept Scale**

The self-concept scale was developed by Malhotra in 1981, it is used to measure self-concept, person concept and product concept (Malhotra, 1981). It is a semantic differential scale, containing 15 bipolar adjective pairs on a seven-point scale. Participants had to select one point between the adjectives, to indicate how they felt about themselves relative to the two adjectives. For example, a participant was given two adjectives, excitable and calm in between those two adjectives there was a seven-point scale and the participant had to indicate if they were extreme right or left of the adjectives. In this study the scale was used to measure the actual self. The scale is a valid and reliable method of measuring self-concept,

person concept and product concept (Malhotra, 1981). The actual self, had a reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 (Malhotra, 1981).

### **The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale**

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale is a ten-item scale that measures an individual's self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965), it has a reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 (Rosenberg, 1965). The Rosenberg self-esteem scale was used to measure self-confidence. The responses were on a four point scale, they ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Participants were presented with ten statements that were related to their self-esteem. For each statement they had to choose a response either strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree. There was a mixture of positive and negative questions in the scale. An example of a positive question from the scale is "I feel that I have a number of good qualities", and a negative statement is "I certainly feel useless at times" (Rosenberg, 1965). When inputting data onto SPSS items 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 had to be recoded (Rosenberg, 1965) because they were reverse scored, strongly disagree was given a 1, disagree, 2, agree, 3 and strongly agree, 4. When all items were recoded, a total score of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale was obtained.

### **The Fashion Consciousness Scale**

The fashion consciousness scale consists of thirty-eight items on a five-point format, with a reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.96 (Gould & Stern, 1989). It was adapted from a self-consciousness scale by Gould and Stern (1989). The items in the scale include statements related to people's views about fashion and their appearance for example "I'm very involved

with the clothes I wear” (Gould & Stern, 1989). The participants had to indicate to what extent each statement best described them, from not at all to very well. Items 11, 34, 26 and 25 were reverse scored, therefore had to be recoded, and the total score was calculated.

## **Procedure**

NCI ethical guidelines were put into consideration when designing the study. The researcher was granted an approval from the NCI ethics committee to carry out the study. An online questionnaire was distributed across social media platforms such as, Snapchat, Facebook, Reddit and Whatsapp. An email with the link to the questionnaire was sent to NCI students, they were asked to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was available online from 22<sup>nd</sup> of January to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February. Participants had to be of the age of eighteen to participate. An information letter was provided in the beginning of the questionnaire, which participants read and had to tick a box to confirm that they had read and understood the information provided, as a result giving consent to participate. They were asked to state their age and gender, then the rest of the questionnaire had to be completed. The survey was entirely anonymous, no personal details were enquired. There was no way of identifying participants during and after the study. An information letter and a debriefing form was provided in the questionnaire. The information letter gave details about the study and it contained the supervisor's and the researcher's contact information in case a participant had some questions that needed clarification. Participants were given three scales, self-concept scale, Rosenberg self-esteem scale and fashion consciousness scale.

Prior to submission of the questionnaire (final step in the online form), debriefing information was displayed. Within the debriefing information sheet there were contact details of the researcher and research supervisor which was also available on the information letter. The debriefing form contained different websites and emails for anyone who would have been affected by the issues raised in the questionnaire, mainly regarding the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale. The questionnaire was created through google forms online, this allows for a link to be shared online with anyone who is willing to complete the survey. The responses collected were scanned through by the researcher to make sure each question was completed and everyone met the inclusion criteria. One participant failed to meet the inclusion criteria, on that account their data was removed. The data was downloaded as an excel file and then onto a USB key in a password protected file to ensure no one else had access to the data. The data was later imported onto SPSS for analysis. A test of normality was carried out to determine the data distribution before proceeding, then the data was analysed using independent samples t test, and bivariate correlation.

## RESULTS

A total of 286 participants completed the online survey. One participant's data could not be used because the participant was under 18, therefore their data was deleted. 285 responses were then analysed using SPSS. Independent samples t-test, Pearson correlation and spearman's rho were used to obtain results.

