



## Employee Relations

Employee beliefs regarding the impact of unconventional appearance on customers in Mexico and Turkey

Katherine Karl Joy Van Eck Peluchette Leda McIntyre Hall

### Article information:

To cite this document:

Katherine Karl Joy Van Eck Peluchette Leda McIntyre Hall , (2016), "Employee beliefs regarding the impact of unconventional appearance on customers in Mexico and Turkey", Employee Relations, Vol. 38 Iss 2 pp. 163 - 181

Permanent link to this document:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/ER-05-2015-0083>

Downloaded on: 07 November 2016, At: 01:29 (PT)

References: this document contains references to 87 other documents.

To copy this document: [permissions@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:permissions@emeraldinsight.com)

The fulltext of this document has been downloaded 237 times since 2016\*

### Users who downloaded this article also downloaded:

(2016), "Competencies of older workers and its influence on career success and job satisfaction", Employee Relations, Vol. 38 Iss 2 pp. 130-146 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/ER-05-2014-0054>

(2016), "Temporary agency workers shake a work community: a social capital perspective", Employee Relations, Vol. 38 Iss 2 pp. 147-162 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/ER-01-2015-0012>

Access to this document was granted through an Emerald subscription provided by emerald-srm:563821 []

### For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit [www.emeraldinsight.com/authors](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/authors) for more information.

### About Emerald [www.emeraldinsight.com](http://www.emeraldinsight.com)

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

\*Related content and download information correct at time of download.

# Employee beliefs regarding the impact of unconventional appearance on customers in Mexico and Turkey

Impact of  
unconventional  
appearance

163

Katherine Karl

*Department of Management, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga,  
Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA*

Joy Van Eck Peluchette

*Lindenwood University, St Charles, Missouri, USA, and*

Leda McIntyre Hall

*Department of Health Policy and Management,  
The George Washington University, Washington,  
District of Columbia, USA*

Received 13 May 2015  
Revised 16 July 2015  
8 September 2015  
Accepted 15 September 2015

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The increasing prevalence of unconventional appearance attributes (e.g. tattoos, piercings, unnatural hair color, alternative clothing) is a concern among employers as these appearance attributes are often viewed negatively. Because much of the existing employee appearance research has been conducted in the USA, the purpose of this paper is to examine employee beliefs regarding the impact of unconventional employee appearance on customer perceptions of service quality in Mexico and Turkey. The authors also examine the impact of gender, age, and position level.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The sample consisted of 295 white collar employees in various service industries in Turkey and Mexico. Respondents reported how they thought eight employee appearance factors (tattoos, facial piercings, unconventional hair color, unconventional hair styles, sweat pants, clothing with rips or tears, clothing that bears midribs, belly-buttons, or cleavage, and uniforms) would affect customer perceptions of service quality.

**Findings** – Employees in both Mexico and Turkey indicated that uniforms would have a positive impact on customer perceptions of service quality and all seven unconventional employee appearance attributes would have a negative impact. Significant differences for country, gender, age, and position level were also found.

**Research limitations/implications** – Future research including a more diverse group of countries and cultures is needed. Future research should also attempt to control for differences in type of organization, organizational culture, and job type.

**Practical implications** – Alternative fashion and appearance styles may be trendy but there are risks in how these might be perceived by customers and by colleagues at work.

**Originality/value** – This study examines employee beliefs regarding the impact of a variety of unconventional employee appearance attributes on customers' perceptions of service quality in Mexico and Turkey.

**Keywords** Cross-cultural management, Individual perception, Service quality, Employee appearance

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Body modifications (e.g. tattoos, piercings, and unnatural hair color) and other unconventional appearance attributes (e.g. hair style, clothing style) have been increasing in prevalence and acceptance particularly among young adults (Ferreira, 2014; Hastings, 2012). This growing popularity has caused concern among employers



who recognize that, traditionally, these have been associated with risky and deviant behavior in Western cultures and customers may have negative views of these appearance attributes (Roberts, 2012; Timming, 2015). Studies of service encounters show that consumers will base their perception of overall service quality on cues in the service environment and that the appearance of employees is a key part of that environment (Ezeh and Harris, 2007). By making inferences and applying stereotypes, consumers form impressions which become the basis for their expectations of the service experience.

While there has been a growing body of literature on the role of employee appearance and attire in the service industry (Harquail, 2006; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007, 2009; Williams and Connell, 2010), there has been little research on the impact of unconventional appearance factors, other than a few studies on tattoos and body piercings (Dean, 2010, 2011; Miller *et al.*, 2009; Timming, 2015). In addition, although workplace appearance norms in other parts of the world have been influenced by trends from the West, there still exist major differences in how clothing and appearance are viewed across the globe (Hansen, 2004; Maynard, 2004). Given the paucity of research examining employee attire and unconventional appearance outside of the USA and Europe, we know little about how these factors are viewed in other countries.

The purpose of this paper is to examine employee beliefs regarding the impact of unconventional employee appearance attributes on customer perceptions. Given that observer characteristics (e.g. gender, position level, age, culture) influence one's sensitivity to appearance cues (Dean, 2010; Solomon and Schopler, 1982; Timming, 2015; Zhang *et al.*, 2008), these characteristics are also examined. Below, we review the literature examining the impact of employee appearance on observers' perceptions and the role of individual differences. We then discuss the role of culture in perceptions of service quality with a focus on Mexico and Turkey.

### **Impact of employee appearance on observers' perceptions**

How employees present themselves to others in the workplace can have a powerful impact on others' perceptions, whether it is co-workers, supervisors, or customers. Known as impression management, this process assumes that individuals actively monitor their environment for clues as to how others perceived them and construct an image that influences others' perceptions (Goffman, 1959; Leary and Kowalski, 1990; Molloy, 1975). Research findings on workplace attire confirm employees use their dress to influence the perceptions of others and to ensure compliance and legitimization with the role requirements of their position (Peluchette *et al.*, 2006; Rafaeli and Pratt, 1993). Recognizing the importance of employee appearance, many companies have sought ways to "manage" employee image to influence customers' perceptions of service quality. Harquail (2006) indicates that, by controlling employees' appearance and having them "wear the brand," brand knowledge is transferred to employee behaviors and cognitions. As a result, employees internalize the brand so that it becomes part of their self-presentation to co-workers and customers.

The relationship between employee appearance and customer expectations has been conceptually acknowledged by scholars studying service organizations. According to the literature, employees are part of the "servicescape" and their characteristics combine with other tangible and intangible cues to influence customer perceptions of overall service quality (Ezeh and Harris, 2007; Hooper *et al.*, 2013). When customers enter into a service encounter, they typically search the environment for clues as to the

service performance they can expect and employee appearance is an implicit cue influencing their expectations of service quality. Research shows that, in these often short and impersonal (or “zero-acquaintance”) interactions, customers typically base their impressions on attributes of employees’ faces and clothing, making evaluations of service providers’ competence by inferring dispositional traits and applying stereotypes based on their appearance (Berry and Wero, 1993; Mangum *et al.*, 1997).

