

An Analysis of Clothing Perception through Fashion Image

Hyekyun Kim ^{a *} and Ella Kidd ^b

^a Associate Professor, Department of Beauty Design Management, Woosong University, e-mail : hyekyun@wsu.ac.kr

^b Assistant Professor, Department of Beauty Design Management, Woosong University, ellakidd@woosong.org.

Abstract: This paper is an exploratory study that examines the selective process of unique fashion through photography. While society has the ability to influence thinking, we investigated the preference for unique attire among undergraduates of Asian-American (Bai-Culture) universities. Participants in this study (N=28) were targeted at two different groups of Koreans and Kazakh nationals enrolled in private universities, and among the methods of analysis, nonparametric methods, or Mann-Whitney U, were analyzed to analyze the preference of clothing of business administration majors at W University. The results showed that in choosing "unique" attire, open thinking and more individualistic and unaffected in the cataclysmic aspect. Based on data results, fashion photography is an essential and influential indicator in choosing styles between gender and culture.

Keywords: Fashion, Photographs, Unique, Preference

1. Introduction

According to Darwin there are three processes to human evolution (1) selection, (2) variation, and superabundance of reproduction (Salzano, F., 2016). The first process is the selection process it is a key indicator of evolutionary change. It is clearly noticeable within our society that the universe is constantly in a never-ending state of change and nothing remains the same (Hunn, K., Kaiser, S. B., 2001). This means that society and everything in it gradually transforms itself. The second process is the variation process states we are all different, and the third process is the superabundance process which states that we have the ability to reproduce ourselves in abundance than necessary (Salzano, F., 2016). In this study, the term "unique" is mentioned repetitiously to draw meaning and organization of the study. According to (Barnard, M., 2007) "unique" is a descriptor which refers to high fashion and trend setting fashions that are not easily accessible. These fashions are usually viewed on red carpets worn by celebrities and high profile models. Garments that are a one-of-a kind are called haute couture. In order to be haute couture a fashion house must be a member of the Syndical Chamber of Haute Couture of Paris. An honor that has been bestowed to only sixteen fashion houses (Barnard, M., 2007). Within this paper, we examined three research questions created by the researchers on the subject of unique fashion where photographs were incorporated to draw meaning and make an interpretation through the structural method of iconography. (a) what are male and female students preferences towards "unique" attire through pictures? (b) Do the preferences of male and female differ towards "unique" attire? (c) What future implications can be made towards university undergraduate student's ideology of "unique" fashion? We will also argue that fashion photography is beginning to lose its ability to act as a symbol of influence. As a result, individuals are making selective choices based on their own cognition and preferences. Our aim was to examine Asian (bi-cultural) undergraduate university students (N=28) preference of unique fashions within the Korean society. The selected participants are business and fashion majors whom we viewed as future generation trend setters.

2. Literature Review and Theory

The fashion retail industry continues to supply customers with new, distinctive, and exclusive garments making clothes more accessible and affordable. As a result, the proliferation of the fashion retail industry has grown by 21% within the last three years according to. The word "fashion" has been described as vulgar, vanity, exploitation, self-expression, and visual discoveries (Bancroft, A., 2012, Barnard, M., 2007). However, we have elected to use (Stets, J.E., 2006) definition, which is: innovation in the surface decoration of the body, which includes social and cultural responses to this innovation. Therefore, it is important to understand if "unique" fashion can or will become more ubiquitous within mainstream society. As we delved deeper into this study, an explanation of how Korean fashion industry influences mass consumers buying power is pertinent to this study.

