

**Influence of Consumer Age and Clothing Type of Salesperson on  
Consumer Satisfaction with Salesperson's Performance**

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# **INFLUENCE OF CONSUMER AGE AND CLOTHING TYPE OF SALESPERSON ON CONSUMER SATISFACTION WITH SALESPERSON'S PERFORMANCE**

**Siwon Cho**

## **(ABSTRACT)**

In the retail environment, the salesperson is a strong factor of influence in consumers' decision process because a store image and ability to build loyalty can heavily depend on the ability and characteristics of the salesperson (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995). A consumer may fully anticipate buying, but this intention may change if the salesperson's performance is not satisfactory. Engel et al. (1995) indicated that appearance is an important characteristic of the salesperson. Clothing is an essential part of the salesperson's appearance and it can transmit many meanings, such as identity, mood, and attitude (Stone, 1962). Hawkins, Best, and Coney (1998) indicated that consumers in different age groups have different attitudes, values, and behaviors. The purpose of this study is to determine the influence of consumer age and the clothing type of the salesperson in the apparel consumer satisfaction process.

Based on the previous literatures, a conceptual model was developed as a framework of the study. This model suggests that consumer age and the clothing type of the salesperson influence consumer attitude toward the salesperson, which in turn influences consumer expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance. Consumer expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance, and expectancy disconfirmation (i.e., the confirmation/disconfirmation between consumer expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance) are three factors that influence consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance. Six hypotheses were generated to test this model. A 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial design was used with two age groups (adolescents and the elderly) and two clothing types of the salesperson (formal and informal). Two questionnaires with the same scenario, but two pictures of the salesperson with the different clothing types, were developed as the measurement of instrument.

The participants were 120 adolescent males 16 to 19 years old and 120 elderly males 65 years and older.

Results indicated that a significant interaction existed between consumer age and the clothing type of the salesperson in consumer attitude toward the salesperson. Adolescent participants had a more positive attitude toward the salesperson with an informal clothing type. On the other hand, elderly participants had a significantly more positive attitude toward the salesperson with a formal clothing type. Significantly positive relationships were found between consumer attitude toward the salesperson and consumer expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance. These results indicated that a more positive attitude toward the salesperson was related to a higher expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance. Significantly positive relationships were also found between consumer expectation and consumer satisfaction, and consumer evaluation and consumer satisfaction. A higher expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance was related to a higher satisfaction with the salesperson's performance. When the relationship between expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation and consumer satisfaction was examined, results indicated that participants were more satisfied with the salesperson's performance when their evaluations of the salesperson's performance were equal or better than their expectations, than when their evaluations were worse than their expectations.

The results of this study suggest that consumer age and the clothing type of the salesperson influences consumer satisfaction with the salesperson. Several marketing applications were discussed and recommendation was given for the future study.

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**In loving memory of Jin-Ok Ryu, my grandmother...**

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION AND FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

Three sections are presented in this chapter. The first section, introduction, describes the justification and focus of the study. The second section, framework of the study, introduces a conceptual model of the influence of consumer age and the clothing type of the salesperson on consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance. The third section, objectives, submits six objectives stating the specific goals of the study.

### **Introduction**

Clothing is a factor in everyday human lives and interactions with others (Horn & Gurel, 1981). It can transmit a vast array of meanings such as identity, value, mood, and attitude (Stone, 1962). Kaiser (1983-1984) introduced an interdisciplinary and conceptual framework using symbolic interaction theory and cognitive social psychology for studying clothing and appearance as a form of communication. Symbolic interaction involved with interactions among individuals (i.e., interpretations of clothing symbols between a wearer and a perceiver) whereas cognitive social psychology regards clothing cues as items that might be selected by perceivers to initiate inference processes about wearers. Interdisciplinary and conceptual framework by

Kaiser (1983-1984) involved the study of the interpersonal and situational aspects of the meanings assigned to clothing and the understanding of clothing as a symbolic representation of the self and others. This framework showed the importance of clothing cues in perceptual and communicative processes. Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) developed a theoretical framework for understanding the linkages between identity and the social aspects of clothing. The authors discussed clothing as a communicator of identity from the perspective of symbolic interaction theory. Individuals acquired identities through social interaction in various settings such as social, physical, and biological surroundings. Identities were communicated by clothing because it showed the social positions of the wearer to both the wearer and the perceiver. Arnheim (1949) and Asch (1946) indicated that the perceiver organized component parts of appearance into a global impression. Interdependent meanings were developed from the perceiver's organization of the physical message cues within the surrounding context or background. Damhorst (1990) emphasized that clothing was a systematic means of transmission of information about the wearer, meaning that multiple messages might be sent to the perceiver. According to previous research, clothing has played an important role in human behavior. Clothing is considered not only as body protection or decoration but also as a communication tool in human interactions.

In the retail environment, the salesperson is a strong factor of influence on consumers because store image and the ability to build loyalty can heavily depend on the salesperson's performance and characteristics such as his/her attentiveness, expertise, friendliness, and appearance (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995). The salesperson represents retailers to customers and works as the transaction or exchange function between retailers and consumers

(Wilkie, 1994). The salesperson informs the customers of the products and services available to them and helps them decide which products and services are the best for their needs and wants.

Wilkie (1994) reported that an industrial firm considered the salesperson's function five times more important than advertising in their marketing mix rates. Supporting the importance of the salesperson, Woodside and Davenport (1974) explained that a salesperson's power plays an important role when the consumer likes the salesperson. The more the consumer likes the salesperson, the more likely the consumer accepts the salesperson's recommendations. The salesperson's influence in the sales interaction is related to the similarity of the salesperson to the consumer regarding such traits as age, gender, interests, and race. Berscheid and Reis (1998) suggested that understanding the principles of attraction in first encounters is the most important factor of interpersonal attraction.

The clothing type of the salesperson, especially in apparel stores, would be an influential nonverbal communication cue that interacts with consumers in sales. As a critical factor of the salesperson's appearance, appropriate clothing of the salesperson may be an important factor in influencing apparel consumer satisfaction with salesperson's performance. A consumer may fully anticipate buying a particular brand of product, but this purchase intention may not be fulfilled if the appearance of the salesperson is not appropriate (Engel et al., 1995). Conversely, a consumer may lack interest in buying a product, but because of the influence of clothing type of the salesperson, the consumer may purchase the product. Engle et al. (1995) reported that some apparel stores hired popular young people as sales people and had them wear the products sold in the store. However, no clear relationship between the clothing type of the salesperson and consumer behavior has been reported in the literature.

Apparel retailers have better chances to be successful in today's marketplace if they target consumers effectively, attract their patronage, and satisfy their needs and wants (Selbert, 1991). To target consumers, it is important to understand consumers' demographics, such as age, income, education, and occupation. Age groups can be very useful as a means of understanding and segmenting an apparel market because age affects how individuals think, feel, and behave (Hawkins, Best & Coney, 1998). A generation or age cohort is a group of persons who have experienced a common social, political, historical, and economic environment. Generations are categorized according to cohort analysis, which is the process of describing and explaining the attitudes, values, and behaviors of an age group, as well as predicting its future attitudes, values, and behaviors. The forces that shape the lives of each generation are different; therefore, each generation behaves differently from other generations as it passes through various age categories

Hawkins et al. (1998) indicated that preferences and tastes formed during the teenage years could influence purchase patterns throughout life. Adolescents spent over 100 billion dollars for personal consumption and they influenced household shopping (Zinn, 1994). More than nine in ten adolescents are involved in a spending or earning transaction each week and almost one-third of 18 to 19 years olds hold a credit card in their own name (Zollo, 1995). Adolescents have been recognized as placing more importance on appearance than any other age group (Hawkins et al., 1998). They are affected by socialization and self-perception within the group. Zollo (1995) stated that adolescents are trendsetters who extend fashion and culture for the population at large. Based on the estimated age distributions of the United States population until 2005, products consumed by teenagers and young adults are predicted to see a sharp increase in demand due to the prosperity in the entertainment industry, and personal electronics (Hawkins et al., 1998). The U. S. Bureau of the Census reported that consumers between the

ages of 5 and 19 accounted for almost 56 million of the population in 1995, 61 million in 2000, and are projected to be about 67 million by the year 2010 (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2001). Zollo (1995) reported that adolescent consumers 12 to 19 years old are projected to be about 34.9 million in 2010. The adolescent market is predicted to be more important in the near future. Forward-thinking companies actively market adult brands to adolescents because they are the future spenders (Zollo, 1995).

The older market, aged 55 years or older, has received substantial recognition from marketers (Shim & Bickle, 1993). The U. S. Bureau of the Census reported that consumers between the ages of 55 and 64 accounted for 21 million of the population in 1995, 24 million in 2000, and are projected to be about 36 million by the year 2010 (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2001). Consumers 65 years and older represented about 34 million of the population in 1995, 36 million in 2000, and are predicted to be 42 million by the year 2010 in the United States. Lazer and Shaw (1987) reported that women 55 to 64 years of age spent 13% more on apparel and 24% more on personal-care products than younger women. Also, Assael (1995) reported that people age 65 and older had the highest discretionary income of any group. They were predicted as the largest market for luxury items (Hawkins et al, 1998).

Hawkins et al. (1998) indicated that adolescents and elderly consumers have different attitudes, values, and behavior. They have different choices in products, services, activities, and media. For example, Chowdhary (1989) found that adolescent consumers and elderly consumers were significantly different in seeking fashion information. Adolescent consumers used mostly consumer-dominated sources, such as social gatherings and friends. Elderly consumers were more likely to use marketer-dominated sources, such as newspapers and radio. Age differences are expected to influence consumer perception. Consumers in different age

groups may have their own unique perceptions and preferences in clothing. Adolescent and elderly consumers may have different responses to the salesperson according to their different perceptions in clothing.

The purpose of this study is to determine (a) the influence of consumer age and the salesperson's clothing type on apparel consumer attitude toward the salesperson, (b) the relationships of consumer attitude toward the salesperson and consumer expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance, and (c) the relationships of consumer expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance and consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance. This study will extend the understanding of adolescent and elderly consumers' interaction the salespersons. With the results of this study, apparel retailers could understand how the clothing type of the salesperson influences consumer behavior. Apparel marketers may apply the results of this study to their business strategies so that they can increase profits by using the clothing type of the salesperson to attract potential consumers and stimulate their purchases.

### **Framework of the Study**

A conceptual model that integrates several propositions as well as prior research was developed for the study (See Figure 1). Engel et al. (1995) suggested that individual differences influence the consumer decision process. Individual differences include consumer demographics, involvement, knowledge, lifestyles, motivation, personality, resources, and values. Age, one of the demographic variables, is the focus of the study. Hawkins, et al. (1988) indicated that



consumers in different age groups often have different attitudes, values, and behaviors. In this study, consumer age influences on consumer attitude toward the salesperson, consumer expectation, evaluation, expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation, and satisfaction with the salesperson's performance.

Engel et al. (1995) suggested that the retail environment has the most influence on consumer behavior in the purchase situation because the retail environment affects consumer behavior at the moment when consumers are in the store. The authors included salespeople as one important influence on consumer behavior in the retail environment, and indicated that attentiveness, expertise, friendliness, and appearance are four important characteristics of the salesperson. The clothing type of the salesperson, one important factor influencing the salesperson's appearances, is the focus of this study.

Stone (1962) stated that individuals who shared similar appearance symbols or at least the same understanding of such symbols were more likely to engage in role taking as meaningful communication. If there is similarity between the salesperson and the consumer in sales interaction, the consumer finds attraction from the salesperson and therefore likes the salesperson (Woodside & Davenport, 1974). When the consumer likes the salesperson, the salesperson has more power in the sales interaction.