According to the expectancy disconfirmation model proposed by Oliver (1980, 1993), customer satisfaction is determined by the customer’s evaluation of the difference between pre-purchase expectations regarding a product/service and the perceived quality after consumption. Consumers’ expectations are determined by prior consumption experience and information gathered during the service encounter and are confirmed if those expectations are met. If the product/service performs better or less than expected, consumers’ expectations are either positively or negatively disconfirmed. Birdwell (1968) and Graeff (1996) argue that the image congruence hypothesis influences customer expectations with regard to employee appearance in service encounters, whereby consumers have a mental image of what “normal” appearing service providers should look like for a particular type of service. Incongruities between the physical appearance of the service provider and the service environment would likely result in the expectation of diminished service performance.

This is supported in research by Shao *et al.* (2004) who found that appropriately dressed investment bankers (i.e. a business suit) received higher ratings on customer expectations of firm service quality than those dressed inappropriately (i.e. jeans and a t-shirt) and concluded that not only do customers judge service employees by their dress, but customers also “use contact employee dress as cues to the quality of the service firm itself” (p. 1172). More recently, researchers found that customers formed positive impressions of service quality and store image when employees were dressed in formal clothing and presented a professional appearance (Kim *et al.*, 2009; Yan *et al.*, 2011), and negative perceptions about service providers who were messy or unhygienic (Vilnai-Yavetz and Rafaeli, 2011).

Several types of unconventional appearance have become more mainstream in recent years (e.g. tattoos, facial/body piercings, unnatural hair color, unconventional hair styles, and alternative styles of clothing). While some are less common than others, all of these appearance factors are generally viewed as different forms of self-expression. Because of the high visibility and extreme nature of these appearance factors, there has been considerable controversy in the workplace with regard to their potential impact on customer perceptions.

### **Impact of unconventional appearance factors on observers’ perceptions**

Evidence indicates that body art, in the form of tattoos and piercings have become increasingly popular in Western cultures over the past two decades (Carmen *et al.*, 2012). According to a recent *NBC News/Wall Street Journal* poll, 40 percent of American adults said that someone in their household has a tattoo, which is up from 21 percent in 1999 (*NBC News/Wall Street Journal* Poll, 2014). Likewise, statistics show that about 25 percent of the adult population in Europe has tattoos (Aslam and Owen, 2013). These less-conventional forms of appearance seem to have particular appeal to young adults. A 2010 study of 2,020 adults living in the continental USA found that nearly 40 percent of Millennials (age 18-29) indicate that they have a tattoo, with 38 percent having more than one, and 25 percent having a piercing in some other place than their earlobe (Pew Research Center, 2010).

Articles in the *Denver Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* have suggested that unnatural hair colors are also becoming more mainstream by pointing out that many celebrities (e.g. Katy Perry, Selena Gomez, Rihanna, Lady Gaga) are wearing bold hair colors (Brown, 2012; Dawson, 2012). Other controversial hair styles in the workplace are mohawks, liberty spikes (hair styled in long stiff peaks), dreadlocks, shaved hair with patterns or words, and hair that is heavily teased or messy (Giegerich, 2012; LeTrent, 2012). However, evidence suggests that not all workplaces are accepting of these forms of individual expression, and they may even result in termination (*Los Angeles Times*, 1989). In addition, clothing is used by many as a form of individual expression, such as punk, gothic, or grunge (Osgerby, 2010). Together, these styles include considerable use of the color black, leather jackets, leather pants, or skirts, fish net stockings, military boots or Converse sneakers, clothing intentionally torn or with holes, loose fitting plaid flannel shirts, sweat pants, or long loose fitting granny-style dresses (Mittica, 2012; Sebra, 2013). Conversely, these styles may also include revealing, tight-fitting or sexually provocative clothing (e.g. underwear is worn as outer wear, short skirts, leather studded collars, laced corsets) as portrayed by Madonna in the 1985 film *Desperately Seeking Susan* or more recently by the Abby Scioto character on the popular television series *NCIS* (*Daily Herald*, 2011; Hunt, 2012).

Despite the popularity of these unconventional appearance factors, research evidence indicates that perceptions in the workplace are largely unfavorable. In one of the few studies of alternative clothing, Sklar and DeLong (2012) interviewed men and women who identify with the punk subculture and found most believed that feeling both appropriate while at work and like “oneself” was not possible. Thus, they made accommodations such as keeping two closets (one for work and one for expressing one’s punk identity) or intentionally blending in vs standing out. In a study of tattoos, undergraduate students (even those with body art themselves) indicated that they preferred not to work with others who had visible body art in jobs involving high levels of face-to-face customer contact or where rewards (e.g. tips) would be shared equally (Miller *et al.*, 2009). In a study of consumer attitudes, Dean (2011) found that visible tattoos on tax service providers were viewed by respondents as inappropriate. These respondents also indicated significantly lower levels of customer satisfaction and less likelihood to recommend even though the service outcome was favorable. In another study, Dean (2010) found both young and old respondents, and those with and without tattoos themselves, believed that employees in financial services should not have visible tattoos. Likewise, studies of patients reveal that health care providers with visible tattoos were perceived negatively, or as less professional (Westerfield *et al.*, 2012).

### *Culture*

In an effort to extend past research, we chose to examine two countries outside the USA and Europe, namely Mexico and Turkey. The following sections discuss what is known about cultural norms regarding workplace attire in these two countries and how unconventional appearance factors might affect perceptions of service quality.

*Mexico.* Evidence indicates that Mexicans expect a certain level of formality in the workplace and seek ways to manage employee appearance (Hofstede, 1984). A survey of Mexican executives found that over one-third believed that wearing appropriate business attire is a “very important” cultural protocol (Hise *et al.*, 2003). Most corporations in Mexico have and enforce dress codes and uniforms are often required for the clerical staff (Messenger, 2004). In fact, a recent survey showed that 40 percent of Mexican respondents wore some type of uniform in the workplace. In addition, since only

---

13 percent felt that wearing shorts and 6 percent felt that wearing sandals/flip-flops was appropriate in the workplace, this shows that a level of formality is expected in how employees present themselves (Reuters/Ipsos Global @dvisory, 2010).

With regard to unconventional appearance factors, there is limited evidence as to how these might be perceived in Mexican culture. It appears that the norm in Mexico is toward a conservative and neat appearance which is evident in O'Connor's (2004) research into the Mexican punk culture. He argues that dressing in the punk style is important in being considered part of the punk culture in Mexico which involves wearing black clothing with patches and hair that is dyed and worn in spikes or a mohawk. O'Connor (2004) states that "the look is dramatic [...] and completely goes against the grain of respectable dress in Mexico" (p. 188). A newspaper article about O'Connor's research included a picture of a Mexican punk youth sporting a tattoo, so it is assumed that the prevalence of tattoos is also part of the punk style (Quinones, 2003).

*Turkey.* Appearance and clothing have been a source of controversy and debate in Turkey for several decades, with regulation of appearance being dictated by different leaders' opinions of the role that Islam should play in Turkish culture. Evidence indicates that formal etiquette is central to Turkish culture, governing most social interactions and use of space. A recent survey of more than 12,500 employees worldwide indicated that 84 percent of Turkish respondents believed that those in senior management should always dress more formally than their employees (Reuters/Ipsos Global @dvisory, 2010). In addition, dress codes are dictated by the state for many constituencies including government employees, students (from primary through graduate school), television announcers, and religious officials. These dress codes are very specific about the formality, modesty, cleanliness, and neatness of clothing and appearance, including footwear, hairstyle, facial hair, and fingernails, with penalties for violating the code (O'Neil, 2010).