Currently, Korea has catapulted itself into a "genuine" fashion industry by focusing on design, brand, and retailing. Simultaneously, acting as a strong influencer and competitor on fashion. This is mainly due to the administrative backing from the Korean National Government and the Seoul Metropolitan Government (Stets, J.E.,

2006). Therefore, because of the global fashion changes amid the Korean apparel industry. Korea has been deemed as the hub for the textile and apparel industry for buyers or brands in developed countries(Stets, J.E., 2006). Several studies have examined the globalization of Korean fashion through quantitative surveys of the foreign market(Bancroft, A., 2012). While our goal of this study was to examine “unique” fashion within a society that has a rich background for fashion guidance, we must first analyze human behaviour through variation and the selection processes. In parallel to the previous statement, through a study conducted by(Bell, Q., 1992), who evaluated 20 young respondents through the exploration of fashion imaging and blogging. The results concluded that a new visual platform amongst the younger generation was on the rise. But as we examine this paper from the perspective of the Social sciences which has many theories, symbolic interaction is one of the theories that intertwine interaction and symbols. Symbolic interaction explains how individuals interact within society with others people. Furthermore, this paper adopts the Symbolic Interactionist (SI) Theory of Fashion(Bell, Q., 1992) where there are three primary principles (meaning, language, and thinking). According to the Symbolic Interactionist Theory, the denotation of those principles include meaning which is the center of human behavior, language which provides meaning by way of symbols, and thinking which changes the interpretation of individuals through symbols(Choi, A., 2016). Since 1991 the SI Theory of fashion emphasizes themes of cultural ambivalence, symbolic ambiguity, and negotiations of style and meanings(Bell, Q., 1992). This study examines rare and unique fashions to explore the selective process of fashion photography as an influential contributor or not towards purchase selection amongst Asian students.

2.1 Pictures: the selection guide

In order to gain insight on how society makes its fashion selection based on photographs in-print, a certain process is performed and it is called browsing, in this case through printed magazines. This ultimately guides and give ideas to the consumer on how to look and live, it tells us what is in style and what is not. While fashion photography is prevalent in contemporary fashion, it appears as though it sets the trend within the eyes of the consumer. Although, the area of fashion photography has received very little attention throughout the years, However, it has been used in several studies to examine social media and fashion bloggers visual perceptions.

According to(Kaisser, K., Hutton, S., Nagasawa, R., 1991) fashion photography reinforces the role of the viewer in the process of identification and selection. In 1992, (Warburg, Aby., 1999) argued that the image of fashion photography does not work to create a heteronormative visual ideology (Salzano, F., 2016). agrees that fashion photography the identification process between the viewer and the viewer is direct; all others exist outside. Overall, fashion photography, caters to aesthetic form of fashion desires, according to(Stets, J.E., 2006) .

2.2 Iconography: the analytical interpreter towards a selection

Since the Italian and Northern Renaissance the process of iconography has been used to examine, categorize, and interpret imagery(Warburg, Aby., 1999, Warburg, Aby., 1999, Panofsky, Erwin., 2012) After that, historian Erwin Panofsky revised the method into three parts:

- a. Pre-iconographic description. This step identifies the fundamental components in a picture(Panofsky, Erwin., 2012).
- b. Iconographical analysis. This part identifies symbolic elements of the photograph such as personifications, allegories, symbols, attributes, and emblems.
- c. Iconological interpretation. This part synthesizes the collected materials and invert them to interpretive (Panofsky, Erwin., 2012).

In (2018) Drainville, examined iconography and how social media influences the public. Society’s recent Black Lives Matter (BLM) peaceful demonstrations sparked a lot of media attention, after white police officers shot and killed Alton Sterling and Philando Castile. Images of Iesha Evans, a demonstrator were captured showing armored police surrounding her and making an arrest. Drainville’s (2018) study concluded that such iconic photograph shows recurring patterns in the way users interpret photographs.

The section of iconological analysis as it relates to Evans, identifies authors of different pictures which multiple artistic interpretations.

In 2011, Kaboudarahangi, Osma, Mustaga, researched fine art garden images through the art of painting. Their study identified iconography as a symbolic imagery method for creating new identities based on specific cultures and the needs of the people.