Consumers in different age groups may have different perceptions in clothing. If the clothing type of the salesperson is similar to the clothing type that consumer prefers to wear, the consumer will have a more positive attitude toward the salesperson. The influence of the clothing type of salespersons on consumer attitude toward the salesperson may be different according to consumer age. A significant interaction may exist between consumer age and the clothing type of salesperson in the influence of consumer attitude toward salesperson. The

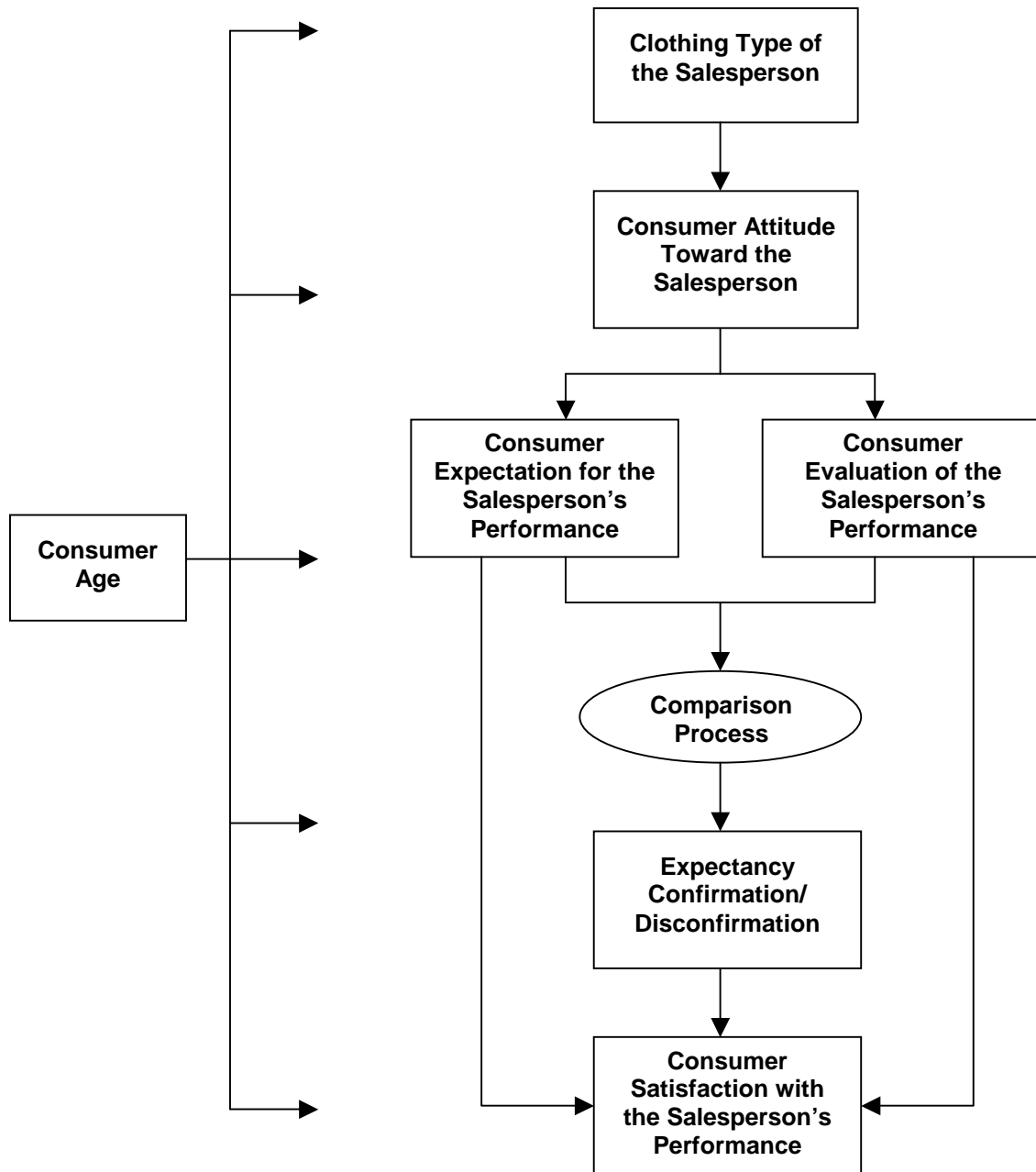


Figure 1

A Conceptual Model of Influence of Consumer Age and the Clothing Type of the Salesperson on Consumer Satisfaction with the Salesperson's Performance

proposed model suggests that there is an interaction between consumer age and the clothing type of the salesperson in the influence of consumer attitude toward the salesperson (see Figure 1).

Miller (1977) indicated that consumers bring a set of expectations to their purchase process. Their expectations are the function of past history as well as of the current purchase situation. Engel et al. (1995) stated that consumers form attitudes toward products and services. Based on these attitudes, services or products having the most favorable attitude are chosen. Based on these propositions, this model suggests that consumer attitude toward the salesperson influences consumer expectation of the salesperson's performance (see Figure 1).

Hawkins et al. (1998) stated that the evaluation of services and products is often based on consumers' immediate emotional response to the services or products. Based on their propositions, this model suggests that consumer attitude toward the salesperson influences consumer evaluation of salesperson's performance (see Figure 1).

Oliver (1977) used a car as the sample product in the study of the effect of expectation on post-purchased product satisfaction. The author found a significant and positive relationship between initial expectation and consumer satisfaction/ dissatisfaction at the product-consumption stage of a car. Higher expectation tended toward higher satisfaction, whereas, lower expectation led to lower satisfaction. Consistent results were reported by Churchill and Surprenant (1982) who found that different levels of expectation of product performance significantly influenced consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Based on these results, the relationship of consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance and consumer satisfaction with salesperson's performance was included in the model (see Figure 1).

Churchill and Surprenant (1982) found that evaluation of product performance was a significant determinant of consumer satisfaction. Consistent results were reported by Tse and Wilton (1988) who found that evaluation of performance of record player was important in

consumer satisfaction. Based on these results, the relationship of consumer evaluation of salesperson's performance and consumer satisfaction with salesperson's performance was included in the model (see Figure 1).

Oliver (1980) stated that satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a product or service was the outcome of a comparison of the expected performance of the product or service against the actual performance. Engel et al. (1995) stated three different forms of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction judgment. Simple expectancy confirmation implies that performance equals expectations; positive expectancy disconfirmation implies that performance is better than expectations; negative expectancy disconfirmation implies that performance is worse than the expectations. Several researchers suggested that simple expectancy confirmation and positive expectancy disconfirmation bring satisfaction and negative expectancy disconfirmation leads to dissatisfaction (Kennedy & Thirkell, 1988; Bearden & Teel, 1983; Swan & Combs, 1976). Based on these propositions, the relationship of expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation (i.e., the confirmation/disconfirmation between consumer expectation and evaluation of salesperson's performance) and consumer satisfaction with salesperson's performance was included in the model (see Figure 1).

### **Objectives of the Study**

Based on the proposed model, six objectives are submitted as specific goals to be accomplished. The objectives are:

1. To determine if there is a significant interaction of consumer age and the clothing type of the salesperson type on consumer attitude toward the salesperson.

2. To determine if there is a significant difference in consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance among consumers with different attitudes toward the salesperson.
3. To determine if there will be a significant difference in consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance among consumers with different attitudes toward the salesperson.
4. To determine if there is a significant difference in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among consumers with different levels of expectation for the salesperson's performance.
5. To determine if there is a significant difference in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among consumers with different levels of evaluation of the salesperson's performance.
- 6.** To determine if there is a significant difference in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among consumers with expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In this chapter, the literature is reviewed in four sections: (a) clothing as nonverbal communication cues, (b) adolescent and elderly consumer behavior, (c) influence of the salesperson on consumer behavior, and (d) similarity effect.

#### **Clothing as Nonverbal Communication Cues**

One person's nonverbal communication could influence another person's behavior (Rosenthal, 1966). Depaulo and Friedman (1998) defined nonverbal communication as a sending and receiving of thoughts and feelings without words. People who have a special relationship might have special sensitivities of understanding the nonverbal communication cues in the interaction (Buck, 1983). Depaulo and Fisher (1981) found that people who were willing to ask for help were more accurate at reading these nonverbal cues.

Many psychological studies in the 1970s investigated the effects of clothing on interpersonal behavior. Samuel (1972) found that a straight-attired female was more likely to be followed across the street in disobedience to the light than a hippie-attired female. Darley and Cooper (1972) investigated the relationship between a political campaigner's clothes and appearance and campaign effectiveness. The potential voter was more reluctant to take or to look

at the information provided by a “deviant” with long hair, beard, dungarees, and an old navy army jacket than by a normally dressed individual with conventional sports clothing and short hair. Keasey and Tomlinson-Keasey (1973) investigated the relationship between clothing styles and petition signing and the authors found that the formally dressed male and female petitioners obtained more signatures from male passersby while the hippie female petitioner obtained less from female passersby. In a study by Harris and Baudin (1973), participants were asked for a dime by well-dressed researchers who wore dresses and heels or coats and ties, or by sloppily dressed researchers who wore jeans and old shirts. Results showed that the well-dressed researchers were more likely to receive the money than researchers in sloppy clothes. Chaikin, Delega, Yoder, and Phillip (1974) and Kleinke (1977) conducted similar studies and also reported consistent results. Schiavo, Sherlock, and Wicklund (1974) investigated the effect of attire on the degree of directions obtained (i.e., no direction, general direction, detailed direction). Participants gave more detailed directions to the conventionally dressed researchers. Even when the participants did not know the directions, they offered other suggestions (e.g., "ask a policeman," "take the subway") more to the conventionally dressed researchers more than to the hippie dressed researchers.

Some researchers in the field of clothing and textiles investigated the effects of appropriate and inappropriate clothes on job interviews. In a study by Workman (1984-1985), the researcher wore either a suit or overalls to job interviews for an orientation advisor position and a groundskeeper position. A suit was considered inappropriate clothing for a groundskeeper, as were overalls for an orientation manager. Results indicated that the interviewee who wore a suit for the groundskeeper position was considered to have a limited choice of clothes to wear, whereas the interviewee who wore overalls for the orientation advisor position was judged as less interested in the position and less confident. The interviewee received more positive ratings

when dressed in a suit rather than in overalls, regardless of the job type. The study showed that the perception of appropriateness of clothing was an important element in interpersonal interaction. Ray (1985-1986) also investigated the influence of clothes in the ratings of a job applicant's personal characteristics. The three levels of appropriate clothing were a suit (high appropriateness), shirt, pants, and tie (moderate), or shirt and pants without tie (low appropriateness). The author found that regardless of the job applicant is experienced, the applicant with a suit received higher recommendation ratings than the less appropriately dressed job applicant. Consistent results were found in several other studies, (Johnson & Roach-Higgins, 1987; Kelly, Jones, Hatch & Nelson, 1976; Kelly, Good & Walter, 1974; Conner, Peters, and Nagasawa, 1973; Douty, 1963) which show that clothing was important in creating a good first impression and that clothing influenced judgments of a person's general ability to meet job requirements. In general, people who were conventionally dressed received more positive reactions than people who were dressed in other clothing types. These results showed that clothing affected people's perceptions of personal traits, ability and attitudes.

Several researchers explored the effects of clothing on social interaction and characteristics perception. Johnson, Nagasawa, and Peters (1977) found that fashionable clothing resulted in perceptions of greater sociability than did unfashionable clothing. Workman (1987) also found that clothing fashionability was a factor in interpersonal distance. A person wearing fashionable clothing received more positive interactions with others than a person wearing out-of-date clothing. If the clothing worn does not reflect current fashion, the wearer may be considered as "different." The author indicated that interpersonal distance in social interaction could be modifiable through the manipulations of clothing. Paek (1986) tested the impressions of personal traits formed by perceivers of a person wearing conservative, daring, casual, or dressy styles. Results indicated that a person wearing a conservative or a casual style was perceived to



be more understanding and dependable than a person in other styles. A person in a daring style was more attractive and individualistic than a person in other styles. A person in a dressy style was regarded to be conventional and dependent on others. Butler and Roesel (1989) examined the influence of teachers' clothing styles on student perceptions of teacher characteristics. The teacher in jeans was judged as fun, approachable, not especially knowledgeable, commanding limited respect, and not looking like a teacher, whereas the suited teacher was seen as not especially fun, unapproachable, an authority figure who assigns homework, and possessing the image of a teacher. No one style was considered as preferable overall. The reason given for this depended on the situation, for example, the diversity of roles, the topics of study, and location of class (e.g., outdoor or indoor).

### **Adolescent and Elderly Consumer Behaviors**

Understanding consumer behaviors, attitudes, and opinions of each age group is an important aspect for marketers (Rentz & Reynolds, 1991). Hawkins et al. (1998) indicated that adolescents and elderly consumers have different attitudes, values, and behaviors. These two segments of the population differ in their choices of products and services, activities, and media.