Information about the current marketplace indicates that Turkish consumers are interested in appearing in a religiously appropriate but fashionable way. This involves blending Western fashion with aspects of Islamic dress that portray trendiness and modesty (Akou, 2007; Sandikci and Ger, 2007). With regard to customer perceptions, evidence shows that Turkish consumers place considerable weight on employee appearance. For example, Filiz (2010) found that 37 percent of the variance between customer expectations and perceptions in Turkish travel agencies was explained by a factor that included "neat employees" and customers felt they got better service from well-dressed agents. This is consistent with findings from a similar study of travel agents in northern Cyprus. Johns *et al.* (2004) found that, of the tangible elements in the service environment, consumers placed the highest weight on "neat appearing" employees in terms of what they expected and how they perceived the service encounter.

While we have limited evidence as to how Turkish consumers would view unconventional attire in a service encounter, we expect that it would be viewed as inappropriate given the religious concern for modesty and weight placed on appearance in studies on consumer perceptions. This is confirmed in results of a worldwide survey where only 11 percent of Turkish employees surveyed saw shorts as appropriate in the workplace and only 12 percent viewed flip-flops as appropriate (Reuters/Ipsos Global @dvisory, 2010). With regard to body art and piercings, evidence indicates that, because Turkey is mainly a Muslim country, there is widespread opposition from religious groups who believe that the natural appearance of the body should not be modified. A recent study shows that, while tattoos and piercings are popular among Turkish young adults, they acknowledge the problems that these could

cause in being accepted socially or in the workplace and some are opting to have them modified or removed (Atik and Yildirim, 2014).

Existing research examining the role of culture in service experiences have focussed primarily on Hofstede's (1984) dimensions of uncertainty avoidance and power distance because these are most closely linked with the tangible aspects of the service encounter (Schneider and Barsoux, 2003). High uncertainty avoidance cultures are more likely to have rigid expectations of beliefs and behavior, having little tolerance for unorthodox practices (The Hofstede Center, 2015) and thus, it is argued that customers generally have high expectations for service providers in order to reduce uncertainty or risk in the service experience (Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Furrer *et al.*, 2000). With regard to power distance, studies show that consumers in high power distance cultures have high service expectations and are most satisfied with service experiences when employees display more formality in terms of appropriate appearance and attire (Furrer *et al.*, 2000; Ladhari *et al.*, 2011). Both Mexico and Turkey have been found to score relatively high on the dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance, thus we expect to find that employees in these countries will tend to believe that unconventional appearance factors, which are neither formal nor mainstream, will have a negative impact on customer perceptions of service quality. However, given that both cultures are similar on power distance and uncertainty avoidance, we do not make any predictions regarding differences between these two countries, therefore we predict:

- H1.* Unconventional appearance attributes (e.g. tattoos, facial piercings, unconventional hair color and styles, revealing clothing) will be perceived by employees as having a more negative impact on customers' perceptions of service quality than conventional appearance (e.g. a uniform).

While the studies described above provide some evidence of consumer perceptions regarding unconventional appearance factors, it is likely that the impressions formed will vary depending on the individual characteristics of the observer. Below, we review the literature examining the role of individual differences in impression formation with a focus on gender, position level, and age.

### *Gender*

Research clearly demonstrates that when it comes to the effects of employee appearance, gender matters. For example, Karl and Peluchette (2006) found women were more likely than men to believe their attire affects the impressions of others, and both men and women indicated that clothing choice has a greater impact on women's workplace outcomes (e.g. productivity, promotions, career success, pay raises, perks) than men's. This supports findings by Solomon and Schopler (1982) that females, compared to males, experience a greater connection between their attire and the quality of their performance. Similarly, Kwon (1994) found that women place more emphasis on the appropriateness of dress in the workplace than men. Employee attire has also been shown to have a greater impact on female customer perceptions than those of males. For example, Chawla *et al.* (1992) found female clients rated formally dressed CPAs significantly higher than male clients on dimensions such as likelihood of hiring, expertise, credibility, reliability, and professionalism. Likewise, Shao *et al.* (2004) found that appropriateness of a banking employee's dress (business suit vs jeans and t-shirt) had a stronger impact on female customer expectations of service quality and purchase intent than that of male customers.

Since evidence indicates that females are more aware of the importance of dress in impression formation and are also more sensitive to dress cues, it is likely that women will be more likely than men to believe that unconventional appearance attributes will have a negative impact on customer perceptions of service quality. In support, Glick *et al.* (2008) found that women were less likely than men to make favorable hiring recommendations for female sales representatives exposing cleavage when attempting to sell an ineffective drug. These researchers also found that men, but not women, believed that female sales professionals ought strategically to use sex appeal to distract from a weak product. Based on these findings, we predict:

- H2.* Female employees will be more likely than male employees to believe that unconventional appearance factors will have a negative impact on customer perceptions of service quality.

#### *Position level*

Aware that employee appearance plays a key role in the service encounter, employers place considerable weight on image both in the hiring process and in what is expected of workers once employed. A survey of human resource managers, who were asked about selection factors for staff interfacing with customers, found that, in addition to having a good personality, 90 percent indicated that having the right appearance was either critical or important to being hired and 93 percent believed that employee appearance was either critical or important to success of the business (Nickson *et al.*, 2005). Once hired, employees are typically trained, monitored, and rewarded by the organization to produce a type of service encounter that will appeal to the senses of the customer (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007; Warhurst *et al.*, 2009).

In considering appearance factors, managers are often influenced by their company's brand and what they believe customers would expect in a service encounter (Pettinger, 2004; Williams and Connell, 2010). For example, Timming (2015) found that hiring managers' prejudices about applicants' appearance were largely driven by their beliefs in the type of image they thought customers would expect in a service encounter. While this determines what managers are likely to view as acceptable and not acceptable, evidence suggests that managers tend to be more conservative when considering their customers' preferences (Erickson *et al.*, 2000). An on-line survey of 37 recruiters and human resource managers in the hospitality industry found that most (67 percent) believed that tattoos and piercings would be viewed negatively by their organizations (Swanger, 2006). Likewise, a study of restaurant managers indicated that applicants with tattoos are viewed less favorably than those without tattoos (Brallier *et al.*, 2011). Given these findings, it is likely that managers would have negative perceptions of all forms of unconventional appearance. As a result, we predict:

- H3.* Managers will be more likely than non-managers to believe that unconventional appearance factors will have a negative impact on customer perceptions of service quality.

