

Many would rather buy generic clothes than stand out with designer brands

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Many people buy and wear clothing from prestigious brands as a way to express and distinguish themselves. However, a new study from the University of Missouri has found that people who are more sensitive to how others perceive them are actually more likely to avoid clothing with large logos, even if the clothing is from a prestigious brand. Eunjin Kim, a doctoral candidate in the MU School of Journalism, says it is important for companies to understand this brand avoidance behavior when marketing their products to consumers.

"Many people, especially those who are sensitive to how others see them, are not looking to stand out due to their [clothing](#) and apparel choices," Kim said. "While they may choose higher prestige brands that they believe will improve their image among their peers, such as Coach or Gucci, they would rather choose a less prestigious brand if it means the logos are smaller and less obtrusive. Even though promoting a positive image is important for these people, we found that it is even more important that they do not stand out in the crowd."

For her study, Kim evaluated participants' sensitivity to the opinions of others by using the attention to social comparison information (ATSCI) scale, which measures how much participants care about social approval. Participants who had higher ATSCI scores exhibited more sensitivity to how they were perceived. Kim then presented various clothing and apparel items to the participants and asked them which items they would be likely to buy and wear. Kim found that high ATSCI individuals avoided potentially attention-garnering brand choices such as those

involving distinctive brands or conspicuous brand logos.

"Our findings indicate that in making their brand choices, many consumers are willing to sacrifice distinctiveness and individuality in order to reduce the possibility of disapproval by others," Kim said. "We cannot always predict others' reactions about our clothing choices, and a chance always exists that those reactions could take the form of criticism, rather than compliments. Because of the possibility of social disapproval prompted by attention-garnering choices, and because high ATSCI consumers crave social approval and fear social isolation, it is likely such individuals will prefer to keep a low profile in their brand consumption behaviors. So in effect, many people are more worried about being viewed negatively by their peers than they are willing to gain positive attention by taking fashion risks."

Kim says clothing brands should pay attention to this trend when marketing to high ATSCI customers. While high ATSCI individuals would rather buy more prestigious brands, if those brands are too distinctive and attention-garnering, Kim says less prestigious brands may be able to capitalize by creating clothing and apparel with small, unobtrusive logos and styles.

Kim also found that although low ATSCI individuals, who are less sensitive to how others perceive them, preferred smaller logos from less prestigious brands, they did not mind relatively large-sized logos on items from prestigious brands.

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