#### Adolescent Consumer Behavior

Adolescents have their own language and way of speaking, their own expressions and tones (Hawkins et al., 1998). Marketers are using this behavior among young consumers to launch brands or to reposition current brands to appeal to this large target market. Young consumers today also have an unique information seeking source that other generations didn't

have when they were young; i.e., the Internet and computer communications (Tapscott, 1996). Layne (1995) reported that members of the N-Generation (i.e., Network Generation - those who grow up using computers) members were moving away from television, and were watching less each year. The flexibility and interactive nature of the Internet was shaping their perceptions of shopping, information gathering, and virtually all other aspects of marketing.

Several studies in clothing and textiles have explored the behaviors of adolescent consumers. Some research studies of adolescents have investigated the relationship between clothing and self-perception. Self-perception has been defined as the feelings and beliefs that people have about themselves (Kaiser, 1985). Self-perception is generally multidimensional. Kaiser (1985) believed that peer acceptance is vital to adolescents' socialization, self-esteem, and body image. Clothing that is similar to one's peers is considered an essential factor for this acceptance. These propositions are consistent with several research results. Francis (1992) found that inability to buy clothing and clothing deprivation affected social competence and social participation among adolescents. High clothing deprivation was indicated as "not dressed right" and low clothing deprivation was indicated as "best dressed." Both inability to buy clothing and high clothing deprivation were associated with low social competence and low social participation. Drake and Ford (1979) investigated the relationship between self-perception and perceived clothing deprivation among adolescents and found that low self-perception was related to highly perceived clothing deprivation (i.e., to be perceived as not dressed right).

## Elderly Consumer Behavior

Blackwell et al. (2001) indicated that today's elderly consumers are known as the "young-again" market consumers who think, feel, and buy young. Schewe (1983) found that elderly consumers were more fashion conscious and spent more money on apparel than elderly consumers in past generations. Chowdhary (1988) also found that elderly consumers liked stylish clothing over classic clothing. However, when elderly consumers were asked to choose the style they liked the most, they selected the style that the researcher defined as classic clothing. The author explained that the classic style was a fashionable style when the participants were in their teens or youth. The style that elderly consumers consider to be classic or trendy may differ from other consumer groups.

Jackson (1992) examined the apparel expenditure patterns of people 60 years and older. Results showed that advancing age did not significantly affect apparel expenditures. Activities, such as travel, hobbies, sports, physical fitness, and volunteer work encouraged elderly consumers to replace wardrobes more often than elderly consumers in past generations (Reich & Goldsberry, 1990). With regard to the income and expenditure relationship, elderly consumers were not significantly different from consumers of other ages. The proportion of expenditure on clothing was similar to that of other age groups.

Jackson and O'Neal (1994) investigated females between 55 years and older to determine how they perceived body changes. Results showed that the participants perceived their body changes during aging by their need for altering ready-to-wear apparel or by choosing flattering dress designs. Shim and Bickle (1993) examined women aged 55 years and older to determine their satisfactions with the fit of apparel purchased through catalogs. The authors found that the overall satisfaction was relatively low for the entire sample. Among petite, medium, and tall attributes, the petite groups showed the least satisfaction with product selection, general size, and

fit factors. The authors stated that many apparel products were designed with the younger adult in mind, unmindful of the physiological and psychological changes associated with aging that made older consumers dissatisfied with fit and product selection.

Several researchers investigated elderly consumers' information resources and shopping behavior. Chowdhary (1988) found that older consumers were more likely to use marketer-dominated sources such as newspapers and radio. Stevens (1981) stated that marketers needed to redirect product messages to elderly consumers by increasing advertisement that reflects the consumer's life styles. Summers, Belleau, and Wozniak (1992) compared the shopping behavior of four age groups and found that the oldest group in the study, over 61 years old, had lower shopping involvement than did the youngest group, between 18 to 35 years old. However, older participants showed significantly higher scores on being quality conscious than did younger participants. Engel et al. (1995) indicated three qualities important to elderly consumers during shopping: comfortable environment, physical and financial security, and easy access in stores. Johnson-Hillery (1995) found that elderly consumers' perceptions of a salesperson were significantly affected by the salesperson's service hospitality and personal characteristics.

### **Influence of the Salesperson on Consumer**

A salesperson can have a strong influence on consumers during shopping. Wilkie (1994) reported that industrial firms considered the salesperson's function five times more important than advertising. Evans (1963) analyzed an interaction dyad (i.e., a pair of individuals in an interaction) engaged in a common activity such as sales interaction between a salesperson and a consumer. The author stated that both the salesperson and the consumer are involved in the

interaction of a purchase decision, which depends on how the two parties view and react to each other. Depaulo and Friedman (1998) indicated that an effective door-to-door salesperson succeeds not because of a knowledge of persuasion techniques, but because of something in the dynamics of the face-to-face interaction. Weitz (1981) also stated that the salesperson's effectiveness in sales interactions affects the consumer purchase decision. The author believed that the salesperson's effectiveness is influenced by both selling behavior and salesperson's resources. Selling behavior includes adapting to consumers, establishing influence bases, using effective techniques, and controlling the sales interaction. The salesperson's resources include product and consumer knowledge, analytical and interpersonal skills, and availability of service alternatives.

Several researchers investigated the influence of a salesperson on consumer behavior. Olshavsky (1973) analyzed the characteristics of the sales interaction as a process having three stages: orientation phase, evaluation phase, and consumption phase. In the orientation phase, the salesperson learns about the consumer's interests and the consumer learns about the products and services of the store. In the evaluation phase, the consumer examines the alternative products and services. In the consumption phase, the consumer decides whether to buy or not. The influence of the salesperson was found the strongest in the evaluation phase because the salesperson could suggest the order and the number of product alternatives to be evaluated and use prepared presentations to guide the consumer's attention. Many consumers gave up their power in the interaction and asked the salesperson for recommendations. The author determined the key results of the sales interaction process, which were that the salesperson often played a powerful role in influencing the consumer purchase decision and was active in guiding consumer's choice towards specific types of products and services rather than assuming consumer's wants and needs. Caballero and Pride (1984) researched the effectiveness of a salesperson's gender and

attractiveness in direct mail advertisement. Results indicated that both male and female consumers preferred a highly attractive female in the catalog and showed significantly more response to the mail offer. This study provides evidence in the influence of a salesperson's attractiveness on consumer behavior.

Wilkie (1994) indicated that the reason why a salesperson has a strong influence on the consumer purchase decision is that the salesperson generally has more product knowledge and more experience of sales interaction than do consumers. Woodside and Davenport (1974) explained the salesperson's power as "expert power", a source of selling influence based on superior knowledge, while the consumer has "referent power", a source of influence based on a consumer's identification with the salesperson. The referent power in the sales interaction is related to the similarity of the salesperson and consumer for characteristics such as age, gender, interests, and race. The referent power is stronger when the consumer likes the salesperson. The more the consumer likes the salesperson, the more the consumer accepts the salesperson's recommendations. Another research study conducted by Johnson-Hillery (1995) also showed the effectiveness of similarity attraction. Results indicated that elderly consumers viewed an older salesperson more positively than a younger salesperson because of the similarity in age.

In apparel research, few studies have investigated the influence of the salesperson. Shim and Kotsiopoulos (1993) found that friendliness, availability, product knowledge, and appearance are important characteristics of a salesperson. The availability of the wardrobe consultant was ranked as one of the significant customer services. Highly involved apparel catalog shoppers were especially more concerned with the salesperson than were apathetic and convenience-oriented apparel catalog shoppers.

## Similarity Effect

Many researchers have studied the relationship between similarity attraction and human behavior. Berscheid and Reis (1998) found that shared similarity between the individuals' personal characteristics during interaction would influence attraction. People who have similar attitudes interact nonverbally in more positive ways, regardless of whether they are new acquaintances. Stone (1962) believed that individuals who shared similar appearance symbols or at least the same understanding of such symbols were more likely to engage in role taking as meaningful communication. Emswiller, Deaux, and Willits (1971) investigated the relationship between similarity and compliance. In their study, straight-dressed males and females and hippie-dressed males and females asked people for a dime. Results showed that the participants were more likely to comply with the request from someone who wore the same type of clothes than from someone who wore different clothes from them. Similarity of clothing type played a major role in determining the compliance, with the tendency being particularly strong among men. Bryant (1971) investigated the effect of similarity on petitioning. Both hippie-dressed and straight-dressed researchers asked people who were also classified as hippie dressed or straight dressed for petition signatures. Researchers received significantly more signatures from the participants dressed like them than from those dressed differently. A similar study conducted by Suefield, Bochner, and Matas (1971) reported consistent results. Marchers in a political demonstration were more likely to sign the petitions of similarly dressed requesters without bothering to read it first. Paek (1986) tested the impressions of personal traits formed by perceivers of a wearer dressed in conservative, daring, casual, or dressy styles. Results showed that a wearer in a daring style made favorable impressions on participants with high clothing interests, whereas wearers in conservative or casual styles received unfavorable evaluations.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology for this study is discussed in five sections in this chapter. The first section, research method, discusses the (a) research design, and (b) selections of clothing type for the salesperson and selection of participants. The second section, hypotheses, presents the objectives of the study. The third section, instrument development, describes the development of the questionnaires. The fourth section, data collection, discusses the procedure of data collection. The fifth section, data analysis, explains how the data collected will be analyzed.

#### **Research Method**

##### Research Design

The current research was an experimental study with a 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial design: two age groups of consumers (adolescent boys aged 16 to 19, elderly men 65 years and older) and two clothing types of the salesperson (type A, type B) (see Table 1). This design resulted in four experimental groups. In Group 1, adolescent participants were shown a picture of the salesperson dressed in clothing type A (i.e., a navy blue suit, tie, white dress shirt, black dress shoes; see picture in Questionnaire 1 in Appendix). In Group 2, adolescent participants were



shown a picture of the salesperson dressed in clothing type B (i.e., a navy blue crew-neck long sleeve shirt, navy blue chino pants, tennis shoes; see picture in Questionnaire 2 in Appendix). In Group 3, elderly participants were shown a picture of the salesperson dressed in clothing type A. In Group 4, elderly participants were shown a picture of the salesperson dressed in clothing type B. Two hundred and forty participants were randomly assigned to the two groups within their age group, 60 for each group.

Table 1

Experimental Design

		<u>Consumer Age</u>	
		Adolescent Participant	Elderly Participant
Clothing Types of Salesperson	Type A (Formally dressed type)	Group 1 -Adolescent -Type A	Group 3 -Elderly -Type A
	Type B (Informally dressed type)	Group 2 -Adolescent -Type B	Group 4 -Elderly -Type B

Selection of Clothing Type for the Salesperson and Participants

Only the category of men’s wear was selected as clothing for the salesperson in this study to reduce the influence of the salesperson’s gender on the results. Based on the terminology used in Butler and Roesel’s study, the concept of the formally dressed (type A) and informally dressed (type B) clothing types was adopted. Butler and Roesel (1989) studied the influence of types of dress on elementary school students’ perceptions of female teacher characteristics. The clothing representing the formally dressed type was a long-sleeved tan and black striped dress, or a navy

blue skirted suit with a white blouse. The clothing representing the informally dressed type was a coordinating ski sweater and dark corduroy slacks, or a long-sleeved oxford shirt and jeans with no belt. In this study, the clothing type A (formally dressed type) consisted of a navy blue suit, tie, white dress shirt, and black dress shoes. The clothing type B (informally dressed type) consisted of a navy blue crew-neck long sleeve shirt, navy blue chino pants, and tennis shoes. The neutral basic styles of the clothing were selected that both adolescent and elderly participants would wear regardless of their age differences. A similar navy blue color was selected for both clothing types to reduce the influence of color difference.

Adolescent and elderly consumers were selected as the participants in the study because the population of these age groups are rapidly increasing and will become increasingly important segments in the market (Blackwell, Miniard, Engel, 2001; Zollo, 1995). Because male and female consumers may have different perceptions of a salesperson, only males were selected as the participants in this study to reduce the influence of gender difference on the results. Male high school students aged 16 to 19 were selected as the adolescent group for this study. Adolescents in this age group can drive a car and they have more opportunities to work part time. They have more experience in purchasing apparel products independently compared to the consumers who are 15 years and under. Participants aged 65 and older were selected as the elderly group. Based on the U. S. Bureau of the Census, this age group is the oldest among the categories (Blackwell et al., 2001).