The participants were 167 females and 118 males, aged 18 to 61 ( $M= 24.96$ ,  $SD= 7.253$ ), age was not normally distributed with skewness of 1.946 ( $SE= 0.14$ ) and kurtosis of 4.875 ( $SE= 0.29$ ). A total score of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale was calculated with men and women's average score of 22.7( $SD= 6.32$ ), see table 1 for summarized results. An overall score of the fashion consciousness scale was also calculated, participants had a means score of 68.50 ( $SD= 26.66$ ). A total score of the Malhotra self-concept scale could not be obtained, each variable had to be analysed separately, and table 2 gives an overview of the results.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics for all Participants (N= 285)*

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Age (years)	18.0	61.0	25.0	7.2
TRSES	10.0	40.0	22.7	6.3
TFCS	13.0	132.0	68.5	26.6

*Note. TFCS=Total Fashion Consciousness Scale*

*Note. TRSES=Total Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale*

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics of Self Concept Variables (N= 285)*

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Rugged/delicate	1.0	7.0	4.2	1.5
Excitable/calm	1.0	7.0	4.3	1.2
Uncomfortable/comfortable	1.0	7.0	4.3	1.6
Dominating/submissive	1.0	7.0	4.2	1.4
Thrifty/indulgent	1.0	7.0	3.9	1.5
Pleasant/unpleasant	1.0	7.0	2.5	1.3
Contemporary/noncontemporary	1.0	7.0	3.5	1.4
Organised/unorganised	1.0	7.0	3.8	1.8
Rational/emotional	1.0	7.0	3.6	1.7
Youthful/mature	1.0	7.0	4.4	1.5
Formal/informal	1.0	7.0	4.6	1.6
Orthodox/liberal	1.0	7.0	5.4	1.4
Complex/simple	1.0	7.0	3.2	1.7
Colourless/colourful	1.0	7.0	4.9	1.6
Modest/vain	1.0	7.0	3.1	1.4

Hypothesis 1: There will be a positive relationship between fashion consciousness and self-concept.

A bivariate correlation was used to obtain the response. A total score of the fashion consciousness scale was calculated, since a total score of the self-concept scale could not be obtained, each variable on the self-concept scale was analysed separately with the total score of the fashion consciousness scale. A Pearson correlation test was used on normally distributed items, and a Spearman rho was used on the following items, pleasant/unpleasant, contemporary/noncontemporary and youthful/mature self-concept because these were not normally distributed.

#### Pearson Correlation

A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between each self-concept variable and fashion consciousness. The following variables revealed a positive significant relationship with fashion consciousness, rugged/delicate, uncomfortable/comfortable, thrifty/indulgent, rational/emotional, orthodox/liberal, colourless/colourful and modest/vain. Three items did not correlate with fashion consciousness. Excitable/calm and formal/informal, had a negative significant correlation. See table 3 for results.



Table 3

*Pearson Correlation for Self Concept Variables and Fashion Consciousness (N= 285)*

	TFCS
Rugged/delicate	.318**
Excitable/calm	-.134*
Uncomfortable/comfortable	.118*
Dominating/submissive	.032
Thrifty/indulgent	.158**
Organised/unorganised	-.059
Rational/emotional	.218**
Formal/informal	-.171**
Orthodox/liberal	.131*
Complex/simple	-.047
Colourless/colourful	.169**
Modest/vain	.154**

*Note. TFCS=Total Fashion Consciousness Scale*

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

#### Spearman's rank order correlation

A spearman's rank order correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the data that was not normally distributed self-concept variables and fashion consciousness. The results revealed a significant negative correlation for pleasant/unpleasant and contemporary/noncontemporary self-concept. The variable

youthful/mature self-concept did not correlate with fashion consciousness. Results are summarized on table 4.

Table 4

*Spearman rho Correlation for Self Concept Variables and Fashion Consciousness (N= 285)*

	TFCS
Pleasant/unpleasant	-.174**
Contemporary/noncontemporary	-.259**
Youthful/mature	.038

*Note. TFCS=Total Fashion Consciousness Scale*

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

Hypothesis 2: Men compared to women will have high fashion consciousness.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare scores in men and women's scores on fashion consciousness. There was a significant difference in the scores for females ( $M= 75.86, SD= 23.912$ ) and males ( $M= 58.08, SD= 26.962$ ), in their scores on fashion consciousness  $t(283) = 5.865, p= .001$ .

Hypothesis 3: High fashion consciousness will result in high self-confidence.

A correlation analysis was used to investigate the relationship between both variables, the Rosenberg self-esteem scale was used to measure self-confidence. A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationship between fashion consciousness and self-confidence. The results revealed no relationship existed between the two variables,  $r= .051, n= 285, p= .394$ .

Hypothesis 4: Fashion consciousness will not diminish with age.

