

Study on the Development of Universal Fashion Products Responding to the Aging Society

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In view of the active social participation and unique consumption culture formation of the elderly in Korea and Japan, where the fastest aging is progressing in the world, they are forecast to be the consumer group with sizeable purchasing power in the demographical and socio-economic aspects.

Accordingly, the product development effort responding to such a change is required in silver marketing. In this study, a universal fashion as merchandise developed in coping with the aging society has been proposed, and the goal of this study is to provide a useful suggestion to firms that want to utilize the universal fashion as a silver marketing strategy.

Universal fashion is the term used by vice chief director of Japan Universal Association, Suzuki Jun, for the first time, indicating the fashion that anyone can enjoy pleasantly, regardless of age, size, body type and handicap. Universal fashion product development is to develop merchandise along with customers. Product development along with customers is to develop the products potentially desired. In other words, it means the merchandise that generates desire.

To develop products capturing the potential customer's needs, it is important to immediately reflect the complaints, inconveniences and requests on the current merchandise by collecting the voices of customers with special needs or identifying the cause of concerned products' being alienated from customers. The maker-driven merchandise development has nearly ignored the voices of customers, just focusing on technology or production background. Namely, makers vaguely dealt with the products that they think customers would need, since they do not identify the needs of customers.

Regarding the product development led by shops, shops identify customer needs, but the customer scope is limited in terms of survey. That is, they can only identify the needs of specific customers via the number of sales. In most cases, many imitate other shops' popular items or make some product improvement from the trend of popular items. These activities may be needed in the shops, but the items may not be those that customers truly want. Meanwhile, customer-driven universal product development is to develop items potentially desired by customers, based on the opinions of the customers with some complaints on fashion.

Concerning the study method, the body type features, standard size of elderly women and

studies on the universal fashion have been examined in terms of theoretical study. In our empirical study, a survey of the complaints on fashion and physical functions and abilities targeting a total of 45 women in their 60's–80's (15 for each age group) was made. The analysis result in this study has been classified into three categories of universal fashion: products responding to the elderly with complaints in size or body type, products responding to lowered physical function and exclusive products responding to handicap.

The result of this study is as follows: The most complaints of the elderly on fashion was "No suitable size," "Buttons are not closed, due to fat belly, although shoulder size is suitable" and "Inconvenience in putting on and taking off clothes." Namely, complaints were mostly concerned with body type and size. In addition, "No desirable design" and "Color is too dark" followed the above complaints as well. According to prior studies,

first, ① In the case of 60's, most body type was almost an aligned straight line along the chest, waist and belly line. For this body type, the front length of upper garment should be made longer, while the back length of upper garment be made shorter, so that they can be corrected to be parallel to the floor. The length between waist and hips of pants was not sufficient and the back length between waist and hips had some extra length. Thus, the former should be made longer and the latter should be made shorter. ② In the case of 80's, they had curved back type compared with other age groups; the length of back became longer and the width of chest became smaller, and the length of arm became shorter. In line with the features of this body type, the front length of upper garment should be made shorter, and the back length of upper garment should be made longer to make parallel to the floor. The width of back should be a little widened with yoke or dart, and chest girth should be somewhat narrower to make the concerned person move easily.

second, mostly, the elderly women showed dry skin, lowered physical function and insensible motor nerves.

① In the case that an arm cannot be raised and a hand cannot touch one's back, due to back pain, the zipper or buttons should be avoided, and the width from shoulder line to arm pit should be designed to be broader, so that the elderly women can wear with their arms bending.

Also, creases or dart should be put.

② When it's difficult to put on and take off clothes and when one cannot move fingers well, buttons should be made in front and flexible materials should be used. A button should be big and easy to use, and the button hole also should be large and long. A ring should be made to the zipper grip, so that a hand can be put. When the use of button is difficult, rubber strap or magic tape should be used.

③ In the case of skin hindrance, due to physical and chemical stimuli or dry allergic skin, the soft natural textile like silk should be used, and non-tight pattern should also be used. Also, anti-bacteria or moisturizing functional material should be used. When using rubber band, several thin ones, rather than one thick one, should be designed to be used.

Third, there were some elderly women who appealed some handicap on their legs, as they were older. Especially, the waist and hips of an old woman using a wheel chair frequently tend to be bigger than when she leads her standing life; thus, extra width or length should be given to the surrounding of the hips and waists. The length of upper garment shoulder be shorter, while the back length between waist and hips should be deeper and the front length between waist and hips should be designed to be shorter in pants.

Through the study result, the elderly women's body type change in features greatly impacts the functionality when wearing clothes. When producing clothes for the elderly women, a suggestion to investigate their physical functions, abilities and design preferences in addition to their body type has been made in this study. In developing universal products for the elderly women, the concrete design, based on the factors requested to clothes, after identifying potential complaints or requests on clothes, has been proposed.

After completing the concerned product, the direct dressing survey, evaluation on the product and correction, as necessary, should be carried out. A series of this process should be constantly applied to the clothing environment of the elderly women to be successful in sliver marketing, according to this study.

Reference

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