## Hypotheses

Based on the framework and the objectives listed in chapter I, six hypotheses were generated to be tested (see Figure 2).

*H1. There will be a significant interaction of consumer age (i.e., adolescents, elderly) and the clothing type of the salesperson type (i.e., formal, informal) on consumer attitude (i.e., positive, neutral, negative) toward the salesperson.*

Woodside and Davenport (1974) stated that if there is similarity between the salesperson and the consumer in the sales interaction, the consumer is attracted to the salesperson and likes the salesperson. If the salesperson's clothing type is similar to the consumer's preference of clothing type, the consumer will have a more positive attitude toward the salesperson. It is expected that adolescent consumers will have a significantly more positive attitude toward a salesperson with an informal clothing type than a salesperson with a formal clothing type because they may prefer an informal clothing type significantly more than a formal clothing type. In contrast, elderly consumers will have a significantly more positive attitude toward a salesperson with a formal clothing type than a salesperson with an informal clothing type because they may prefer a formal clothing type significantly more than an informal clothing type.

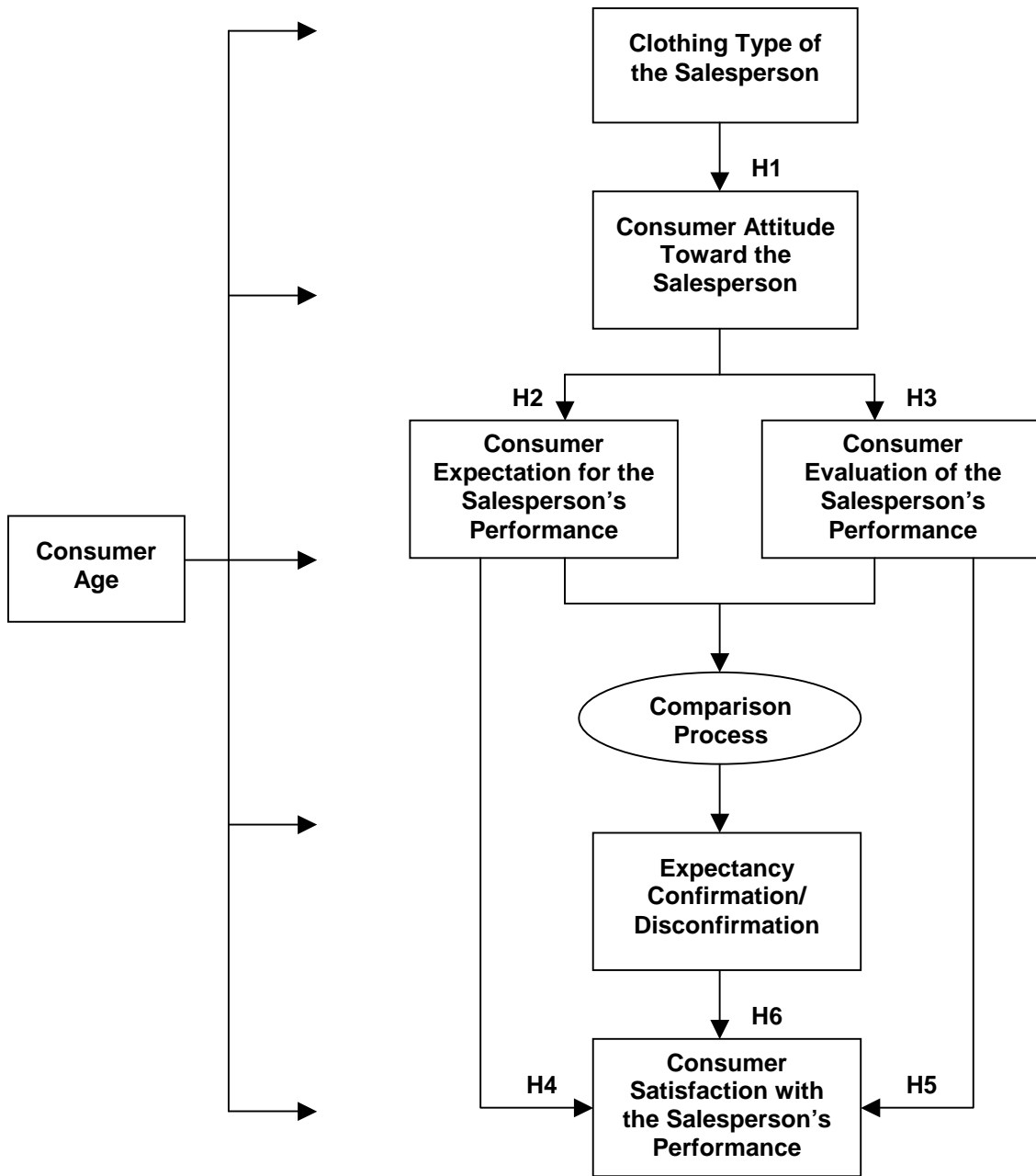


Figure 2

Generated Hypotheses for the Examination of the Proposed Model

*H2. There will be a significant difference in consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance among consumers with different attitudes toward the salesperson.*

Miller (1977) indicated that consumers bring a set of expectations to their purchase process. Their expectations are the function of past history as well as of the current purchase situation. Salespersons in the current purchase situation may play a role in consumer expectation. Engel et al. (1995) also stated that consumers form attitudes toward services and products and that based on these attitudes, the services or products having the most favorable attitude is chosen. Consumer attitude toward the salesperson may have a significant influence on consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance. It is expected that consumers who have a more positive attitude toward a salesperson will have a significantly higher level of expectation for the salesperson's performance. On the other hand, consumers who have a more negative attitude toward a salesperson will have a significantly lower level of expectation for the salesperson's performance.

*H3. There will be a significant difference in consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance among consumers with different attitudes toward the salesperson.*

Hawkins et al. (1998) stated that the evaluation of services and products is often based on consumers' immediate emotional response to the services and products. It is expected that consumers who have a positive attitude toward a salesperson will have a significantly higher level of evaluation for the salesperson's performance. On the other hand, consumers who have a negative attitude toward a salesperson will have a significantly lower level of evaluation for the salesperson's performance.

*H4. There will be a significant difference in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among consumers with different levels of expectation for the salesperson's performance.*

Oliver (1977), and Churchill and Surprenant (1982) found that consumers with a higher expectation in the purchase stage tended toward higher satisfaction in the product consumption stage whereas a lower expectation led to lower satisfaction. When these results are applied to the service condition, it is expected that consumers who have a higher level of expectation will have a higher level of satisfaction with the salesperson's performance. On the other hand, consumers who have a lower level of expectation will have a lower level of satisfaction with the salesperson's performance.

*H5. There will be a significant difference in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among consumers with different levels of evaluation of the salesperson's performance.*

Churchill and Surprenant (1982), and Tse and Wilton (1988) found that evaluation of product performance was a significant determinant of consumer satisfaction. A higher level of evaluation of product performance led to a higher level of consumer satisfaction. When these results are applied to the service condition, it is expected that consumers who have a higher level of evaluation of salesperson's performance will have a higher level of satisfaction with the salesperson's performance. On the other hand, consumers who have a lower level of evaluation will have a lower level of satisfaction with the salesperson's performance.

*H6. There will be a significant difference in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among consumers with positive expectancy disconfirmation (i.e., evaluation is better than expectation), simple expectancy confirmation (i.e., evaluation equals expectation), and negative expectancy disconfirmation (i.e., evaluation is worse than expectation).*

Several researchers found that positive expectancy disconfirmation and simple expectancy confirmation bring positive satisfaction, and negative expectancy disconfirmation leads to dissatisfaction (Kennedy & Thirkell, 1988; Bearden & Teel, 1983; Swan & Combs, 1976). Based on these studies, it is expected that consumers with positive expectancy disconfirmation and simple expectancy confirmation will have a higher level of satisfaction with the salesperson's performance. Consumers with negative expectancy disconfirmation will have a lower level of satisfaction with the salesperson's performance.

### **Instrument Development**

Based on the objectives of the study stated in Chapter I, two questionnaires with three parts were developed as an instrument of measurement. In these two questionnaires, the scenario, salesperson, and questions were exactly the same. The only difference was the clothing type of the salesperson shown in the pictures. A copy of each questionnaire is shown in the Appendix.

In Part I of the questionnaire, the participant was asked to put himself in a shopping scenario and observe a picture of a salesperson. In social psychology, experimental scenarios are frequently used as measuring instruments for personality measures (Asch, 1946; Wishner, 1960; Aronson & Linder, 1965; Milgram, 1974). For example, Asch (1946) investigated the perceived

impressions of personality. The author provided two scenarios describing a person by using different words such as “warm” and “cold.” Participants were asked to write their impressions of the person based on the scenario. Scenarios are also used in the field of clothing and textiles (Robinson, 1986; Leach 1990; Moye, 2000). For example, Moye (2000) investigated the importance of environmental dimensions in choosing a shopping store by using three scenarios. After reading the scenario, women 18 years and older were asked to rate the importance of environmental dimensions in choosing a store. In the current study, the scenario presented a situation in which the participant entered the casual wear section in a department store to purchase sweatshirts for him and was approached by a salesperson. For groups 1 and 3 (see Table 1), participants saw a picture of the salesperson in a suit (type A). For groups 2 and 4, participants were shown a picture of the salesperson in a sweatshirt and chino pants (type B). After the participant read the scenario and observed the picture of the salesperson, the participant’s attitude toward the salesperson was measured in question I-1, and his expectation of the salesperson’s performance was measured in question I-2 (see Table 2). The question for measuring the participant’s attitude was adapted from Engel et al. (1995). The participant was asked to indicate the degree to which he liked the salesperson in the picture. The scale ranged from “strongly disagree” (1), to “neutral” (4), to “strongly agree” (7). The question for measuring the participant’s expectation was adapted from the study of Chen-Yu et al. (1999). The participant was asked to answer the level of his expectation for the salesperson’s performance. The scale ranged from “terrible” (1), to “neutral” (4), to “excellent” (7).



Table 2

Measurement of Variables

Variable in the Framework	Question
Consumer Attitude toward Salesperson	I-1
Consumer Expectation of Salesperson's Performance	I-2
Consumer Evaluation of Salesperson's Performance	II-1
Consumer Satisfaction with Salesperson's Performance	II-2
Expectancy Confirmation/Disconfirmation between Consumer Expectation and Consumer Evaluation of Salesperson's Performance	Score of II-1 minus score of I-2
Consumer Preference of Clothing Type	II-3
Consumer Age, Race, and Clothing Expenditure	III-1~3

In Part II, the scenario from Part I was continued. In the scenario, the participant was greeted by the salesperson and shown the location of the sweatshirts that the participant needed. The participant's evaluation and satisfaction with the salesperson's performance was measured in questions II-1 and II-2 (see Table 2). The question for measuring the evaluation of the salesperson's performance was adapted from the study of Chen-Yu et al. (1999). The participant was asked to answer the level of his evaluation of the salesperson's performance according to the service described in the scenario. The scale ranged from "terrible" (1), to "neutral" (4), to "excellent" (7). No question was asked to measure expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation between consumer expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance. It was calculated by subtracting the score of evaluation (i.e., question II-1) from that of expectation (i.e., question I-2).

A graphic format was used to examine the participant's satisfactions with the salesperson's performance. Hausknecht (1990) stated that the graphic format could communicate and quantify consumer satisfaction and remove the ambiguity of verbal measures. A scale with 10 equal intervals was used and each interval represented 10% increments of satisfaction. Moving from the left end of the scale (0%) to the right end of the scale (100%), the percentage of

satisfaction increased. The participant was asked to mark an arrow (↓) on the scale to indicate at what percentage they were satisfied with the salesperson's performance. The participant's preference of clothing type was measured in question II-3. The participant was asked to look at two pictures shown in the questionnaire and was asked to circle the letter, A (i.e., informal clothing type) or B (i.e., formal clothing type), to represent his preference of clothing type.

In Part III, questions about the participant's age, race, and clothing expenditure were asked (see Table 2). The participant's age, race, and clothing expenditures were asked in questions III-1 to III-3. Questions were adapted from a study by Chen-Yu (1995).