#### *Age*

According to a study of 1,501 adults living in the continental USA, unconventional appearance attributes (e.g. tattoos, unnatural hair color such as blue or pink, body piercings other than the earlobe) are more common among younger generations than older generations with almost half (54 percent) of 18-25 year olds having one of these attributes and only 21 percent of those over 40 having any of these attributes



(Pew Research Center, 2008). Given these findings, it is likely that age will influence the impressions formed of employees with unconventional appearance. In support, Dean (2010) found that older respondents held more unfavorable views of visibly tattooed people than younger respondents and were more likely to see them as less intelligent and less honest than those without tattoos. In contrast, other studies have found young individuals also hold negative impressions of the visibly tattooed (Miller *et al.*, 2009; Timming, 2015), thus, it is possible that younger individuals, especially those with visible tattoos themselves, are more sensitive to unconventional appearance cues and their impact on impression formation because they have experienced the stigma first hand. This was the case with one of Timming's (2015) interviewees who blamed his failure to get jobs on the highly visible tattoos which covered his face. Given these conflicting findings, we intend to examine the impact of age but make no predictions.

## Method

### *Sample*

For this study, we utilized a convenience sample of employees in both public and private sector organizations in in Mérida, Mexico and Ankara, Turkey. In both countries, surveys were delivered to organizations which had agreed to participate and returned by mail to protect the privacy of participants. Surveys were translated into Spanish and Turkish by language specialists. In Mexico, 250 surveys were distributed and 154 completed surveys were returned, producing a response rate of 63 percent. In Turkey, 250 respondents were solicited and 141 completed the survey, producing a response rate of 55 percent. Respondents in Mexico were sampled from various workplaces including banking ( $n = 4$ ), health care ( $n = 7$ ), education ( $n = 53$ ), and government (public utilities, social services;  $n = 90$ ). In Turkey, respondents were sampled from workplaces including a state-owned bank ( $n = 89$ ) and two government organizations (finance,  $n = 22$ ; tourism,  $n = 30$ ). About 40 percent were males ( $n = 119$ ) and 54.6 percent ( $n = 161$ ) reported they held a management-level position. The average age was 34.7 ( $SD = 9.43$ ) and the average hours worked per week was 49.8 ( $SD = 9.24$ ). However, the sample in Mexico compared to that in Turkey, was significantly older and had a greater proportion of managers ( $F(1, 280) = 3.99, p < 0.05$ ; and  $F(1, 279) = 9.90, p < 0.000$ ; respectively).

### *Measures*

The survey consisted of two sections: demographic information and beliefs regarding the impact of employee appearance on customer perceptions.

*Demographic information.* Respondents answered demographic questions regarding their age and work hours (both continuous variables), gender (coded 0 = male, 1 = female), position (management/non-management; coded 0 = non-management, 1 = management), and type of organization/industry.

*Employee beliefs regarding the impact of unconventional appearance on customers.* To measure beliefs regarding the impact of employee appearance on customer perceptions, we adapted a measure developed by Hall *et al.* (2013). Specifically, respondents were asked what impact they believed that eight different attributes of appearance or items of clothing had on customer perceptions of an employee's ability to provide accurate and dependable service; willingness to help customers and provide prompt service; knowledge, competence, and ability to convey trust and confidence; and ability to provide caring and individualized attention. These four items correspond

to the reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy dimensions of the well-known SERVQUAL measure developed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1988). The eight clothing or appearance variables included seven unconventional appearance attributes: facial piercings; tattoos; unconventional hair color (e.g. blue, green, bright red); unconventional hair style; sweat pants; clothing with tears, rips, or holes; and clothing that bares belly-buttons, midriff, or cleavage. In addition, we included an eighth item (uniforms) to provide an example of something that was more conventional, allowing minimal individual expression. All items were answered using a five-point response scale (1 = very negative, 5 = very positive). We computed eight overall measures of employee beliefs regarding the impact of appearance on customers by calculating the average of all four service quality items for each of eight types of appearance variables.  $\alpha$  coefficients for these eight overall measures ranged between 0.89 and 0.94.

## Results

In Table I, we report the means and standard deviations for uniforms and each of the seven unconventional appearance items for the total sample. In general, our respondents believed that uniforms had a somewhat positive impact on customer perceptions of overall service quality ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = 0.06$ ) but that the other seven unconventional appearance factors would have a negative impact (means ranged between 1.81 and 2.26). The correlations show that, in general, older respondents believed that clothing baring midriff, belly-buttons, or cleavage, and clothing with tears, rips, or holes, would have a more negative impact on customer perceptions of service quality than younger respondents. A within-subjects comparison using MANOVA with repeated measures revealed significant differences between the eight appearance variables ( $F(7, 237) = 93.61$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). Pairwise comparisons using a Bonferroni correction revealed that uniforms were rated significantly higher than all seven unconventional appearance items (all  $p$ -values  $< 0.001$ ) confirming *H1*. Facial piercings were perceived as having a more negative impact on customer perceptions than tattoos, sweat pants, clothing baring belly-buttons, midriff, or cleavage, and either unconventional hair styles or hair colors (all  $p$ -values  $< 0.05$ ). Sweat pants were perceived as having the least negative impact as compared to all six of the other unconventional appearance items (all  $p$ -values  $< 0.001$ ).

Employee appearance attributes	Total sample		Age
	<i>M</i>	SD	
Uniforms	3.76 <sup>a</sup>	0.93	0.04
Sweat pants	2.26 <sup>b</sup>	0.81	-0.13
Unconventional hair color	1.99 <sup>c</sup>	0.76	-0.10
Unconventional hair styles	1.97 <sup>c</sup>	0.73	-0.12
Clothing that bares belly-buttons, midriff, or cleavage	1.92 <sup>c,d</sup>	0.77	-0.24 <sup>***</sup>
Tattoos	1.88 <sup>c,d</sup>	0.75	-0.10
Clothing with tears, rips, or holes	1.87 <sup>c,d,e</sup>	0.75	-0.26 <sup>***</sup>
Facial piercings	1.81 <sup>e</sup>	0.76	-0.12

**Notes:** The response scale for these items ranged between 1 = very negative impact, and 5 = very positive impact. <sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>Means with different superscripts are significantly different from one another at  $p < 0.05$ . <sup>\*\*\*</sup> $p < 0.001$

**Table I.**  
Means, standard  
deviations, and  
correlations between  
age and employee  
beliefs regarding the  
impact of employee  
appearance  
attributes on  
customers' service  
quality perceptions

To test for the effects of gender and position level on beliefs regarding the impact of employee appearance on customer perceptions of service quality, we conducted two MANOVAs with repeated measures. In the first MANOVA, we examined the effects of gender (between-subjects factor) and appearance (within-subjects factor), and in the second, we examined position level (between-subjects factor) and appearance (within-subjects factor). The resulting Wilks  $\lambda$  was significant for both gender ( $F(7, 235) = 3.06, p < 0.004$ ) and position level ( $F(7, 227) = 2.68, p < 0.05$ ) supporting *H2* and *H3*. We next conducted separate ANOVAs for each of the eight appearance items with main effect comparisons for gender and position level using Bonferonni corrections. Means, standard deviations and resulting *F*-values are shown in Table II. These results are also illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

A MANCOVA was conducted to examine differences between our Mexican and Turkish respondents in their beliefs regarding the impact of employee appearance on customer perceptions of service quality with age and managerial status entered as covariates. The resulting Wilks  $\lambda$  was significant ( $F(7, 218) = 3.46, p < 0.002$ ). We subsequently conducted eight separate ANCOVAs with main effect comparisons for country using Bonferonni corrections. Means, standard error terms and resulting *F*-values are shown in Table II.