2.3 Participants

The participants (N=28) in this study are university students living in the same geographical location and enrolled at a private university, studying various degrees of business (i.e., marketing, economics, accounting, and

aesthetics). The representative participants were selectively randomized based on their prospective majors and years of English study.

3. Data Procedure

3.1 Using Images to Understand Meaning

In this paper we examined the preferences of Asian(male and female) university students' in regards to "unique" designer fashions. In order to stay aligned with previous studies, we used photo elicitation to evoke information, along with research questions which pertained to individual preferences. Photo elicitation is the insertion of a photograph in interviews, as previously mentioned, it reinforces the role of the viewer. In this study we incorporated an electronic questionnaire to draw meaning(Rothenberg, M.A., Valente, J., 1996). We used idiosyncratic and rare fashion pictures to make inferences on the selective process of the participants. The photos were ascertained from the W-fashion 2018 issue. The W-Magazine is a magazine that features stories about style through the lens of culture, fashion, art, celebrity, and film. According to(Stets, J.E., 2006), it is believed that images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness compared to text, this is a partly due to the age of brain parts that process visual information. Because this is a small ethnography study, we chose the four photographic samples.



Figure 1. women and men`s fashion images

3.2

The goal of this examination, was to examine the power of the selective process through the aid of photographs. The following research questions were proposed: (1) what are male and female students preferences towards "unique" attire? (2) Do the preferences of male and female differ towards "unique" attire? (3) What future implications can be made towards university undergraduate student's ideology of "unique" fashion? After the research questions were composed, the researchers constructed a sixteen question questionnaire in order to collect data for this study.

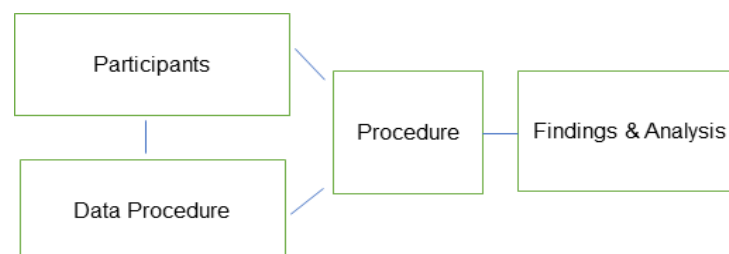


Figure 2. procedure of the study

The data used in this study, which included the sample group (N=28), 12 males, and 16 females; whom are all undergraduate students. The scaling tool was comprised of 16 questions devised by the researchers. The collected data were analyzed using the IBM-Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), where we implemented a non-parametrical method, namely Mann-Whitney U Test to analyze the questions.

4. Findings and Analysis

According to the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, the results data for all variables included in this study are significantly different from normal at any level of significance. The results of the exploratory analyses revealed that the data was not normally distributed. In addition to this, a homogeneity of variance test was conducted. According to the results of the Levene's Test, the variances are not significantly different, thus indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variances have been met. Since the data was not normally distributed, a proper non-parametrical method, namely Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyze the preferences of male and female students towards "unique" attire. And to evaluate the preferences between males and females towards "unique" attire. According to the Mann-Whitney's U-statistics, there is no difference between male and female opinions in "unique" attire, $U=68$, effect size -0.25 ; there is no significant difference between male and female in purchasing clothes presented by fashion, $U=84$, effect size -0.1 ; no difference in fashion making them stand out, $U=84$, effect size -0.113 ; no difference in wearing the latest fashions are expensive, $U=90$, effect size -0.05 ; no difference in brand names create a specific image, $U=89$, effect size -0.067 ; no difference in being different makes them cool, $U=85$, effect size -0.1 ; no difference in being different to make others smile, $U=75$, effect size -0.05 ; no difference in wearing different or strange clothes, $U=80.5$, effect size -0.14 ; no difference in wearing same gender clothes does not bother me, $U=89$, effect size, 0.064 . However, the results indicate that there is a significant difference between male and female dress as the participants viewed the dress as feminine; $U=37$, $p<0.01$, and the effect size is -0.53 .