To establish the content validity of the questionnaire, three faculty members evaluated the questions included in the questionnaire against the research objectives. The questionnaire was pilot tested with eight adolescents 14 to 18 years old and seven elderly people 65 to 85 years old. Participants in the pilot study were not included in the main study. Participants were asked to evaluate the wording, ease of understanding, clarity of the picture, and time requirement to complete the questionnaire. The pilot test results showed that the pictures clearly showed the detail of the clothing, and the scenario and questions were easy to understand.

### **Data Collection**

Prior to data collection, this study was approved for exemption status as required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Exemption was granted by the IRB because there was no risk involved to the participants in this study.

Data was collected from November 2000 to January 2001. The survey for the adolescent group (N=120) was conducted at two high schools in Southwest Virginia. The study was

approved by the Montgomery County School Board in Christiansburg, Virginia. The survey was administered by the teachers who volunteered to help with this study. Participants in the adolescent group who were 18 to 19 years old were given a consent form and a questionnaire to complete. Participants who were 16 to 17 were given a parental consent form, an assent form, and a questionnaire to complete.

Participants in the elderly group (N=120) were recruited from five retirement centers in Northern Virginia, two town and county recreation centers, and a mall in Southwest Virginia. Permission for data collection in the elderly group was obtained from managers of the retirement centers and town and county recreation centers as well as from the individual participants. Participants were given a consent form and a questionnaire to complete. Surveys conducted in the retirement and recreation centers were administered by program managers of the centers; surveys conducted in the mall were administered by the researcher.

### **Data Analysis**

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the collected data. The two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine Hypothesis 1. Hypotheses 2 to 6 were examined by utilizing the Pearson's Correlation tests to find any significant linear correlation between variables, and the two-way ANOVA tests to compare the group means and to examine the interaction of two variables on the dependent variable. The Least-significant difference (LSD) tests were used to perform multiple comparisons between group means. Fisher's z transformation tests were conducted to examine whether the relationship between two variables was significantly different between adolescent and elderly participants.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS**

In this chapter, results, interpretations, and hypotheses are examined in three sections. In the first section, consumer attitude toward the salesperson, Hypothesis 1, is examined. In the second section, consumer expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance, Hypotheses 2 and 3, are examined. In the third section, consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance, Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6, are examined.

#### **Consumer Attitude Toward the Salesperson**

Hypothesis 1 was generated to examine whether there would be a significant interaction between consumer age and the clothing type of the salesperson on the variable consumer attitude toward the salesperson.

*H1. There will be a significant interaction of consumer age (i.e., adolescents, elderly) and the clothing type of the salesperson type (i.e., formal, informal) on consumer attitude (i.e., positive, neutral, negative) toward the salesperson.*

The two-way ANOVA test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant interaction in the influence of consumer age and the clothing type of the salesperson on consumer attitude toward the salesperson. The results indicated that elderly participants had a significantly more positive attitude toward the salesperson than did adolescent participants. The salesperson with a formal clothing type received a significantly more positive attitude from all participants. A significant interaction of consumer age and clothing type of the salesperson on consumer attitude toward the salesperson was found (see Table 3). Table 4 shows the mean scores of the consumer attitude toward the salesperson in the four experimental groups. Elderly participants who observed a picture of the salesperson with a formal clothing type had the highest score. The Least-significant difference (LSD) test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between the means of consumer attitude toward the salesperson in the four experimental groups. The results indicated that a significant difference existed between Group 3 and the rest of the groups ( $p < .001$ );(see Table 4). Groups 1, 2, and 4 were not significantly different at the .05 level. These results indicated that the elderly participants had the most positive attitude toward the salesperson with a formal clothing type than the other participants. Group 1 and Group 2 were significantly different at the .06 level. This result was very close to the .05 significance level. These results indicated that the adolescent participants had a more positive attitude toward the salesperson with an informal clothing type than the salesperson with a formal clothing type. Based on these results, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Table 3.

The Two-way ANOVA Test: The Relationships of Consumer Attitude Toward the Salesperson with Consumer Age and the Clothing Type of the Salesperson

	Consumer Attitude			
	S.S	D.F.	M.S.	F
Consumer Age	36.04	1	36.04	21.15***
Clothing Type	28.70	1	28.70	16.85***
Consumer Age x Clothing Type	78.20	1	78.20	45.91***
Residual	402.05	236	1.70	
Total	545.00	240		

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 4

The LSD Test: Mean Scores of Consumer Attitude Toward the Salesperson Between the Experimental Groups

Mean Scores of Consumer Attitude	
Group 1 (Adolescent Participants / Formal Clothing Type)	3.72 <sup>a</sup>
Group 2 (Adolescent Participants / Informal Clothing Type)	4.17 <sup>a</sup>
Group 3 (Elderly Participants / Formal Clothing Type)	5.63 <sup>b</sup>
Group 4 (Elderly Participants / Informal Clothing Type)	3.80 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a, b</sup>. Means with different superscript letters are significantly different at the .001 level.  
7 was the highest possible score.

To explain the possible reason for the significant findings of the interaction between consumer age and the clothing type of the salesperson, consumer preference of the clothing type between adolescent and elderly participants was examined. The Likelihood Ratio test, one of the

Chi-square tests, indicated that adolescent participants preferred to wear the informal clothing type and elderly participants preferred to wear the formal clothing type (see Table 5). The results indicated that when the participants' preferences of the clothing type matched the clothing type of the salesperson, the participant had a more positive attitude toward the salesperson.

Table 5

The Likelihood Ratio Test: The Relationship of Consumer Preference of the Clothing Type with Consumer Age

	<u>Consumer Preference of Clothing Type (%)</u>		$X^2$
	Formal	Informal	
Consumer Age			77.52***
Adolescent Participants	26	73	
Elderly Participants	74	27	

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Consumer Expectation and Evaluation of the Salesperson's Performance**

Hypotheses 2 and 3 were generated to examine whether there would be significant differences in consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance and consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance among consumers with different attitudes toward the salesperson. Consumer attitude toward the salesperson was classified into three groups: negative attitude (scores of 1 to 3, 23.8%), neutral (score of 4, 29.2%), and positive attitude (scores of 5 to 7, 47.0%).

*H2. There will be a significant difference in consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance among consumers with different attitudes toward the salesperson.*

The Pearson's Correlation test indicated that a significant linear correlation existed between consumer attitude toward the salesperson and consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance ( $r = .77, p < .001$ ). These results indicated that a more positive attitude toward the salesperson was related to a higher expectation for the salesperson's performance. The two-way ANOVA test was also conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference in consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance among participants with different attitudes toward the salesperson, and whether there was a significant interaction of consumer attitude and consumer age on consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance among the participants with different attitudes (i.e., positive attitude, neutral, negative attitude) toward the salesperson (see Table 6). This result indicated that consumer attitude was significantly related to consumer expectation toward the salesperson's performance. The mean scores of the expectation for the salesperson's performance was the lowest for the participants who had a negative attitude toward the salesperson, moderate for the participants who felt neutral toward the salesperson, and the highest for the participants who had a positive attitude toward the salesperson (see Table 7). The LSD test indicated that significant differences existed among all levels ( $p < .001$ ). These results indicated that participants who had a more positive attitude toward the salesperson had a significantly higher level of expectation for the salesperson's performance than those who had a negative attitude toward the salesperson. Based on these results, Hypothesis 2 was supported.



Table 6.

The Two-way ANOVA Test: The Relationships of Consumer Expectation for the Salesperson's Performance with Consumer Attitude Toward the Salesperson and Consumer Age

	Consumer Expectation			
	S.S	D.F.	M.S.	F
Consumer Attitude	194.67	2	97.34	91.30***
Consumer Age	.63	1	.63	.59
Consumer Age x Consumer Attitude	10.39	2	5.20	4.88**
Residual	249.47	234	1.07	
Total	474.33	239		

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 7

The LSD Test: Mean Scores of Consumer Expectation for the Salesperson's Performance by Three Groups of Consumer Attitude Toward the Salesperson

	<u>Mean Scores of Consumer Expectation</u>		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Consumer Expectation	3.21 <sup>a</sup>	4.44 <sup>b</sup>	5.54 <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a, b, c.</sup> Means with different superscript letters are significantly different at the .001 level. 7 was the highest possible score.

The two-way ANOVA test also indicated that adolescent and elderly participants had no significantly different expectation for the salesperson's performance. However, a significant interaction of consumer age and consumer attitude toward the salesperson on consumer expectation was found (see Table 6). Table 8 shows the mean scores of the consumer expectation

for the salesperson in adolescent and elderly groups. Elderly participants who had a positive attitude toward the salesperson had the highest score of consumer expectation for the salesperson’s performance. The LSD test indicated that among participants with a positive attitude toward the salesperson, elderly participants had a significantly higher expectation for the salesperson’s performance than the adolescent participants.

Table 8

The LSD Test: Mean Scores of Consumer Expectation for the Salesperson’s Performance by Consumer Attitudes and Age

Attitude / Age Groups	Mean Scores of Consumer Expectation
Negative Attitude / Adolescent	3.31 <sup>a</sup>
Negative Attitude / Elderly	3.08 <sup>a</sup>
Neutral / Adolescent	4.48 <sup>b</sup>
Neutral / Elderly	4.37 <sup>b</sup>
Positive Attitude / Adolescent	5.13 <sup>c</sup>
Positive Attitude / Elderly	5.80 <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a, b, c, d.</sup> Means with different superscript letters are significantly different at the .01 level. 7 was the highest possible score.

The Fisher’s z-score transformation test was also conducted to examine whether the correlation between consumer attitude toward the salesperson and consumer expectation for the salesperson’s performance in the adolescent group and that in the elderly group were significantly different. Pearson’s Correlation tests were first conducted to examine whether there was any linear correlation between consumer attitude toward the salesperson and consumer expectation for the salesperson’s performance in both adolescent and elderly groups. Significant results were found in both groups. A more positive attitude toward the salesperson was significantly

correlated to a higher expectation for the salesperson's performance (Adolescent Group -  $r = .64$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Elderly Group -  $r = .87$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The Fisher's z-score transformation test indicated that the correlations in the adolescent and elderly groups were significantly different ( $z_{r_{Adolescent} - r_{Elderly}} = -4.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ). There is a stronger linear relationship between consumer attitude and consumer expectation in the elderly group than the adolescent group.

*H3. There will be a significant difference in consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance among consumers with different attitudes toward the salesperson.*

The Pearson's Correlation test indicated that a significant linear correlation existed between consumer attitude toward the salesperson and consumer evaluation for the salesperson's performance ( $r = .52$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These results indicated that a more positive attitude toward the salesperson was correlated to a higher evaluation of the salesperson's performance. The two-way ANOVA test was also conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference in consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance among participants with different attitudes toward the salesperson, and whether there was a significant interaction of consumer attitude and consumer age on consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance. The results indicated that a significant difference existed in consumer evaluation ( $F = 2.89$ ,  $p = .06$ );(see Table 9). The results indicated that consumer attitude was significantly related to consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance. The mean score of the consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance was the lowest for the participants who had a negative attitude toward the salesperson, moderate for the participants who felt neutral toward the salesperson, and the highest for the participants who had a positive attitude toward the salesperson (see Table 10). The LSD test indicated that significant differences were found among all levels ( $p < .01$ ). These results

indicated participants who had a more positive attitude toward the salesperson had a significantly higher level of evaluation of the salesperson's performance than those who had a negative attitude toward the salesperson. Based on these results, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Table 9.

The Two-way ANOVA Test: The Relationship of Consumer Evaluation of the Salesperson's Performance with Consumer Attitude Toward the Salesperson and Consumer Age

	Consumer Evaluation			
	S.S	D.F.	M.S.	F
Consumer Attitude	70.68	2	35.34	22.56***
Consumer Age	.73	1	.73	.46
Consumer Age x Consumer Attitude	9.06	2	4.53	2.89
Residual	366.55	234	1.57	
Total	457.58	239		

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 10

The LSD Test: Mean Scores of Consumer Evaluation of the Salesperson's Performance by Three Groups of Consumer Attitude Toward the Salesperson

	<u>Mean Scores of Consumer Attitude</u>		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Consumer Evaluation	4.14 <sup>a</sup>	4.91 <sup>b</sup>	5.58 <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a, b, c.</sup> Means with different superscript letters are significantly different at the .001 level. 7 was the highest possible score.