Finally, we also conducted some post hoc analyses using MANOVA to determine whether there were any significant interactions between gender, position level, and appearance or country, gender, and appearance. These interactions were not significant ( $F(7, 216) = 0.93, p = \text{ns}$ , and  $F(7, 215) = 1.29, p = \text{ns}$ , respectively).

## Discussion

Our findings add to the growing body of literature demonstrating that employee appearance plays an important role in the service experience (Hall *et al.*, 2013; Kim *et al.*, 2009; Miller *et al.*, 2009). While existing research has focussed mainly on tattoos and body piercings, this study extends such research by including other aspects of unconventional appearance, such as alternative clothing and hair styles/color. In addition, as the service sector becomes a larger part of the international business arena, a broader understanding of service quality perceptions in other countries is increasingly important. This study contributes to that understanding by examining employee beliefs regarding the role that unconventional appearance plays in customers' perceptions of service quality in Mexico and Turkey.

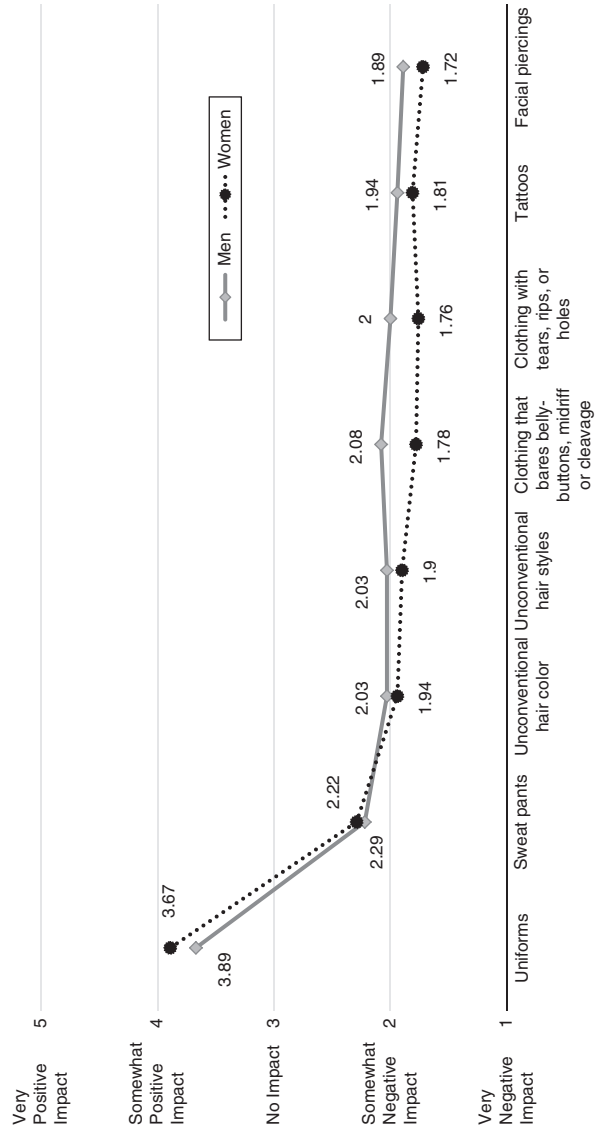
As predicted, employees in Mexico and Turkey believed that unconventional employee appearance items (e.g. revealing clothing, unconventional hair styles/color) would have a negative impact on customer perceptions of service quality, whereas uniforms would have a positive impact. Additionally, we found women were more likely than men to believe that ripped or revealing clothing would lead to negative customer impressions. It could be that both of these types of unconventional attire are considered to be provocative and, consistent with previously cited research (Glick *et al.*, 2008), women view these aspects of clothing and appearance more negatively than men. Also, consistent with previous research (Erickson *et al.*, 2000), managers indicated that customers would view unconventional appearance more negatively than non-managers.

While we did not make any predictions for age or culture, we found older respondents had more negative views than younger respondents on two of the seven unconventional items, namely, revealing clothing and clothing with rips or holes. As to why older respondents are more critical of these items than others, it is unclear. Future research examining stereotypes or biases associated with these unconventional

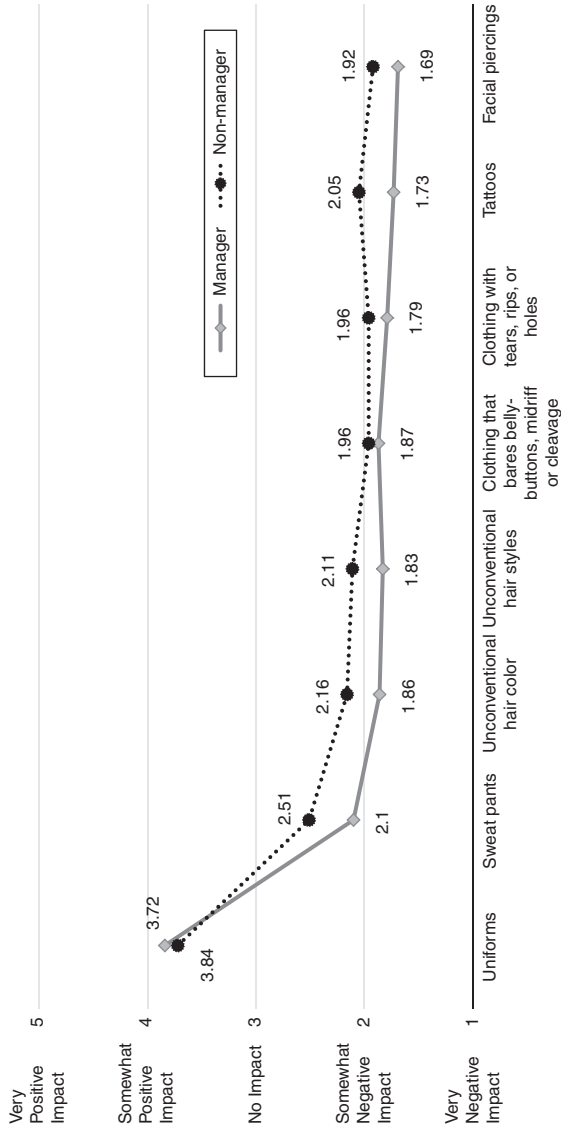
Employee appearance attributes	Gender						Position level						Country					
	Men			Women			Manager			Non-manager			Mexico			Turkey		
	M	SD	F	M	SD	F	M	SD	F	M	SD	F	M	SE	F	M	SE	F
Uniforms	3.67	0.94	3.89	0.91	3.43	3.84	1.03	3.72	0.78	1.0	3.97	0.08	3.62	0.09	7.08**			
Sweat pants	2.22	0.73	2.29	0.84	0.48	2.10	0.82	2.51	0.71	15.96***	2.25	0.07	2.27	0.08	0.06			
Unconventional hair color	2.03	0.70	1.94	0.82	0.90	1.86	0.78	2.16	0.72	11.73***	2.16	0.07	1.77	0.07	13.25***			
Unconventional hair styles	2.03	0.67	1.9	0.76	2.03	1.83	0.76	2.11	0.69	9.13**	1.75	0.07	2.12	0.07	13.56***			
Clothing that bares belly-buttons, midriff or cleavage	2.08	0.77	1.78	0.77	9.22**	1.87	0.79	1.96	0.77	0.90	1.91	0.07	1.89	0.08	0.05			
Clothing with tears, rips, or holes	2.00	0.72	1.76	0.76	6.11*	1.79	0.75	1.96	0.74	2.91	1.92	0.07	1.77	0.07	2.24			
Tattoos	1.94	0.73	1.81	0.77	1.97	1.73	0.74	2.05	0.74	11.33***	1.69	0.07	2.02	0.07	10.41***			
Facial piercings	1.89	0.75	1.72	0.76	2.86	1.69	0.75	1.92	0.76	5.31*	1.68	0.07	1.88	0.08	3.57			

