

A STUDY ON THE WEARING PERCEPTION OF SPORTSWEAR

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INTRODUCTION

Consumers in Taiwan placed much importance on the brand name, style and color design of sportswear instead of their functionality. The athletes therefore *can* usually choose only from the ready-made products. However functional properties of fabric such as breathability, thermal insulation, air and vapor permeability, and elasticity are to the athletes' advantage in maintaining the physical agility and getting better performances. The objective of **this study** is to assess the athletes' wearing perception and their expectation properties of sportswear, that will serve as an index for the textile industry to manufacture products that *can* satisfy the needs of sporting.

METHODS

1. The subjects were the **final year** students in the department of physical education in **all** colleges in Taiwan, in 1992.
2. The **sportswear** chosen here is the T-shirts the athletes wear daily.
3. The **scaled questionnaires** were structured in four parts:
 - (1) Psychological perception of the athletes on their criteria for a sportswear.
 - (2) Psychological perception on the important elements of a sportswear.
 - (3) Physiological perception on the actual wearing.
 - (4) The degree of satisfaction and the expectation from ready made sportswear.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaires were distributed to 880 final year students, where 620 pieces returned within which **585** pieces were valid. The rate of valid returns was 67%. In each question, the subjects were **asked** to give weighting factors on the options provided.

The results of **this** article were analyzed in terms of normal sport condition, not the **sportswear** for special item of exercises or special condition. **So**, these general results *can* be divided into **three** parts according to the frame of the questions (**see** METHODS 3.).

1. **Psychological feeling**: Athletes agreed that the sportswear should have functional properties and these can help them to get better records.

The objective considerations for the functional and comfortable properties like "absorbent", "softness", "air-permeability", and "movement-matching-style", were found more important. The women paid more attention to them **than** men. On the other **hand**, items like "brand", "price", "color", "fiber content", and "nice-looking", which did not relate to the properties of the fabric, were less important. However, the male subjects attached more importance to these **than** the female ones.

Considering from practical and consumers' view point, the "nice-looking", "durability", "movement-matching-style", and "absorbent" were very important. It meant that the consumers will expect to have the aesthetic, durable, and functional properties.

2. **Physiological perception**: The discomfort feelings of perspiration stimulated on the skin from unsuitable moisture regulation was most detectable. These descriptors were clammy, clingy, damp, sultry, and nonabsorbent. The second group of discomfort included local-restriction of style, insufficiency of material elasticity, and heaviness, which related to the stretch and movement of the body. The last group prickly and rough concerned the roughness of the material which generated skin abrasion (**see** figure 1.). Men detected all of these discomfort easier **than** women.

Many subjects mentioned "comfort is important" or "with comfort is all right" in their questionnaires. Actually, the term "comfort" is a nebulous one[1], and *can* mean different between people. It was generally agreed that the state of comfort *can* be achieved when the **most** complex interactions between a range of physiological, psychological, and physical factors have taken place in a satisfactory manner[2]. There are two factors governing the comfort of fabrics[3]--thermal conductive properties and mechanical perception properties. The body fitness of clothing is also important, and it relates to the sizes and design.

People will perspire and feel hot in exercising process, so the perceptions arise from "thermal conductive properties" are the most noticeable. The body and limbs stretch in activity, therefore clothing restriction due to body "fitness" is noticed second, and the last one is abrasion connected with the "mechanical perception". From the results discussed above, the most significant factor should be "thermal conductivity properties" in developing new sportswear fabrics, although the handle and softness are also important considerations when buying clothing.

3. About 93% of the athletes feel acceptable or satisfied of the ready-made sportswear, and the satisfaction of men and women is quite the same. However, they still suggested many improving factors, such as price, style, functional properties of fabrics, caring properties, and sizes.

CONCLUSIONS

The athletes agreed with the importance of the functions of clothing, and they noticed the discomfort of the unsuitable organization of heat and moisture. These proved the significance of the **high** performance of the thermal and moisture conductivity of fabrics. Sportswear is one kind of merchandises, and it should meet with the principle of practical use. That is, besides the functional wearing properties, the consideration of "price", "nice-looking", "shape-holding", and "durability" after wearing are all very important.

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Fig. 1 The results of physiological perception of sportswear after exercising.