The two-way ANOVA test also indicated that adolescent and elderly participants had no significantly different evaluation of the salesperson’s performance. A significant interaction of consumer age and consumer attitude toward the salesperson on consumer evaluation was found at the .06 level (see Table 9). This result was very close to the .05 significance level. Table 11 shows the mean scores of the consumer evaluation of the salesperson in adolescent and elderly groups. Elderly participants who had a positive attitude toward the salesperson had the highest score of consumer evaluation of the salesperson’s performance. The LSD test indicated that elderly participants who had a positive attitude toward the salesperson had a significantly higher evaluation of the salesperson’s performance than all other participants.

Table 11

The LSD Test: Mean Scores of Consumer Evaluation of the Salesperson’s Performance by Consumer Attitudes and Age

Participant / Attitude	Mean Scores of Consumer Evaluation
Negative Attitude / Adolescent	4.09 <sup>a</sup>
Negative Attitude / Elderly	4.20 <sup>a, c</sup>
Neutral / Adolescent	5.05 <sup>b</sup>
Neutral / Elderly	4.70 <sup>a, b, c</sup>
Positive Attitude / Adolescent	5.22 <sup>b</sup>
Positive Attitude / Elderly	5.81 <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a, b, c, d</sup>. Means with the same superscript letters are not significantly different at the .05 level. 7 was the highest possible score.

The Fisher’s z-score transformation test was also conducted to examine whether the correlation between consumer attitude toward the salesperson and consumer evaluation of the salesperson’s performance in the adolescent group and that in the elderly groups were

significantly different. The Pearson's Correlation tests were first conducted to examine whether there was any linear correlation between consumer attitude toward the salesperson and consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance in both adolescent and elderly groups. Significant results were found in both groups. A more positive attitude toward the salesperson was significantly correlated to a higher evaluation of the salesperson's performance (Adolescent Group -  $r = .35, p < .001$ ; Elderly Group -  $r = .69, p < .001$ ). The Fisher's z-score transformation test indicated that the correlations in the adolescent and elderly groups were significantly different ( $z_{r_{Adolescent} - r_{Elderly}} = -3.70, p < .001$ ). There is a stronger linear relationship between consumer attitude and consumer evaluation in the elderly group than the adolescent group.

### **Consumer Satisfaction with the Salesperson's Performance**

Hypotheses 4 to 6 were generated to examine whether there would be significant differences in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among consumers with different levels of expectation or evaluation, and whether significant differences existed in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among consumers with positive expectancy disconfirmation, simple expectancy confirmation, and negative expectancy disconfirmation.

*H4. There will be a significant difference in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among consumers with different levels of expectation for the salesperson's performance.*

The Pearson's Correlation test indicated that a significant linear correlation existed between consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance and consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance ( $r = .60, p < .001$ ). The results indicated that a higher expectation for the salesperson's performance was significantly correlated to a higher satisfaction with the salesperson's performance. The two-way ANOVA test was also conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among participants with different levels of expectation for the salesperson's performance, and whether there was a significant interaction of consumer expectation and consumer age on consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance. A general rule of 33% (low), 33% (medium), and 33% (high) split was used to classify the scores of consumer expectation for the salesperson into three levels. According to the frequency distributions, consumer expectation was classified into low (scores of 1 to 4, 42.5%), medium (score of 5, 29.2%), and high (scores of 6 to 7, 28.3%). A significant difference was found in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among the levels of consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance (see Table 12). The results indicated that consumer expectation was significantly related to consumer satisfaction. The mean scores of consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance were the lowest at the low level of consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance, moderate at the medium level of consumer expectation, and the highest at the high level of consumer expectation (see Table 13). The highest possible score was 100. The LSD test indicated that significant differences were found among all levels ( $p < .001$ ).

These results indicate that participants who had a higher level of expectation for the salesperson's performance had a significantly higher level of satisfaction with the salesperson's performance than those who had a lower level of expectation. Based on these results, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Table 12

The Two-way ANOVA Test: The Relationship of Consumer Satisfaction with Consumer Expectation and Consumer Age

	Consumer Satisfaction			
	S.S	D.F.	M.S.	F
Consumer Expectation	29269.65	2	12634.84	46.33***
Consumer Age	463.03	1	463.03	1.47
Consumer Age x Consumer Expectation	3022.75	2	1511.38	4.78**
Residual	73928.38	234	315.90	
Total	110918.33	239		

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ . \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 13

The LSD Test: Mean Scores of Consumer Satisfaction with the Salesperson's Performance by Three Levels of Consumer Expectation for the Salesperson's Performance

	<u>Mean Scores of Consumer Satisfaction</u>		
	Low	Medium	High
Consumer Expectation	58.33 <sup>a</sup>	74.07 <sup>b</sup>	86.62 <sup>c</sup>

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

a, b, c. Means with different superscript letters are significantly different at the .001 level. 100 was the highest possible score.



The two-way ANOVA test also indicated that adolescent and elderly participants had no significantly different satisfaction with the salesperson’s performance. However, a significant interaction of consumer age and consumer expectation for the salesperson on consumer satisfaction was found (see Table 12). Table 14 shows the mean scores of the consumer satisfaction with the salesperson in adolescent and elderly groups. Elderly participants who had a high expectation for the salesperson’s performance had the highest score of consumer satisfaction with the salesperson’s performance. The LSD test indicated that elderly participants who had a high expectation for the salesperson’s performance had a significantly higher satisfaction with the salesperson’s performance than all other participants.

Table 14

The LSD Test: Mean Scores of Consumer Satisfaction with the Salesperson’s Performance by Consumer Expectation and Age

Expectation / Age Groups	Mean Scores of Consumer Satisfaction
Low Expectation / Adolescent	60.54 <sup>a</sup>
Low Expectation / Elderly	55.65 <sup>a</sup>
Medium Expectation / Adolescent	74.25 <sup>b</sup>
Medium Expectation / Elderly	75.00 <sup>b</sup>
High Expectation / Adolescent	78.33 <sup>b</sup>
High Expectation / Elderly	91.14 <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a, b, c</sup>. Means with different superscript letters are significantly different at the .01 level. 100 was the highest possible score.

The Fisher’s z-score transformation test was also conducted to examine whether the correlation between consumer expectation and consumer satisfaction with the salesperson’s performance in the adolescent group and that in the elderly groups were significantly different.

Pearson's Correlation tests were first conducted to examine whether there was any linear correlation between consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance and consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance in both adolescent and elderly groups. Significant results were found in both groups. A higher expectation for the salesperson's performance was significantly correlated to a higher satisfaction with the salesperson's performance (Adolescent Group -  $r = .48, p < .001$ ; Elderly Group -  $r = .70, p < .001$ ). The Fisher's z-score transformation test indicated that the correlations of adolescent and elderly group were significantly different ( $z_{r_{Adolescent} - r_{Elderly}} = -2.63, p < .01$ ). There is a stronger linear relationship between consumer expectation and consumer satisfaction in the elderly group than the adolescent group.

*H5. There will be a significant difference in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among consumers with different levels of evaluation of the salesperson's performance.*

The Pearson's Correlation test indicated that a significant linear correlation existed between consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance and consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance ( $r = .79, p < .001$ ). The results indicated that a higher evaluation of the salesperson's performance was significantly correlated to a higher satisfaction with the salesperson's performance. The two-way ANOVA test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among participants with different levels of evaluation of the salesperson's performance, and whether there was a significant interaction of consumer evaluation and consumer age on consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance. A general rule of 33% (low), 33% (medium),

and 33% (high) split was used to classify the scores of consumer evaluation of the salesperson into three levels. According to the frequency distributions, consumer evaluation was classified into low (scores of 1 to 4, 31.7%);, medium (score of 5, 27.9%);, and high (scores of 6 to 7, 40.4%);). A significant difference was found among the levels of consumer evaluation of the salesperson’s performance in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson’s performance (see Table 15). The results indicated that consumer evaluation was significantly related to consumer satisfaction. The mean score of consumer satisfaction with the salesperson’s performance was the lowest at the low level of consumer evaluation, moderate at the medium level of consumer evaluation, and the highest at the high level of consumer evaluation (see Table 16). The LSD test indicated that significant differences were found among all levels ( $p < .001$ ). These results indicated that participants who had a higher level of evaluation of the salesperson’s performance had a significantly higher level of satisfaction with the salesperson’s performance than those who had a lower level of evaluation. Based on these results, Hypothesis 5 was supported.

Table 15.

The Two-way ANOVA Test: The Relationship of Consumer Satisfaction with Consumer Evaluation and Age

	Consumer Satisfaction			
	S.S	D.F.	M.S.	F
Consumer Evaluation	60519.30	2	30259.65	145.08***
Consumer Age	976.23	1	976.23	4.68*
Consumer Age x Consumer Evaluation	160.20	2	80.10	.68
Residual	48806.55	234	208.58	
Total	110918.33	239		

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ . \*  $p < .05$

Table 16

The LSD Test: Mean Scores of Consumer Satisfaction with the Salesperson’s Performance by Three Levels of Consumer Evaluation of the Salesperson’s Performance

	<u>Mean Scores of Consumer Satisfaction</u>		
	Low	Medium	High
Consumer Evaluation	49.47 <sup>a</sup>	72.24 <sup>b</sup>	87.22 <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a, b, c.</sup> Means with different superscript letters are significantly different at the .001 level.

The two-way ANOVA test also indicated that adolescent and elderly participants had a significantly different satisfaction with the salesperson’s performance ( $p < .05$ );(see Table 15). The mean score of adolescent participants’ satisfaction was 84.17 when they had a high evaluation of the salesperson’s performance and that of elderly participants’ satisfaction was 90.20 when they had a high evaluation (see Table 17). No significant interaction in consumer age and consumer evaluation of the salesperson on consumer satisfaction was found.

Table 17

The LSD Test: Mean Scores of Consumer Satisfaction with the Salesperson's Performance by Three Levels of Consumer Evaluation

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Evaluation / Age Groups    Mean Scores of Consumer Satisfaction

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Low Evaluation / Adolescent	47.44 <sup>a</sup>
Low Evaluation / Elderly	51.62 <sup>a</sup>
Medium Evaluation / Adolescent	71.21 <sup>b</sup>
Medium Evaluation / Elderly	73.24 <sup>b</sup>
High Evaluation / Adolescent	84.17 <sup>c</sup>
High Evaluation / Elderly	90.20 <sup>d</sup>

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<sup>a, b, c, d.</sup> Means with the different superscript letters are significantly different at the .05 level. 100 was the highest possible score.

The Fisher's z-score transformation test was also conducted to examine whether the correlation between consumer evaluation and consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance in the adolescent group and that in the elderly groups were significantly different. Pearson's Correlation tests were first conducted to examine whether there was any linear correlation between consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance and consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance in both adolescent and elderly groups. Significant results were found in both groups. A higher evaluation of the salesperson's performance was significantly correlated to a higher satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among adolescent and elderly participants (Adolescent Group -  $r = .81, p < .001$ ; Elderly Group -  $r = .77, p < .001$ ). The Fisher's z-score transformation test indicated that the correlations of adolescent and elderly group were not significantly different ( $z, r_{Adolescent} - r_{Elderly} = 0.82$ ). The linear relationship between consumer expectation and consumer satisfaction in the elderly group and adolescent group were not significantly different.