**Notes:** The response scale for these items ranged between 1 = very negative impact, and 5 = very positive impact. Due to missing data, the degrees of freedom for the error term in the *F*-tests ranged between 233 and 260. <sup>a</sup>The means shown for Mexico and Turkey are the estimated marginal means with age and managerial status as covariates. \**p* < 0.05; \*\**p* < 0.01; \*\*\**p* < 0.001

**Table II.** ANCOVA results for the impact of unconventional clothing or appearance on service quality perceptions by gender, position level, and country<sup>a</sup>



**Figure 1.** Employee beliefs regarding the impact of unconventional employee appearance on customer perceptions of service quality by gender



**Figure 2.** Employee beliefs regarding the impact of unconventional employee appearance on customer perceptions of service quality by position level

appearance factors might help to explain these results. We also found that Mexican employees, compared to Turkish employees, had more negative views of unconventional hair style, unconventional hair color, and tattoos and more positive view of uniforms. While the two countries scored similarly on Hofstede's (1984) dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance, Mexico's score on power distance was a bit higher (81 vs 66), this, combined with the prevalence of uniform requirements in Mexico, could explain these differences.

One limitation of this study is that we did not survey actual customers. Instead, using the rationale that all of our respondents have been customers at some time, we examined employee beliefs regarding the impact of appearance on customer perceptions of service quality. However, our methodology of asking employees how customers might view unconventional appearance is consistent with that of Timming (2015) who asked recruiters for their assumptions about customers' impressions of visibly tattooed employees. Additionally, in some cases self-reports, which suffer from common method variance, are still appropriate (Conway and Lance, 2010). For example, when implementing and enforcing workplace dress codes, an understanding of employee beliefs regarding the role their appearance plays in service encounters is important as these beliefs may affect employee resistance to dress code policies.

Another limitation is that we did not examine differences in context, such as the type of organization, sector (private vs public), organizational culture, and job type. It is likely that type of organization is an important determinant of how employee appearance affects customer perceptions. For example, unconventional employee appearance in a movie theater or a trendy clothing store may be much more acceptable than in a finance, health care, or legal organization. Similarly, employee appearance may be of little concern for positions having no face-to-face contact with customers but crucial for others which have such contact. Research shows that what subjects see as appropriate dress is dependent on the industry and the particular workplace (Kelen, 2012), as well as whether the position is managerial vs non-managerial (Howlett *et al.*, 2015). Likewise, Timming (2015) found perceptions regarding tattoos was somewhat mitigated by the type of industry, the customer demographic, the anticipated level of interaction with customers, and the genre of the tattoo. It is also possible that having a tattoo or some type of unconventional appearance may actually have positive outcomes in the workplace. For example, Timming (2012) found that having a tattoo was an asset for tattoos artists being recruited by tattoo studios.

Finally, it is likely that biases or stereotypes mediate the relationship between unconventional employee appearance factors and customer perceptions. McElroy *et al.* (2014) found pierced individuals, compared to non-pierced individuals, were perceived as less agreeable, less conscientious, less competent, less sociable, and not as trustworthy. Thus, we recommend that future research extend this analysis of mediators to other unconventional appearance attributes.

#### *Implications for practice*

The bottom line is that employee appearance does matter in service encounters. While research shows there is evidence for this in the USA and the UK (Hall *et al.*, 2013; Nickson *et al.*, 2005), our findings show that this extends to other countries as well. This has important implications for companies interested in managing customer impressions in the global arena. While employers can be sympathetic toward employees' rights to express themselves, employee appearance is considered to have a critical role in conveying the company image in the customer service experience.

Alternative fashion and appearance styles of the Western world may be trendy but there are risks in how these might be perceived by customers.

Employers who are concerned about their image or brand should develop policies regarding dress and appearance for employees who have face-to-face contact with customers that are consistent with mainstream or generally accepted cultural standards in specific countries where they are doing business as opposed to attempting to implement organization-wide dress/appearance standards. It is important to note that these policies may cause employee dissatisfaction or even resistance from those who prefer to appear in a different way since research shows that some employees resent the considerable effort they spend to dress appropriately (referred to as “aesthetic labor”) and can experience dissonance because what they feel they need to wear is not what they would prefer to wear (Rafaeli *et al.*, 1997; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007; Witz *et al.*, 2003). However, this can be tempered with clear communication from employers as to why the standards are necessary.

This study has provided preliminary evidence suggesting that unconventional employee appearance factors are believed by employees to have a negative effect on perceptions of service quality in Mexico and Turkey. It is our hope that this provides an impetus for research on other aspects of unconventional appearance and/or self-presentation that may be of interest to employers such as make-up, perfume, facial hair, hair length, skirt length, jewelry, sloppiness, cleavage, or tight-fitting clothing. In addition, as many service providing businesses continue to expand internationally, research should extend these examinations to a more diverse group of countries and cultures. This was a step in that direction.

## References

- Akou, H. (2007), “Building a new ‘world fashion’: Islamic dress in the twenty-first century”, *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 403-422.
- Aslam, A. and Owen, C. (2013), “Fashions change but tattoos are forever: time to regret”, *British Journal of Dermatology*, Vol. 169 No. 6, pp. 1364-1366.
- Atik, D. and Yildirim, C. (2014), “Motivations behind acquiring tattoos and feelings of regret: highlights from an Eastern Mediterranean context”, *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 212-223.
- Berry, D. and Wero, J. (1993), “Accuracy in face perception: a view from ecological psychology”, *Journal of Personality*, Vol. 61 No. 4, pp. 497-520.
- Birdwell, A.E. (1968), “A study of the influence of image congruence on consumer choice”, *Journal of Business*, Vol. 41 No. 1, pp. 76-88.
- Brallier, S., Maguire, K., Smith, D. and Palm, L. (2011), “Visible tattoos and employment in the restaurant service industry”, *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, Vol. 2 No. 6, pp. 72-76.
- Brown, D. (2012), “Bold hair color moves from alternative to mainstream”, available at: [www.denverpost.com/ci\\_21475652/bold-hair-color-moves-from-alternative-mainstream](http://www.denverpost.com/ci_21475652/bold-hair-color-moves-from-alternative-mainstream) (accessed May 8, 2015).
- Carmen, R.A., Guitar, A.E. and Dillon, H.M. (2012), “Ultimate answers to proximate questions: the evolutionary motivations behind tattoos and body piercings in popular culture”, *Review of General Psychology*, Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 134-143.
- Chawla, S., Khan, Z. and Cornell, D. (1992), “The impact of gender and dress on choice of CPAs”, *Journal of Applied Business Research*, Vol. 8 No. 4, pp. 25-29.