Age was not normally distributed, a non-parametric bivariate correlational analysis was used to establish if a relationship existed between age and fashion consciousness. A spearman's rank order correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between fashion consciousness and age. Results revealed a weak negative significant correlation between the two variables,  $r_s = -.135$ ,  $n=285$ ,  $p = .023$ .

## DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between fashion consciousness and self-concept. The data analysed was from 285 participants aged, 18-61. Result findings showed some significant correlations between fashion consciousness and 11 out of 15 self-concept variables, fashion conscious individuals describe themselves in almost similar ways to fashion innovators in previous researches. They differed in two adjectives from the self-concept scale which were emotional and delicate, the two adjectives were not mentioned in previous research about fashion innovativeness and self-concept. Individuals who were fashion conscious were more likely to describe themselves as delicate, excitable, comfortable, indulgent, emotional, formal, liberal, colourful, vain, pleasant and contemporary.

Fashion consciousness did not correlate with the rest of the variables on the self-concept scale these included, youthful/mature, complex/simple, organised/unorganised and dominating/submissive self-concept. An independent samples t-test revealed a difference in men and women's scores on fashion consciousness. Women's level of fashion consciousness was higher than men's, their mean score was greater than that of males on fashion consciousness. High scores on fashion consciousness did not correlate with high scores on self-confidence. A spearman rank order correlation was used to investigate the relationship of age and fashion consciousness. The researcher wanted to know if fashion consciousness diminished with age. The results showed there was a negative significant relationship between age and fashion consciousness. Yes, fashion consciousness diminished with age, younger people had higher scores on fashion consciousness than the older adults.

There were positive and negative correlation between fashion consciousness and self-concept variables. A total score of the self-concept scale could not be calculated, therefore each self-concept variable was analysed separately with the total score of fashion

consciousness. The results indicated that fashion consciousness was linked with some variables on the self-concept scale. The current study measured the actual self-concept. Fashion conscious individuals had a raised awareness and different view of their self-concept they described themselves as delicate, excitable, comfortable, indulgent, emotional, formal, liberal, colourful, vain, pleasant and contemporary. Goldsmith and colleagues (1999) examined the relationship between fashion innovativeness and self-concept, and found a relationship between the two variables. Individuals' description of their self-concept matched seven out of 11 adjectives found to correlate with fashion consciousness in this study. Results on the self-concept scale seem to be similar to previous findings on research regarding fashion innovativeness and also fashion consciousness. The adjectives which correlated with fashion consciousness were similar to the adjectives in earlier research (Goldsmith et al., 1999; Phau & Iqbal, 2004; Goldsmith et al., 1996).

Fashion conscious individuals also described themselves as delicate and emotional, these two adjectives did not appear in previous research on fashion innovativeness and self-concept. Fashion conscious individuals described themselves as being vain, they probably see fashion as a way to focus on themselves and to improve their overall physical appearance. Fashion conscious individuals described themselves as emotional, we could say that, they might be able to communicate their feelings with the clothes they wear (Tombs 2010). If fashion conscious individuals described themselves as emotional and excitable, the clothes we wear could have some link to our mood, because people dress in a way that is congruent with their self-concept (Piancetini & Mailer, 2004). The clothes we wear are also a way of self-expression (McCracken & Roth, 1989), which we can use to impress the people around us (Goldsmith et al., 1996). People dress according to their emotions and these feelings can be communicated to others (Tombs, 2010). We cannot conclude that fashion consciousness correlates with overall self-concept due to the fact that a total score of self-concept was not

obtained and even though there was a correlation with the self-concept variables, not every self-concept variable was linked with fashion consciousness.

The current study looked at if there was a difference in men and women's scores of fashion consciousness. The results revealed women had higher scores of fashion consciousness when compared to men. There were more female participants who took part in the study than males. Results suggest that gender may play a role in how a person reacts to fashion. Despite fashion shows and fashion magazines encouraging men's involvement in fashion (Bakewell et al., 2006), many might still feel reluctant. Men and women's views on fashion are different and it may have not changed as much. Men may still be implementing fashion trends way after females (Beaudoin et al., 2003). Women view fashion as a way to improve their external appearance, while men see fashion as a way to express who they are, they view fashion and style on a more personal level (Gould & Stern, 1989). We can conclude that men are fashion conscious, because they are aware of what is deemed fashionable, what is trending and what is in style (Bakewell et al., 2006), but they do not adopt the styles they claim to be aware of. With women's scores being higher than that of men, we can say that men's fashion consciousness may be more related to cognitive and affective issues (Bakewell et al., 2006), than behaviour. They view fashion in a more simplistic form than women. The results from the current study agrees with the results from Gould and Stern (1989), their results also found that women were more fashion conscious than men. They seem to pay more attention on their external appearance and are more apprehensive on how people see them than men (Gould & Stern, 1989).