*H6. There will be a significant difference in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among consumers with positive expectancy disconfirmation (i.e., evaluation is better than expectation), simple expectancy confirmation (i.e., evaluation equals expectation), and negative expectancy disconfirmation (i.e., evaluation is worse than expectation).*

The Pearson's Correlation test indicated that a significant linear correlation existed between expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation (i.e., confirmation/disconfirmation between consumer expectation and evaluation) and consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ). These results indicated that participants were more satisfied when their scores of the evaluation were higher than that of the expectation. The two-way ANOVA test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among participants with positive expectancy disconfirmation, simple expectancy confirmation and negative expectancy disconfirmation, and whether there was a significant interaction of expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation and consumer age on consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance. The scores of expectancy confirmation/ disconfirmation were classified into three groups: positive disconfirmation (score of evaluation is higher than that of expectation, 15.8%), simple confirmation (score of evaluation is equal with that of expectation, 44.6%), and negative disconfirmation (score of evaluation is lower than that of expectation, 39.6%). The groups were categorized by subtracting the score of the consumer expectation from the score of the consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance. A significant difference was found among different groups of expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation in consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance (see

Table 18). The results indicated that expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation was significantly related to consumer satisfaction. The mean score of the consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance was the lowest in the negative expectancy disconfirmation group (see Table 19). The LSD test indicated that significant differences were found between the negative disconfirmation group and the simple confirmation group ( $p < .05$ ), as well as between the negative disconfirmation group and the positive disconfirmation group ( $p < .01$ ). However, there was no significant difference between the simple confirmation group and the positive disconfirmation group. These results indicate that participants with positive expectancy disconfirmation and simple expectancy confirmation had a significantly higher level of satisfaction with the salesperson's performance than those with negative expectancy disconfirmation. In other words, participants were more satisfied with the salesperson's performance when their evaluations of the salesperson's performance were better or equal than their expectations than when their evaluations were worse than their expectations. Based on these results, Hypothesis 6 was supported.

Table 18.

The Two-way ANOVA Test: The Relationship of Consumer Satisfaction with Consumer Expectancy Confirmation/Disconfirmation and Consumer Age

	Consumer Satisfaction			
	S.S	D.F.	M.S.	F
Expectancy Disconfirmation	3570.08	2	1785.04	4.12**
Age	2272.98	1	2272.98	5.24*
Age x Expectancy Disconfirmation	3366.95	2	1683.47	3.88*
Residual	101460.51	234	433.60	
Total	110918.33	239		

\*\*  $p < .01$ . \*  $p < .05$

Table 19

The LSD Test: Mean Scores of Consumer Satisfaction with the Salesperson's Performance by Expectancy Confirmation/Disconfirmation

	<u>Mean Scores of Consumer Satisfaction</u>		
	Negative Disconfirmation	Simple Confirmation	Positive Disconfirmation
Expectancy Confirmation/Disconfirmation	61.05 <sup>a</sup>	71.87 <sup>b</sup>	74.21 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a, b, c.</sup> Means with different superscript letters are significantly different at the .01 level.

The two-way ANOVA test also indicated that adolescent and elderly participants had a significantly different level of satisfaction with the salesperson's performance ( $p < .05$ );(see Table 20). A significant interaction in consumer age and expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation on consumer satisfaction was also found (see Table 18). Table 20 shows the



mean scores of the consumer satisfaction with the salesperson in adolescent and elderly groups. Adolescent participants who had a negative disconfirmation (i.e., evaluation was lower than expectation) had the lowest score. These LSD test indicated that adolescent participants with a negative disconfirmation had a significantly lower satisfaction with the salesperson's performance than all other groups.

Table 20

The LSD Test: Mean Scores of Consumer Satisfaction with the Salesperson's Performance by Expectancy Confirmation/Disconfirmation and Consumer Age

Expectancy Confirmation/Disconfirmation / Age Groups	Mean Scores of Consumer Satisfaction
Negative Disconfirmation / Adolescent	54.09 <sup>a</sup>
Negative Disconfirmation / Elderly	70.63 <sup>b, c</sup>
Simple Confirmation / Adolescent	67.05 <sup>b</sup>
Simple Confirmation / Elderly	75.24 <sup>c</sup>
Positive Disconfirmation / Adolescent	75.93 <sup>c</sup>
Positive Disconfirmation / Elderly	71.95 <sup>b, c</sup>

<sup>a, b, c.</sup> Means with different superscript letters are significantly different at the .05 level. 100 was the highest possible score.

The Fisher's z-score transformation test was also conducted to examine whether the correlation between expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation and consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance in the adolescent group and that in the elderly groups were significantly different. Pearson's Correlation tests were first conducted to examine whether there was any linear correlation between expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation and consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance in both adolescent and elderly groups. The results indicated that a positive expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation was significantly

correlated to a higher satisfaction with the salesperson's performance in the adolescent group, while no significant correlation was found in the elderly group (Adolescent Group -  $r = .39$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Elderly Group -  $r = -.06$ ,  $p < .48$ ). The Fisher's z-score transformation test indicated that the correlations between adolescent and elderly groups were significantly different ( $z_{r_{Adolescent} - r_{Elderly}} = 2.70$ ,  $p < .01$ ). There is a stronger linear relationship between expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation and consumer satisfaction in the adolescent group than the elderly group.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The summary of the study is provided in the first part of this chapter. The discussion of results and their implications are then presented and followed by recommendations for future research and the limitations of the study.

#### **Summary**

The purpose of this research was to study the influence of the interaction between consumer age and the clothing type of the salesperson on the process of consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance. A conceptual model was developed to provide a basis for examining this influence. Based on this model, the study was categorized into three parts: (a) consumer attitude toward the salesperson, (b) consumer expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance, and (c) consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance.

A 2 x 2 factorial design was developed with two consumer age groups (i.e., adolescent group, elderly group) and two clothing types of the salesperson (i.e., formal clothing type, informal clothing type). This design resulted in four experimental groups. Two questionnaires with three parts were developed as an instrument of measurement.

In both questionnaires, the scenario, the model of the salesperson, and the questions were the same. The only difference was the clothing type of the salesperson shown in the pictures.

Clothing type A (formal) was a navy blue suit, tie, white dress shirt, and black dress shoes.

Clothing type B (informal) was a navy blue crew-neck long sleeve shirt, navy blue chino pants, and tennis shoes. A total of 240 individuals, 120 adolescents 16 to 19 years old and 120 elderly 65 years and older, were recruited as participants in this research.

The results indicated that the influence of consumer age and the clothing type of the salesperson on consumer attitude toward the salesperson's performance were significantly different. Elderly participants had a more positive attitude toward the salesperson with a formal clothing type and adolescent participants had a more positive attitude toward the salesperson with an informal clothing type. The examination of the relationship between consumer attitude toward the salesperson and consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance indicated that a positive consumer attitude toward the salesperson was related to a higher consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance in both adolescent and elderly groups. A positive consumer attitude toward the salesperson was also found related to a higher consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance in both adolescent and elderly groups. When consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance was examined, the results indicated that higher expectation or higher evaluation of the salesperson's performance was related to higher satisfaction with the salesperson's performance in both the adolescent and elderly groups. Simple confirmation or positive disconfirmation between consumer expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance was related to higher consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance.

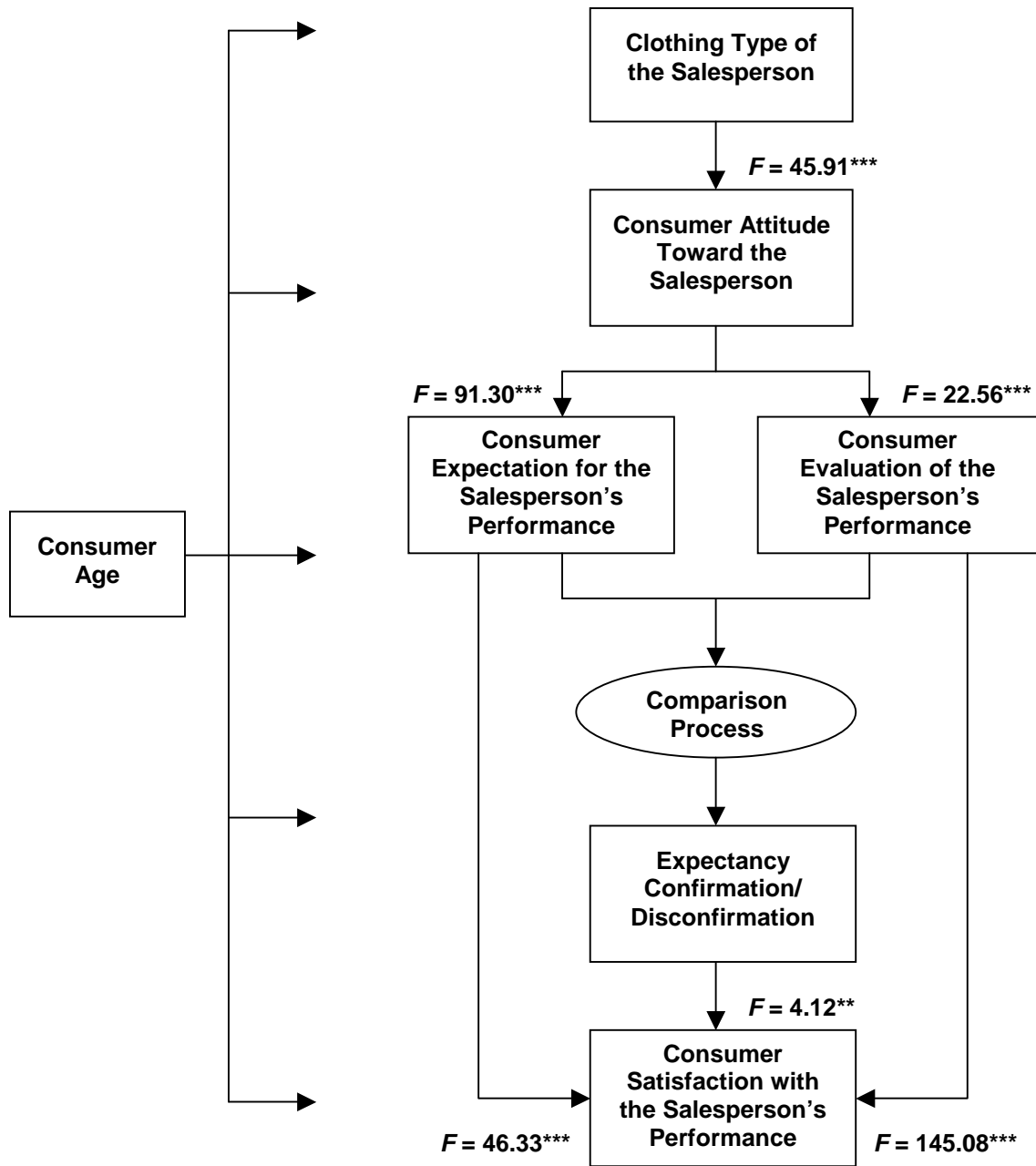
## **Discussion and Implications**

### Consumer Attitude toward the Salesperson

A significant interaction was observed when the influence of consumer age and the salesperson's clothing on consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance was examined (see Figure 3). Clothing types were significantly related to the adolescent and elderly participants' attitudes toward the salesperson. Elderly participants had a significantly more positive attitude toward the salesperson when the salesperson wore a formal clothing type. Adolescent participants had a more positive attitude toward the salesperson when the salesperson wore an informal clothing type.

This significant interaction may be explained by the consistency between the clothing type that participants preferred to wear and the clothing type that the salesperson wore. Elderly participants significantly preferred to wear a formal clothing type more than an informal clothing type and they had a significantly more positive attitude toward the salesperson when the salesperson wore a similar formal clothing type. Adolescent participants significantly preferred to wear an informal clothing type more than a formal clothing type, and they had a more positive attitude toward the salesperson when the salesperson was in a similar informal clothing type.

This finding supports the proposition of Stone (1962), which indicated that individuals who share similar appearance symbols or at least the same understanding of such symbols are more likely to engage in meaningful communication. If there is similarity between the salesperson and the consumer in the sales interaction, the consumer is attracted to the salesperson and therefore likes the salesperson (Woodside & Davenport, 1974). In this study, the similarity was found between the clothing type that the participant preferred to wear and the clothing type that the salesperson



\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Figure 3

The Result Model

was wearing in the scenario. This similarity might increase the salesperson's attractiveness. That, in turn, might be related to a positive consumer attitude toward the salesperson.

These results may provide some implications for retailers. When retailers request what their salespersons should wear, they should first understand the clothing type that their target customers prefer to wear. For example, based on the current results, an informal clothing type may be a better choice for the store when adolescents are the only target customers. For elderly consumers, having salespersons wear a formal clothing type (e.g., tie, jacket, slacks) is a better choice for the stores where elderly consumers are the prime customers. Department stores may have salespersons wear clothing types according to the target customers in each section.