- Conway, J. and Lance, C. (2010), "What reviewers should expect from authors regarding common method bias in organizational research", *Journal of Business & Psychology*, Vol. 25 No. 3, pp. 325-334.
- Daily Herald* (2011), "Pauley Perrette: She's your Goth go-to gal on 'NCIS'", December 12, available at: [www.dailyherald.com/article/20111212/entlife/712139950/photos/AR/](http://www.dailyherald.com/article/20111212/entlife/712139950/photos/AR/) (accessed July 2, 2015).
- Dawson, A. (2012), "Purple, blue, pink – why not? Vibrant hair color breaks through", available at: <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/jul/15/image/la-ig-hair-color-20120715> (accessed May 8, 2015).
- Dean, D. (2010), "Consumer perceptions of visible tattoos on service personnel", *Managing Service Quality*, Vol. 20 No. 3, pp. 294-308.
- Dean, D. (2011), "Young adult perception of visible tattoos on a white collar service provider", *Young Consumers*, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 254-264.
- Donthu, N. and Yoo, B. (1998), "Cultural influences on service quality expectations", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 1 No. 2, pp. 178-186.
- Erickson, B.H., Albanese, P. and Drakulic, S. (2000), "Gender on a jagged edge: the security industry, its clients, and the reproduction and revision of gender", *Work and Organizations*, Vol. 27 No. 3, pp. 294-318.
- Ezeh, C. and Harris, L. (2007), "Servicescape research: a review and a research agenda", *The Marketing Review*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 59-78.
- Ferreira, V. (2014), "Becoming a heavily tattooed young body: from a bodily experience to a body project", *Youth and Society*, Vol. 46 No. 3, pp. 303-337.
- Filiz, Z. (2010), "Service quality of travel agents in Turkey", *Qual. Quant.*, Vol. 44 No. 4, pp. 793-805.
- Furrer, O., Shaw-Ching Liu, B. and Sudharshan, D. (2000), "The relationships between culture and service quality perceptions: basis for cross-cultural market segmentation and resource allocation", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 2 No. 4, pp. 355-371.
- Giegerich, S. (2012), "Should his dreadlocks keep him out of a job?", available at: [www.stltoday.com/business/local/should-his-dreadlocks-keep-him-out-of-a-job/article\\_d0ce1a2a-949a-11e1-83a9-0019bb30f31a.html](http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/should-his-dreadlocks-keep-him-out-of-a-job/article_d0ce1a2a-949a-11e1-83a9-0019bb30f31a.html) (accessed May 8, 2015).
- Glick, P., Chrislock, K., Petersik, K., Vijay, M. and Turek, A. (2008), "Does cleavage work at work? Men, but not women, falsely believe cleavage sells a weak product", *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 326-335.
- Goffman, E. (1959), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Double Day Anchor, Garden City, NY.
- Graeff, T.R. (1996), "Image congruence effects on product evaluations: the role of self-monitoring and public/private consumption", *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 13 No. 5, pp. 481-499.
- Hall, L., Karl, K. and Peluchette, J. (2013), "City employee perceptions of the impact of dress and appearance: you are what you wear", *Public Personnel Management*, Vol. 42 No. 3, pp. 452-470.
- Hansen, K. (2004), "The world in dress: anthropological perspectives on clothing, fashion, and culture", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 369-392.
- Harquail, C. (2006), "Employees as animate artifacts: employee branding by 'wearing the brand'", in Rafaeli, A. and Pratt, M. (Eds), *Artifacts and Organizations: Beyond Mere Symbolism*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc., Mahwah, NJ, pp. 161-180.
- Hastings, R. (2012), "Survey: tattoos can leave lasting impressions", available at: [www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/employeerelations/articles/pages/tattooslastingimpressions.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/employeerelations/articles/pages/tattooslastingimpressions.aspx) (accessed May 8, 2015).

- Hise, R., Solano-Mendez, R. and Gresham, L. (2003), "Doing business in Mexico", *Thunderbird International Business Review*, Vol. 45 No. 2, pp. 211-224.
- Hofstede, G. (1984), *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*, 2nd ed., Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, CA.
- Hooper, D., Coughlan, J. and Mullen, M. (2013), "The servicescape as an antecedent to service quality and behavioral intentions", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 27 No. 4, pp. 271-280.
- Howlett, N., Pine, K., Cahill, N., Orakçioğlu, I. and Fletcher, B. (2015), "Unbuttoned: the interaction between provocativeness of female work attire and occupational status", *Sex Roles*, Vol. 72 Nos 3-4, pp. 105-116.
- Hunt, J. (2012), *Popular Culture: 1980-1999*, Heinemann-Raintree, Chicago, IL.
- Johns, N., Avci, T. and Karatepe, O. (2004), "Measuring service quality of travel agents: evidence from northern Cyprus", *The Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 24 No. 3, pp. 82-100.
- Karl, K. and Peluchette, J. (2006), "Perceptions regarding the impact of workplace attire on workplace outcomes", *Journal of North American Management Society*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 40-46.
- Kelen, E. (2012), "The becoming of business bodies: gender, appearance, and leadership development", *Management Learning*, Vol. 44 No. 1, pp. 45-61.
- Kim, J., Ju, H. and Johnson, K. (2009), "Sales associate's appearance: links to consumers' emotions, store image, and purchases", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 16 No. 5, pp. 407-413.
- Kwon, Y. (1994), "The influence of appropriateness of dress and gender on the self-perception of occupational attributes", *Clothing & Textiles Research Journal*, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 33-39.
- Ladhari, R., Pons, F., Bressolles, G. and Zins, M. (2011), "Culture and personal values: how they influence perceived service quality", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 64 No. 9, pp. 951-957.
- Leary, M. and Kowalski, R. (1990), "Impression management: a literature review and two-component model", *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 107 No. 1, pp. 34-47.
- LeTrent, S. (2012), "Decoding the workplace dress code", available at: [www.cnn.com/2012/08/14/living/workplace-dress-code/](http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/14/living/workplace-dress-code/) (accessed May 8, 2015).
- Los Angeles Times* (1989), "Blue hair gets him a pink sheet", December 15, PART-A, Metro Desk, p. 47.
- McElroy, J., Summers, J. and Moore, K. (2014), "The effect of facial piercing on perceptions of job applicants", *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Vol. 125 No. 1, pp. 26-38.
- Mangum, S., Garrison, C., Lind, C. and Hilton, H. (1997), "First impressions of the nurse and nursing care", *Journal of Nursing Care Quality*, Vol. 11 No. 5, pp. 39-47.
- Maynard, M. (2004), *Dress and Globalization*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Messenger, R. (2004), "Style matters", *Business Mexico*, Vol. 14 No. 7, pp. 30-35.
- Miller, B., Nicols, K. and Eure, J. (2009), "Body art in the workplace: piercing the prejudice", *Personnel Review*, Vol. 38 No. 6, pp. 621-640.
- Mittica, C.J. (2012), "Top trends for 2013", *Wearables*, Vol. 16 No. 10, pp. 53-59.
- Molloy, J.T. (1975), *Dress for Success*, Warner Books, New York, NY.
- NBC News/Wall Street Journal* Poll (2014), "Body ink is in, newspaper ink is out", posted May 1, available at: [www.nbcnews.com/politics/first-read/poll-body-ink-newspaper-out-n95056](http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/first-read/poll-body-ink-newspaper-out-n95056) (accessed September 1, 2015).