Piancettini and Mailer (2004), suggested that self-confidence could be increased through clothing and the clothing choices people made was closely linked with their self-concept. The results of the current study found no correlation between fashion consciousness

and self-confidence. The level of fashion consciousness may have no link with any self-confidence. Fashion consciousness may have little or no impact on self-confidence. Previous studies have found different results regarding the age and a person's interest in fashion. Goldsmith and colleagues (1999) found that age did not decrease women's interest in fashion. Goldsmith and colleagues (1991) found a negative correlation between age and fashion innovativeness. The present study wanted to examine if there was a correlation between age and fashion consciousness. The current study found a negative significant correlation between age and fashion consciousness. High fashion consciousness revealed a decrease in age. Younger participants were more likely to score higher on the fashion consciousness scale. Fashion involvement may be due to age or older adults who are fashion conscious did not take part in the study. The majority of participants were younger, maybe this had some impact on the results.

## **Limitations**

As with many empirical studies, this research had its limitations. The majority of respondents were younger adults, there needs to be further investigation on age and fashion consciousness, mainly among the older adults. Future studies can investigate the difference between the younger and older adults in terms of fashion consciousness. The study looked at fashion consciousness, and failed to consider other factors that could affect a person's choice of clothing. We were unable to calculate a total score of the self-concept scale; therefore, we could not conclude that there was a relationship between fashion consciousness and self-concept. We can say there was a relationship between fashion consciousness and some self-concept variables, as results revealed a correlation between fashion consciousness and 11 out of 15 self-concept variables. Fashion consciousness may also be affected by culture or

religion, the current study did not mention this possibility. Future studies should also investigate how religion and culture may play a role in fashion consciousness. Some religions and cultures may have certain rules in regards to what is deemed appropriate for individuals to wear, this somehow could affect how people view fashion.

While every effort was made to make this an honest research, it relied solemnly on self-report measures, some participants may have not been completely honest when completing the survey. Even though participants were informed that the entire questionnaire was anonymous, due to sensitive questions being asked on the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, there could have been inaccurate record of responses. The self-concept scale was difficult to comprehend; this may have caused some confusion during the completion of the questionnaire. A future study on self-concept should search for a self-concept scale which would be easier for participants to follow. The researcher received feedback from participants who were suffering from depression, they reported that their illness may have affected how they responded on the Rosenberg self-esteem scale because their mood fluctuated each day due to their illness. The research, was a cross sectional study, which only looked at correlations, no causation could be inferred from the findings. We cannot say that age, self-concept or gender causes change on fashion consciousness. The study investigated both males and females, however there were more female respondents than males. Men should be encouraged to take part in future studies, to learn about their spending and also fashion behaviours. Future studies may want to investigate if there are differences in self-concept between fashion innovators and fashion conscious individuals.

The researcher was able to gather large amount of data through social media and emails. The study received a great number of participants there were 286 people who accepted to take part in the research. The researcher provided enough details and information



to each participant before they took part in the study. The researcher made sure consent was gained from every participant, by making sure they ticked the box giving full consent to participate. The researcher promised anonymity, which was respected throughout the course of the study. Participation was anonymous, no personal or identifiable information was requested, and the researcher did not share any of the data collected. Ethical considerations were valued and participants' privacy was respected. The present study was able to contribute to research on fashion consciousness and self-concept, which was understudied. Fashion conscious individuals described themselves as emotional and delicate, these two adjectives were not mentioned in studies of fashion innovativeness and self-concept or studies of fashion consciousness and self-concept. The study found a difference in men and women's level of fashion consciousness, future studies can investigate if a difference exists in men and women's self-concept. The current study was able to examine each hypothesis and report each finding. The present study examined the actual self, future studies can explore the ideal and social self.

