

Jan 1st, 12:00 AM

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Martindale, Addie and Lee, Young-A, "Students' Perceptions of Adopting Minimal Transformative Wardrobes" (2017). *International Textile and Apparel Association (ITAA) Annual Conference Proceedings*. 19.

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## Students' Perceptions of Adopting Minimal Transformative Wardrobes

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Keywords: minimal wardrobe, perception, sustainability, transformative clothing

Public media coverage has alluded to a rising interest in minimum wardrobe adoption attributing the growing interest to individuals' increased work productivity and desire for a more sustainable wardrobe option (Elejalde-Ruiz, 2015). Minimal wardrobe adoption has been credited with less stress, individuals feeling to have more clothing choices put together, saving money, and developing their iconic look. Individuals who have adopted a minimal wardrobe have expressed that they felt no one noticed as long as they were appropriately dressed for their work environment. Usually, men have been admired for their minimal wardrobe adoption while it has been presented as less acceptable for women (Elejalde-Ruiz, 2015).

The incorporation of transformative clothing into minimum wardrobe adoption provides potential solutions for individuals wanting more styling options without having more clothing. Transformative clothing that can be worn in multiple ways has been identified for its potential to increase consumer wear rate, postpone disposal, and extend the lifespan of clothing (Cao et al., 2014; Rahman & Gong, 2016). In spite of existing doubts by fashion industry professionals on whether consumers would be willing to accept transformative clothing (Rahman & Gong, 2016), young consumers have expressed interest in transformative clothing that would expand their wardrobe possibilities and extend the wear length of their clothing (Cao et al., 2014).

As this research uses the instructor's adoption of a minimal wardrobe to gain students' perceptions, it is important to acknowledge the impact that instructors' clothing can have on students. As an instructor's appearance is part of the overall students' learning environment, Chatelain (2015) found the impact of instructors' appearance on the students' perceptions of both instructor and course credibility. This exploratory research aimed to understand the perceptions of future professionals in fashion disciplines regarding the use of transformative clothing in the adoption of minimal wardrobes. As limited academic research has been available on minimal wardrobe adoption, this study was designed to explore the concepts that public media has pressed on minimal wardrobe adoption. This research intended to incorporate the research findings on transformative clothing use to understand the role of transformative clothing in minimal wardrobe adoption and create a more sustainable wardrobe.

A purposive sample of 36 students (24 females and 12 males) enrolled an introductory retailing class at a large U.S. Southeastern university was used to gauge the perceptions of minimal wardrobe adoption by their course instructor. The instructor adopted a minimal wardrobe on the seventh class meeting without telling the students. The wardrobe consisted of two identical dresses in two neutral colors, designed specifically for this study with the capability to be worn frontwards and backwards. The instructor alternated between the two dresses and their frontward and backward capabilities for 30 consecutive class meetings during the semester. At the 30<sup>th</sup> class meeting, a survey questionnaire including yes or no and open-ended questions

was distributed to and completed by the students. It solicited students' perceptions of the instructor's wardrobe, transformative clothing, role of gender in adoption, and reason for possible consumer adoption of minimal wardrobes. Descriptive statistics and content analysis were performed to analyze the data.

The majority of the students (69.4%) in the class noticed the wardrobe adoption with over 50% disclosing they noticed within the first six class meetings of the wardrobe adoption period; around 78% of female students noticed as compared to 58.3% of male students. The perceived benefits of the instructor's wardrobe adoption were divided into the following common themes: simplification, professional appearance, and saving time and money. While none of the students disclosed that they were aware of the dresses being worn frontwards and backwards, 69.4% of the students felt that the availability of transformative clothing could reduce clothing consumption and extend its lifespan, which confirms Cao et al.'s (2016) findings. The majority of the students (77%) also expressed interest in owning transformative clothing. Distinctive reasons were identified for adopting minimal transformative clothing between the male and female students, with males more on concerns with environmental sustainability and females more on increased work productivity. The majority of the students expressed it to be more socially acceptable for men than women to adopt a minimal transformative wardrobe.

This exploratory research brought together the publicly pressed ideas of minimal wardrobe adoption with academic research on transformative clothing for the increased awareness of sustainability in college students' current and future life. The findings confirm the concept of minimal wardrobe adoption in regard to future professionals' perceptions of sustainability and work productivity. The study also revealed gender differences in minimal transformative wardrobe adoption and extended research on students' perceptions of their instructor's appearance. This study provides valuable insights on emerging professionals' perceptions on minimal transformative wardrobe adoption. In addition, the process of minimal transformative wardrobe adoption used in this research can be possibly adapted as a pedagogical tool by other instructors to enhance students' sustainability awareness and practices in a safe learning environment.

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