- Nickson, D., Warhurst, C. and Dutton, E. (2005), "The importance of attitude and appearance in the service encounter in retail and hospitality", *Managing Service Quality*, Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 196-208.
- O'Connor, A. (2004), "Punk and globalization: Spain and Mexico", *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 175-195.
- O'Neil, M. (2010), "You are what you wear: clothing/appearance laws and the construction of the public citizen in Turkey", *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 65-82.
- Oliver, R.L. (1980), "A cognitive model of the antecedents and consequences of satisfaction decisions", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 460-469.
- Oliver, R.L. (1993), "Cognitive, affective, and attribute bases of the satisfaction response", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 20 No. 3, pp. 418-430.
- Osgerby, B. (2010), *Fashion and Subculture: A History of Style*, Berg Publishers, Oxford.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. and Berry, L.L. (1988), "SERVQUAL: a multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 64 No. 1, pp. 12-40.
- Peluchette, J., Karl, K. and Rust, K. (2006), "Dressing to impress: beliefs and attitudes regarding workplace attire", *Journal of Business and Psychology*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 45-63.
- Pettinger, L. (2004), "Brand culture and branded workers: service work and aesthetic labour in fashion retail", *Consumption, Markets, and Culture*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 165-184.
- Pew Research Center (2008), "Tattooed gen nexters", available at: [www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/tattooed-gen-nexters/](http://www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/tattooed-gen-nexters/) (accessed July 14, 2015).
- Pew Research Center (2010), "Millennials: confident, connected, open to change 2010. Pew Research Social and Demographic Trends", available at: [www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/02/24/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change/](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/02/24/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change/) (accessed July 2, 2015).
- Quinones, S. (2003), "Mexico's globohobe punks", *Foreign Policy*, No. 138, pp. 78-79.
- Rafaeli, A. and Pratt, M. (1993), "Tailored meanings: on the meaning and impact of organizational dress", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 32-55.
- Rafaeli, A., Dutton, J., Harquail, C. and Mackie-Lewis, S. (1997), "Navigating by attire: the use of dress by female administrative employees", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 40 No. 1, pp. 9-45.
- Reuters/Ipsos Global @dvisory (2010), "Workplace attire poll", available at: [www.ipsos-na.com/download/pr.aspx?=-9809](http://www.ipsos-na.com/download/pr.aspx?=-9809) (accessed May 8, 2015).
- Roberts, D. (2012), "Secret ink: tattoo's place in contemporary American culture", *Journal of American Culture*, Vol. 35 No. 2, pp. 153-165.
- Sandikci, O. and Ger, G. (2007), "Constructing and representing the Islamic consumer in Turkey", *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 11 Nos 2/3, pp. 189-210.
- Schneider, S. and Barsoux, J. (2003), *Managing Across Cultures*, 2nd ed., Prentice Hall, Harlow.
- Sebra, M. (2013), "The 11 essentials of punk style", available at: [www.gq.com/style/wear-it-now/201305/the-11-essentials-of-punk-style#slide=12](http://www.gq.com/style/wear-it-now/201305/the-11-essentials-of-punk-style#slide=12) (accessed May 8, 2015).
- Shao, C., Baker, J. and Wagner, J. (2004), "The effects of appropriateness of service contact personnel dress on customer expectations of service quality and purchase intention: the moderating influences of involvement and gender", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 57 No. 10, pp. 1164-1176.
- Sklar, M. and DeLong, M. (2012), "Punk dress in the workplace: aesthetic expression and accommodation", *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, Vol. 30 No. 4, pp. 285-299.
- Solomon, M. and Schopler, J. (1982), "Self-consciousness and clothing", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 508-514.

- Swanger, N. (2006), "Visible body modification (VBM): evidence from human resource managers and recruiters and the effects on employment", *Hospitality Management*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 154-158.
- The Hofstede Center (2015), "Mexico 'Turkey'", available at: <http://geert-hofstede.com/mexico.html> (accessed May 8 2015).
- Timming, A. (2012), "What do tattoo artists know about HRM? Recruitment and selection in the body art sector", *Employee Relations*, Vol. 33 No. 5, pp. 570-684.
- Timming, A. (2015), "Visible tattoos in the service sector: a new challenge to recruitment and selection", *Work, Employment, and Society*, Vol. 29 No. 1, pp. 60-78.
- Vilnai-Yavetz, I. and Rafaeli, A. (2011), "The effects of a service provider's messy appearance on customer reactions", *Services Marketing Quarterly*, Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 161-180.
- Warhurst, C. and Nickson, D. (2007), "Employee experience of aesthetic labour in retail and hospitality", *Work, Employment, & Society*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 103-120.
- Warhurst, C. and Nickson, D. (2009), "Who's got the look? Emotional, aesthetic and sexualized labour in interactive services", *Gender, Work, and Organization*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 385-404.
- Warhurst, C., Thompson, P. and Nickson, D. (2009), "Labor process theory: putting the materialism back into the meaning of service work", in Korczynski, M. and Macdonald, C. (Eds), *Service Work*, Routledge, New York, NY, pp. 91-112.
- Westerfield, H., Stafford, A., Speroni, K. and Daniel, M. (2012), "Patients' perceptions of patient care providers with tattoos and/or body piercings", *Journal of Nursing Administration*, Vol. 42 No. 3, pp. 160-164.
- Williams, C. and Connell, C. (2010), "Looking and sounding right: aesthetic labor and social inequality in the retail industry", *Work and Occupations*, Vol. 37 No. 3, pp. 349-377.
- Witz, A., Warhurst, C. and Nickson, D. (2003), "The labour of aesthetics and the aesthetics of organization", *Organization*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 33-54.
- Yan, R., Yurchisin, J. and Watchravesringkan, K. (2011), "Does formality matter? Effects of employee clothing formality on consumers' service quality expectations and store image perceptions", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 39 No. 5, pp. 346-362.
- Zhang, J., Beatty, S. and Walsh, G. (2008), "Review and future directions of cross-cultural consumer services research", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 61 No. 3, pp. 211-224.

### Further reading

- Bitner, M. (1992), "Servicescapes: the impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 56 No. 2, pp. 57-71.
- Chawla, S., Smith, M. and Khan, Z. (1993), "The impact of gender and dress on the choice of a minority certified public accountant for a small business", *Journal of Business & Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 117-125.

### Corresponding author

Professor Katherine Karl can be contacted at: [katherine-karl@utc.edu](mailto:katherine-karl@utc.edu)

---

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

[www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm](http://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm)

Or contact us for further details: [permissions@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:permissions@emeraldinsight.com)