## **Conclusion**

The study showed a relationship between fashion consciousness and self-concept variables. Fashion conscious individuals were more likely to describe themselves as delicate, excitable, comfortable, indulgent, emotional, formal, liberal, colourful, vain, pleasant and contemporary. Women were found to be more fashion conscious than men. Men's scores on the fashion consciousness scale were lower than that of women. High self-confidence did not correlate with high fashion consciousness. Younger age was linked with high fashion consciousness. The results contribute to research on fashion consciousness and self-concept. The lower male participation rate when compared to women, suggests that men should be

encouraged to take part in such research studies. Fashion conscious individuals described themselves as emotional, this results may be indicating that the types of clothing we wear may be linked to our emotions. Further research is needed in the area of fashion consciousness and self-concept to further the understanding of what has an impact on our self-concept. Understanding that fashion consciousness may have an impact on self-concept is important for the fashion industry. The findings of this study can be incorporated into marketing, and fashion retailers. They can use future advertisement to reach out to younger consumers as the study discovered high fashion consciousness was related to younger age. Advertising campaigns should focus on the self-concept of fashion conscious individuals and create their advertisements in relation to those self-concepts. Fashion consciousness may have a significant role to play in men's behaviour towards fashion. Fashion retail companies need to build plans to focus on men to increase their awareness and involvement in fashion.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### CONSENT FORM

My name is Yolande Maketivila, I am a final year psychology student. As part of my final year project I am conducting a research to investigate the relationship between keeping up with fashion trends (fashion consciousness) and the views one has of themselves (self-concept).

#### WHO CAN TAKE PART?

Anyone from the age of 18 can participate.

#### WHAT'S INVOLVED?

Participants are being invited to complete a questionnaire, which should take less than ten minutes. The questionnaire consists of three scales, fashion consciousness scale, self-concept scale and the Rosenberg self-esteem scale. Each scale is being used to measure different concepts. The fashion consciousness scale measures how well an individual keeps up with current trends. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale is measuring one's level of self-confidence. The self-concept scale measures an individual's self-concept.

#### WHAT HAPPENS TO THE INFORMATION PROVIDED?

The information provided will only be used for study purposes. The researcher will carry out statistical analyses to gain results for the study. The results will enable the researcher to conclude if a relationship exists between fashion consciousness and self-concept. Your participation in the study is voluntary; you do not have to take part if you wish not to. No personal details will be asked throughout. If participants feel the need to withdraw from the study, they may do so during completion of questionnaire but not after it has been submitted, as the data will be stored anonymously and will not be linked to your name or other identifying information.

The researcher will have full responsibility of data storage. All information collected will be stored on a USB key and only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the data. All information collected will only be used for the project. The researcher followed the NCI ethical guidelines while designing this study and it has been approved by the NCI ethics committee. If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact the researcher or the supervisor. The contact details are:

Researcher: Yolande Maketivila  
Email: x15549863@student.ncirl.ie

Research Supervisor: Dr Caoimhe Hannigan  
Email: caoimhe.hannigan@ncirl.ie

Thank you for your participation,  
Yolande Maketivila

## **Appendix B**

### **Fashion consciousness scale (Gould & Stern, 1989)**

Below is a list of statements related to people's views about fashion and their appearance. Please indicate the degree to which each statement describes you.

I'm very involved with the clothes I wear

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I reflect about the fashions I wear a lot

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I'm general attentive to my inner feelings about the clothes I wear

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I look in the mirror throughout the day

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I'm very aware of men's ties as a fashion object

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I'm very involved with fashion

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I'm more fashionable than the average person

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I'm very conscious of dresses as a fashion object

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50



- (3) Fairly well
  - (4) Very well
- I'm aware of people's shoes as fashion objects
- (0) Not at all
  - (1) A little
  - (2) About 50/50
  - (3) Fairly well
  - (4) Very well
- I'm very conscious of the fashion related to my own gender
- (0) Not at all
  - (1) A little
  - (2) About 50/50
  - (3) Fairly well
  - (4) Very well
- I'm seldom conscious of the clothes I'm wearing
- (0) Not at all
  - (1) A little
  - (2) About 50/50
  - (3) Fairly well
  - (4) Very well
- I usually notice how some people are more fashionable than others
- (0) Not at all
  - (1) A little
  - (2) About 50/50
  - (3) Fairly well
  - (4) Very well
- I'm always shopping for new fashions
- (0) Not at all
  - (1) A little
  - (2) About 50/50
  - (3) Fairly well
  - (4) Very well
- I'm aware of women's blouses as fashion objects
- (0) Not at all
  - (1) A little
  - (2) About 50/50
  - (3) Fairly well
  - (4) Very well
- I'm very alert to changes in fashion
- (0) Not at all
  - (1) A little
  - (2) About 50/50
  - (3) Fairly well
  - (4) Very well
- I'm aware of people's hats as fashion objects
- (0) Not at all
  - (1) A little
  - (2) About 50/50
  - (3) Fairly well
  - (4) Very well
- I read fashion magazines
- (0) Not at all

- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I'm aware of make up being in fashion

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I would say I'm very fashion conscious

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I'm very aware of people's business suits as fashion objects

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I'm usually the first to try new fashions

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I'm aware of women's dresses as fashion objects

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I'm self-conscious about how my clothes look at work

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I'm very fashionable

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I hardly ever notice what other people are wearing

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I'm very conscious of the fashion related to people of the opposite gender

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I'm usually aware of people's hairstyles as fashion objects

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

Other people think am very fashionable

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I wouldn't be where I am today without looking good

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I'm very price conscious when it comes to fashion

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I usually only shop in fashionable stores

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

You have to be rich to be fashionable

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

Other people ask me what is fashionable

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50
- (3) Fairly well
- (4) Very well

I'm not very bold when it comes to fashions

- (0) Not at all
- (1) A little
- (2) About 50/50

(3) Fairly well

(4) Very well

I'm very conscious of people's jewelry as fashion objects

(0) Not at all

(1) A little

(2) About 50/50

(3) Fairly well

(4) Very well

I'm usually aware of men's shirts as fashion objects

(0) Not at all

(1) A little

(2) About 50/50

(3) Fairly well

(4) Very well

I'm usually aware of my motives when I buy clothes

(0) Not at all

(1) A little

(2) About 50/50

(3) Fairly well

(4) Very well

I'm usually aware of the way my mind works when I go shopping for clothes

(0) Not at all

(1) A little

(2) About 50/50

(3) Fairly well

(4) Very well

### **Appendix C**

#### **Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965)**

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

On the whole I am satisfied with myself

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

At times I think I am no good at all

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel I have a number of good qualities

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I am able to do things as well as most other people

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel I do not have much to be proud of

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I certainly feel useless at times

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I wish I could have more respect for myself

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I take a positive attitude toward myself

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

### **Appendix D**

#### **Self-concept scale (Malhotra, 1981)**

The self-concept scale aims at finding out about your ideas and opinions of yourself. Every adjective has an opposite characteristic at each end. There are 7 points between the adjectives. You should select one of the 7 points to indicate how you feel about yourself.

Rugged	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Delicate
Exciting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Calm
Uncomfortable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Comfortable
Dominating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Submissive
Thrifty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Indulgent
Pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unpleasant
Contemporary	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uncontemporary
Organized	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unorganized
Rational	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Emotional
Youthful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mature
Formal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Informal
Orthodox	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Liberal
Complex	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Simple
Colorless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Colorful
Modest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Vain

### **Appendix E**

#### **Debriefing form**

You have reached the end of the questionnaire, IN ORDER TO SAVE YOUR RESPONSES PLEASE CLICK THE "SUBMIT" BUTTON BELOW. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. We hope you enjoyed taking part in the study and found it to be a positive experience. If you have further questions about your participation, please feel free to contact one member of the research team. Their contact details are below:

Researcher: Yolande Maketivila

Email: x15549863@student.ncirl.ie

Research supervisor: Dr Caoimhe Hannigan

Email: caoimhe.hannigan@ncirl.ie

If this questionnaire has raised any issues you would like to discuss. The following support services may also be of assistance to you:

Aware.ie

1800804848

Supportmail@awarere.ie

Samaritans.org

116123

jo@samaritans.org

Pieta.ie

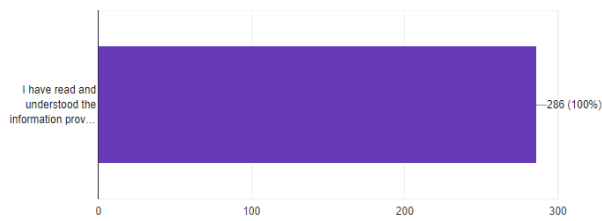
1800247247

### Appendix F

#### Evidence of data collection

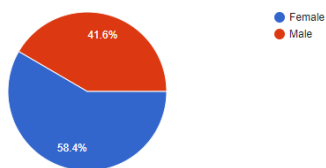
Please tick the box provided if you have read the information and consent to participate in the study

286 responses



#### Gender

286 responses



## Age

286 responses