5. Conclusion

This conclusion we will analyze with the literature review (fashion photography), iconography, and the collected data. As stated previously fashion photography images are strong descriptive indicators which aid in the selection and identification process. Throughout time, fashion photography has had a profound influence on society, especially the young generation.

Analysis 1: Analysis. In this case, we examined Asian youth. In this study, all of the participants showed no significance when it comes to "unique" fashion, therefore, we deduce that as a future generation of people they will not concern themselves with separate individualism. Also, when it comes down to male attire worn by females and male attire worn by females there was a significance. The results are in line with (Hunn, K., Kaiser, S. B., 2001) and studies (Kaiser, K., Hutton, S., Nagasawa, R., 1991). On the other hand, when it comes to the selection process this study is in line with (Choi, A., 2016) where the young generation is progressing into an era of visual change.

Analysis 2: Description. Within this examination we studied two Asian groups with disparate cultures. In the area of clothing selection, the results show that the participants are free-thinkers, individualistic in terms of selection, and not influential. Therefore, the participants in this study are not influenced by pictures in-print.

Analysis 3 Interpretation. In conclusion, based on the data results, images are quintessential and influential indicators of choosing a style between genders and cultures.

References

- A. Salzano, F. (2016). The role of natural selection in human evolution-insights from Latin America. Published online 2016 Aug 4. doi: 10.1590/1678-4685-GMB-2016-0020.
- B. Hunn, K., & Kaiser, S. B. (2001). The emergence of modern infant wear, 1896-1962: Traditional white dresses succumb to fashion's gender obsession. *Clothing & Textiles Research Journal*, 19(3), 103-119.
- C. Stets, J.E. (2006). Emotions and Sentiments. *Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research*. 309-335.
- D. Bancroft, A. (2012). *Fashion and Psychoanalysis: Styling the Self*. I. B. Taurus: New York.
- E. Barnard, M. (ed.) (2007) *Fashion Theory*, Abingdon, Routledge. — (ed.) (2012) *Fashion, Volume IV*, Abingdon, Routledge.
- F. Bell, Q. ([1947] 1992) *On Human Finery*, London: Allison and Busby.
- G. Choi, A. (2016). Fashion photography on social media: Insights from Hong Kong fashion image producers. *International Journal Management and Applied Research*. Vol. 3. 130-144.
- H. Kaiser, K., Hutton, S., & Nagasawa, R. (1991). Fashion, postmodernity, and personal appearance: A symbolic interactionist formulation. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249986327_Fashion_Postmodernity_and_Personal_Appearance_A_Symbolic_Interactionist_Formulation
- I. Warburg, Aby. 1999. Dürer and Italian Antiquity. In *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural*

- J. History of the European Renaissance. Translated by David Britt. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute,
- K. pp. 554–58. First published 1905.
- L. Warburg, Aby. 1999. Italian Art and International Astrology in the Palazzo Schifanoia, Ferrara. In *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*. Translated by David Britt.
- M. Panofsky, Erwin. 2012. On the Problem of Describing and Interpreting Works of the Visual Arts. *Critical Inquiry* 38: 467–82. First published 1932. [CrossRef]
- N. Panofsky, Erwin. 1972. Introductory. In *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*. New York and London: Harper and Row, pp. 3–31. First published 1939.
- O. Panofsky, Erwin. 1971. *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character*. 2 vols. New York: Icon. First published 1953.
- P. Panofsky, Erwin. 1982. *Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art*. In *Meaning in the Visual Arts*. Chicago: University of
- Q. Drainville, R. (2018). *Iconography for the Ages of Social Media*. *Humanities*. Vol. 7(1). pg. 12.
- R. Rothenberg, M.A. & Valente, J. (1996). Fashionable theory and fashion-able women: returning Fuss's homospectatorial look. *The University of Chicago Press*, 22(2)372-382.