Jan 1st, 12:00 AM

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Keywords: Communication, Diffusion, Consulting

The purpose of this study was to examine how a client's perceived similarity to (homophily) and differences (heterophily) from a stylist impacts adoption of a fashion message. The stylist or appearance consultant is a significant influencer in the fashion industry, creating new looks and sellable fashions (Shala, 2012). Appearance messages, unlike other products, can be complex given the fashion look, the individual wearer, and the various contexts where it is found (Damhorst, 1999). Within diffusion theory, the consultant can be considered a change agent or an individual who influences clients' decisions about adoption of an innovation or perceived new appearance. To be successful a change agent should be similar to the client in social characteristics and, to ensure trust, different in expertise (Rogers, 1995).

Limited research has examined communication between an image consultant and a client. Saiki (2005) researched the diffusion of a fashion message in a teaching situation where participants listened to a presentation about dressing for a job interview. The participants' perceived similarity in size and behavior, and differences in credibility to the presenters were important in influencing learning. Churchill, Collins, and Strang (1975) found consumers in a retail setting tended to buy apparel from sales people similar to themselves. Both studies noted the importance of perceived similarity of visible cues in adoption. This tendency was partially explained by the short duration of the consultant/client interaction in these studies.

Method: In this research, participants listened to a one hour instructional presentation about appropriate workplace dress and later went shopping with a fashion consultant to purchase workplace clothing. After the two to three hour shopping trip, participants completed a survey. Three sessions of the same protocol were completed with varying groups of participants and consultants. A reliable and valid survey assessed participants' perceptions of similarities and differences to consultants along various categories (attitude, morality, appearance, and background) and differences in credibility (McCroskey, Richmond & Daly, 1975). A reliable and valid survey by Richmond, Gorham and McCroskey (1987) was modified to include an item that assessed perceptions of learning and future use of the program information. After mean scores were calculated, relationships between perceived adoption of the information (learning and future use) to levels of homophily/heterophily were measured using a Pearson's Correlation coefficient analysis. The research was approved by the IRB (#244949).

Results: The 57 participants reported similarity to his/her consultant (1=similar; 7=different) in attitude (thinks, behaves, and attitude) and morality (morality and sexual attitudes) with mean scores from 2.02 to 2.93. The participants felt somewhat similar in background (economic situation, status, and background) to their consultants with mean scores ranging from 2.89 to 3.76. Participants perceived him or herself as moderately different from the consultant in appearance (M = 4.65) and body size (M = 5.04). Participants learned the material (M = 2.41) and indicated future use of the program material with a mean score of 2.20 where 1 was agree and 7 was disagree. Participants found the consultants credible with a mean score of 6.6 (1= not

credible; 7 =credible). As perceived similarity in attitude, background, and morality increased so did perceived adoption of the program information (see Table 1). As perceptions of credibility increased, learning (r=-.341; p = .010) and use of information increased (r=-.402; p = .002).

Table 1. *Perceived Similarity/Difference and Learning and Future Use of Information*

Variable	Sub Variable 1	Sub Variable 2	Sub Variable 3	Sub Variable 4
	Pearson's Correlation Coefficient: p value (*p≤.05)			
#1 Learning to				
Attitude	Thinks .454:.001*	Behaves .474:.000*	Attitude 519: .000*	
Morality	Morals .647: .000*	Sexual att. .420:.004*		
Background	Soc. class .556:.000*	Economic .374:.014*	Status .422:.002*	Backg.556:.000*
Appearance	Looks .116:.402	Size .187:.176		
#2 Future use of information to				
Attitude	Thinks .523:.000*	Behaves .510:.000	Attitude .491: .000*	
Morality	Morals .628: .000*	Sexual att. 432;.003		
Background	Soc. class .563:.000*	Economic.328: .020	Status .475:.000*	Backg .465: 001*
Appearance	Looks .169:.222	Size .197:.154		

Discussion: The results supported the theory of diffusion (Rogers, 1995). When the client perceived the consultant as similar in characteristics such as attitude, morality, and background, and different in credibility the client adopted the information. Interestingly, similarity and differences in appearance cues (fit and appearance) did not relate significantly to adoption, conflicting with findings from previous research (Churchill, 1975; Saiki, 2005). The long duration of the consultation period could explain the difference. Visual information may become less important in the adoption process when the consultant/client interact on more than one occasion and for long periods of time. Further research could examine the impact of the duration of the consulting period on the adoption of appearance messages.

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