#### Consumer Expectation and Evaluation of the Salesperson's Performance

When the relationship between consumer attitude toward the salesperson and consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance was examined, the results indicated that there was a significantly positive relationship between consumer attitude and consumer expectation (see Figure 3). Participants who had a more positive attitude toward the salesperson had a higher expectation for the salesperson's performance. These results were consistent with the propositions of Miller (1977) and Engel et al. (1995). Miller (1977) indicated that consumers' expectations are the function of past history as well as of the current purchase situation. The current study supports the proposition of Miller (1977), which stated that consumer attitude toward the salesperson in the purchase situation was significantly related to their expectations.

The relationship between consumer attitude toward the salesperson and consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance was also examined. The results indicated that participants who had a more positive attitude toward the salesperson had a higher evaluation of the salesperson's performance (see Figure 3). These results were consistent with the proposition

of Hawkins et al. (1998), which stated that the evaluation of products and services is often based on consumers' emotional response to the products or services. In the current study, participants' evaluation of the salesperson was significantly related to their attitudes toward the salesperson. This result supports the idea that consumers may evaluate salespersons' performance in relation to their attitudes toward the salesperson (i.e., positive attitudes, neutral, negative attitudes).

### Consumer Satisfaction with the Salesperson's Performance

When the relationship between consumer expectation for the salesperson's performance and consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance was examined, a significantly positive relationship was found (see Figure 3). Participants who had a higher expectation for the salesperson's performance before they received the service were significantly more satisfied with the salesperson's performance than those who had a lower expectation. Oliver (1977) and Churchill and Surprenant (1982) found that consumers with higher expectations for the product performance at purchase tended to have higher satisfactions with the product after the product was used. The results of the current study were similar regarding salesperson's service. These results suggest that one way to increase consumer satisfaction is to increase consumer expectation. For example, in store promotion programs, retailers may show their commitment to provide better service to customers. Customers may have a higher expectation for better service. That, in turns, may increase customer satisfaction.

A significantly positive relationship between consumer evaluation and consumer satisfaction was found in the current study (see Figure 3). Participants who gave a higher evaluation rating of the salesperson's performance were more satisfied with the salesperson's performance than those who gave a lower evaluation rating. These results were consistent with the studies of Churchill and Surprenant (1982) and Tse and Wilton (1988), which found that



consumer evaluation of the product performance was a significant determinant of consumer satisfaction with the product. These results show the importance of the salesperson's performance. To increase consumer satisfaction, retailers need to improve their salespersons' service performance. For example, retailers may need to train their salespersons to improve the quality of salespersons' performance regarding aspects such as friendliness, attentiveness, and product knowledge.

The relationship between expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation (i.e., confirmation/disconfirmation between expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance) and consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance was also examined, and a positive relationship was found (see Figure 3). Participants whose evaluations of the salesperson's performance were equal or better than their expectations were more satisfied than those whose evaluations of the salesperson's performance were worse than their expectations. However, when the relationship between adolescent and elderly participants' satisfactions with the salesperson's performance and expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation were analyzed separately, a significant relationship was found in adolescent participants, but no significant relationship was found in the elderly participants. Adolescent participants whose evaluations of the salesperson's performance matched or were better than their expectations were significantly more satisfied with the salesperson's performance than those whose evaluations of the salesperson's performance were worse than their expectations. These results were consistent with many previous studies (Swan & Combs, 1976, Bearden & Teel, 1983; Kennedy & Thirkell, 1988). These results suggest that to increase the level of adolescent consumers' satisfaction with salespersons, retailers may need to understand their adolescent customers' expectations for salespersons and always make sure that salespersons' performance matches or exceeds customers' expectations. For example, retailers may need to understand how much product

knowledge that adolescent customers expect to know from salespersons or how much interaction that they expect to receive from salespersons. Each individual's expectation for the salesperson may vary. For example, some customers may need some time to look around the store but some customers may want immediate attention. Some may prefer to shop by themselves and some may prefer one-to-one service during their shopping. Salespersons need to observe their customers carefully to understand each customer's shopping behaviors. Retailers may also provide rewards to encourage customers to give suggestions or recommendations so that they can understand customers' expectations and then provide what customers expect.

When elderly participants' satisfactions with the salesperson's performance were examined, the result indicated that both expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance were significantly related to consumer satisfaction. However, no significant relationship was found between expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation (i.e., confirmation/disconfirmation between expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance) and consumer satisfaction. This result suggests that for elderly consumers, confirmation/disconfirmation between expectation and evaluation may not relate to consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance. Two possible reasons may explain why no significant relationship was found between the expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation and consumer satisfaction in elderly participants. While adolescent consumers may use their expectation for the salesperson's performance as a comparison standard to determine their satisfaction with the salesperson's performance, elderly consumers might use another comparison standard to determine their satisfactions. For example, Woodruff, Cadotte, and Jenkins (1983) suggested that consumers often have experiences with other services or products. These broad experiences are likely to play a role in disconfirmation comparisons. Elderly consumers may use the performance level that they experienced with other salespersons in the past, instead of the

salesperson at the present, as the standard to compare with their evaluation and determine their satisfactions. Another explanation may be provided by the cognitive dissonant theory. The cognitive dissonance theory indicates that when a person knows various things that are not psychologically consistent with one another, the inconsistency will create a state of psychological discomfort and the person will try to make them more consistent (Festinger, 1962). Elderly consumers may tend to minimize the discrepancy between their expectations and evaluations more than do adolescent consumers.

### **Recommendations for Future Research and Limitations of the Study**

The results of the current study provide some understanding of the influence of consumer age and the clothing type of the salesperson on consumer behavior. The results fully support the proposed model. This model has successfully provided a basis for the current study. It may also serve as a conceptual framework for future studies of consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance. However, the results may not be generalized to all adolescent and elderly consumers because the participants were not randomly selected. Because only male participants were selected, the results may not be generalized to female consumers. Replication is needed to examine the reliability of the study. Clothing type of the salesperson was the only independent variable and was manipulated in this study. The other variables in the model (i.e., consumer age, consumer attitude, consumer expectation, consumer evaluation) were not manipulated in the research design. Further research is needed to investigate the cause-and-effect relationships.

Many studies may be extended from the current research. In this study, two types of salesperson's clothing, (a) formal clothing type (i.e., navy blue suit, tie, white dress shirt, black dress shoes) and (b) informal clothing type (i.e., navy blue crew-neck long sleeve shirt, navy blue chino pants, tennis shoes) were used. Various types and styles of clothing (e.g., trendy and classic, conservative and sexy, uniform and non-uniform) may be used in future studies to examine the influence of salespersons' clothing on consumer attitude. For example, Workman (1987) indicated that a person with fashionable clothing received more positive interactions with others than a person with out-of-date clothing. Zollo (1995) reported that adolescents are trendsetters; they are very interested in fashion. Fashionable or basic clothing type may have different influence on adolescent participants' attitudes toward the salesperson.

Arnheim (1949) and Asch (1946) indicated that the perceiver organized component parts of appearance into a global impression and interdependent meanings. In addition to clothing, other appearances may also be related to consumers' global impressions of the salesperson. For example, salespersons with appropriate styles of hair, cosmetic make-up, accessories, or facial expressions may also increase customers' positive attitudes toward the salesperson. However, appropriate appearance may vary among consumers. For example, a salesperson with body piercing or tattoos may be considered interesting and unique for adolescent consumers, but considered inappropriate for elderly consumers. Understanding what aspects of the salesperson's appearance their target customers consider appropriate may be important for retailers. More studies are needed to further understand the influence of appearance in various customer segments.

The scenario of this study described the salesperson working in a department store. The influence of salespersons' clothing may differ on customers of various stores. In future studies, various types of stores, such as discount stores, outlet stores, or specialty stores also may

be used. For example, in the current apparel market, salespersons in department stores or discount stores are often required to wear various styles of uniforms. However, no study has been reported which clothing types may create a more positive consumer attitude toward the salesperson in specific stores. Additional customer segments may also be considered. For example, customers in both genders (i.e., male and female), other age groups (e.g. children and adult), different areas (e.g., rural and urban), or different cultures or countries could be investigated.

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**APPENDIX**

**ADDITIONAL FINDINGS**

## **Results of Additional Quantitative Examinations**

In addition to the variables included in the model, consumer's race and clothing expenditure were also obtained from the questionnaire. The relationships of these two variables with consumer attitude, consumer expectation, consumer evaluation, and consumer satisfaction were analyzed for additional qualitative examinations.

### Consumer's Race

One-way ANOVA tests were conducted to test whether there would be any significant differences in consumer attitude toward the salesperson, consumer expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance, and consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among participants in different race groups. Race was classified into two groups: White (70.4%) and non-White (i.e., Black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, other) (29.6 %). The results indicated that there were no significant differences in consumer attitude toward the salesperson, consumer expectation, evaluation, and satisfaction with the salesperson's performance between White and non-White participants. However, the mean scores of consumer attitude toward the salesperson were 4.21 for White participants and 4.62 for non-White participants. These results indicated that the non-White participants seemed to have a more positive attitude toward the salesperson than the White participants did, although the significance was only at the .053 level.

The results of one-way ANOVA tests indicated that consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance was not significantly different between White and non-White participants. However, when the Likelihood Ratio test was conducted to examine whether there would be a significantly different distribution between White and non-White participants at the low, medium, and high levels of consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance, the

results indicated that there was a significant difference between the two race groups ( $X^2 = 6.52$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In both low and high levels of consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance, there were more White participants than non-White participants (Low Level - White 34.3% vs. Non-White 25.4%; High Level - White 42.6% vs. Non-White 35.2%) (see Table A-1). There were significantly more non-White participants at the medium level of consumer evaluation of the salesperson's performance than White participants (Non-white 39.4% vs. White 23.1%). These results indicated that non-White participants evaluated the salesperson's performance more neutral than White participants.

The Likelihood Ratio test was also conducted to examine whether the distribution would be significantly different between White and non-White participants based on their preferences of clothing type (i.e., formal, informal). A significant difference existed in consumer preference of clothing type between the two race groups ( $X^2 = 11.01$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (see Table A-1). These results indicated that White participants preferred to wear an informal clothing type (White 53% vs. non-White 30%) while non-White participants preferred to wear a formal clothing type (non-White 70% vs. White 47%). There was 78.3% of White participants and 21.7% of non-White in the adolescent group, and 65.5% of White participants and 37.5% of non-White participants. The Chi-square test indicated a significant different distribution of non-White participants in adolescent and elderly groups ( $p < .05$ ). There were more elderly participants in the non-White group. Prior results from Hypothesis 1 indicated that elderly participants preferred to wear a formal clothing type. It is possible that non-White participants preferred to wear a formal clothing type because there were more elderly participants in the non-White group than in the adolescent group.

Table A-1

The Likelihood Ratio Tests: The Relationships of Consumer Race with Consumer Preference of Clothing Type and Consumer Evaluation of the Salesperson's Performance

	Race (%)		$\chi^2$
	White	Non-White	
Consumer Evaluation			6.52***
Low	34.3	25.4	
Medium	23.1	39.4	
High	42.6	35.2	
Consumer Preference			11.01***
Formal Clothing Type	47	70	
Informal Clothing Type	53	30	

\*\*\* $p < .001$

Consumer's Clothing Expenditure

The scores of clothing expenditure were classified into three levels based on a general rule of 33% (low), 33% (medium), and 33% (high) split. According to the frequency distributions, clothing expenditure was classified into low (under \$200, 33.8%), medium (\$200-499, 34.6%), and high (over \$500, 32.8%). When the One-way ANOVA tests were conducted to examine whether there would be any significant difference in consumers' clothing expenditures between adolescent and elderly participants, the results indicated that there was no significance. The results indicated that adolescent and elderly participants had similar clothing expenditures. The Likelihood Ratio test was conducted to examine whether there would be any significant difference in consumer preference of clothing type (i.e., formal, informal) among the participants with low, medium, and high clothing expenditures and no significance was found. The results



indicated that participants had similar clothing preferences although they had different clothing expenditures.

One-way ANOVA tests were conducted to examine whether there would be any significant differences in consumer attitude toward the salesperson, consumer expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance, and consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance among participants with different levels of clothing expenditure. No significant differences were found in any of the relationships. These results indicated that clothing expenditure did not play a role in consumer attitude toward the salesperson, consumer expectation and evaluation of the salesperson's performance, and consumer satisfaction with the salesperson's performance

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### RESEARCH INTERESTS

Consumer Behavior