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Satisfaction of Current Martial Arts' Uniforms and Purchase Intention of New Uniforms

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The martial arts industry has grown and developed tremendously over the past years (Ko, 2003). Martial arts uniforms are important for practicing martial arts, because they bear (1) symbolic/aesthetic value – the representation of skill level, rank and the style of the practitioner, and (2) functional value – the protection of the practitioner and enhancement of the practitioner’s physical performances. However, no study has examined whether martial arts practitioners are satisfied with their current uniforms or what types of uniforms they plan to purchase for future use. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to identify factors that influence martial arts practitioners’ satisfaction of their current uniforms and purchase intention of new uniforms.

Theoretical Framework. The Functional, Expressive, and Aesthetic Consumer Needs Model (Lamb & Kallal, 1992) was used as the theoretical framework. Function and aesthetics are essential factors for sportswear; sports commitment is priority given to a sport and it influences purchase intention (Dickson & Pollack 2000). Therefore, the relationships among function, aesthetics, commitment, satisfaction, and purchase intention were proposed (Figure 1).

Method. All measures were adapted from existing scales to measure quality of uniform, selection choice of uniform, protection, enjoyment of martial arts, satisfaction of the current uniform, preferred appearance, preferred function, commitment to martial arts, and intention to purchase new uniform (Dickson & Pollack 2000; Wheat & Dickson, 1999). Each item was measured by a 7-point Likert scale. A total of 588 participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk were recruited for a quantitative survey, including 401 males and 187 females. The ages ranged from 18 to 64 with an average age of 29 years ($SD = 7.19$).

Results. The structural model had satisfactory levels of fit indices: $\chi^2_{(355)} = 639.68, p < .0001, \chi^2/df = 1.8, CFI = .95, TLI = .95, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .04$. Nine out of 12 hypotheses were supported (Figure 1). Based on Taub et al. (2008), the study identified that there were strong relationships

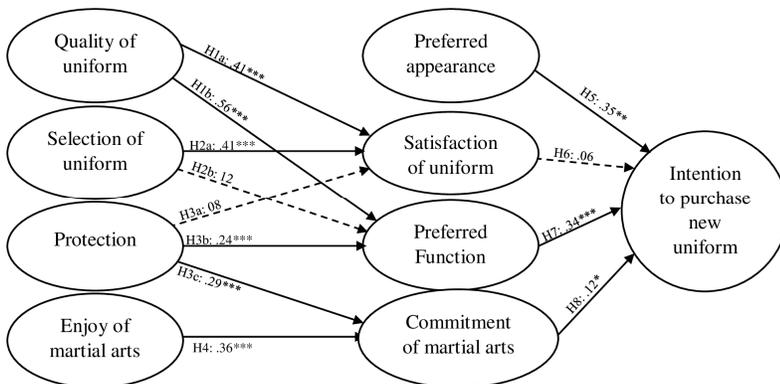


Figure 1. Structural model results. Note: * $p = .05$, ** $p = 0.001$, *** $p = .0001$.

between quality ($\beta = .41$) and satisfaction, and between selection choices ($\beta = .41$) and satisfaction ($R^2 = .48$). However, protection ($\beta = .08$) did not relate to satisfaction. The reason might be because the current uniforms in the market do not have any special protection features, except that practitioners wear additional protective equipment, such as protective gloves and gum shields (Macan, Bundalo-Vrbanac, & Romić, 2006). Protection moderately ($\beta = .24$) and quality strongly ($\beta = .56$) contributed to preferred function of uniforms ($R^2 = .62$), indicating that practitioners prefer to have better quality and uniforms with better protection. However, selection choices (e.g., right size and correct fit) did not contribute to preferred functionality. The reason might be because size and fit are easy to achieve with normal uniforms, and they are not very important when compared with protection. Again, protection ($\beta = .29$) and enjoyment of martial arts ($\beta = .36$) both strongly contributed to commitment of martial arts ($R^2 = .29$). Therefore, practitioners' long term commitment of martial arts was decided by whether they enjoy martial arts and whether they are protected from injury. Finally, preferred function ($\beta = .34$), commitment of martial arts ($\beta = .12$), and preferred appearance ($\beta = .35$) together led to purchase intention of new uniforms. However, satisfaction of the current uniforms did not relate to purchasing new uniforms.

Conclusion. Martial art practitioners were satisfied with their current uniforms as long as two functional attributes were good: quality (e.g., durable and sewn well) and selection choices (e.g., size, color, fit). However, to buy new uniforms, both functional (e.g., protection, enhance performance) and aesthetic attributes (e.g., fashion, enhance physical appearance, unique styles) are necessary conditions. Furthermore, satisfaction was not related to purchase intention, further supporting that practitioners have different evaluation standards related to satisfaction of their current uniforms and purchase intention of unknown new uniforms. The current study filled a research gap about consumers' satisfaction of their current uniforms and purchase intention of new uniforms. This study provided guidelines for industry in creating better martial arts uniforms in order to meet practitioners' needs.

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