

Cross-cultural Study of Clothing Deprivation and Clothing Decision Criteria in Korean and Taiwanese Young Women⁺

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore and compare the perception of Korean and Taiwanese young women's clothing deprivation and clothing decision factors. The study used a convenience sample consisting of 238 female college students: 101 Korean with a mean age of 20.78 and 137 Taiwanese with a mean age of 21.03. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 14.0 for windows was used for the data analysis. The clothing decision criteria and clothing deprivation scale were used for the study. The Koreans chose both brand name and newest fashion as higher criteria than Taiwanese. Both countries chose fit (4.28/ 4.09) as an important factor of how often they think about things when they decide what clothes to wear. Compared to Korean women, clothing deprivation for clothes for school was twice as high among Taiwanese women. Korean women had relatively low percentage of clothing deprivation for clothing for school and for friends. However, they did have higher clothing deprivation for dress-up clothes.

Key Words : cross-cultural, clothing deprivation, clothing decision criteria

I. Introduction

Culture is the lens through which people view products¹⁾. Culture provides a consumer framework of values, beliefs, practices, and behaviors²⁾.

The Korean and Taiwanese cultures have been influenced by the dominance of the Confucian religion, which transcends into business, individual behavior, and family structure³⁾⁴⁾. Taiwan's

culture is infused with Confucian influences; specifically Confucian ideals of moderation in consumption that many influence how Taiwanese consumers evaluate clothing⁵⁾.

Many marketers recognize the need to understand the unique aspects of each country with which they hope to do business, in order to tailor their products and marketing strategies appropriately¹⁾. Many researchers have provided sufficient support for the significant impacts of

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ethnicity on consumer attitude and behavior⁶⁾⁷⁾⁸⁾. So far, research has tended to focus on cross-cultural differences between Korea and U.S. in terms of apparel shopping satisfaction, decision making styles, and consumers' use of clothing evaluative criteria. However, little work has been done on the cross-cultural differences in these perceptual variables within Asia and, in particular, between Korean and Taiwanese women regarding apparel shopping satisfaction, decision making styles, consumers' use of clothing evaluative criteria, and clothing deprivation and clothing decision factors.

The two countries were selected for several reasons in the study. Geographically, it is close to each other Korea and Taiwan in East Asia. Seoul and Taipei are the capitals and the economic and political hub of the countries. Seoul is the center of fashion and market testing place for the foreign brands which aims at Korean. Because Koreans were recognized as fashion sensitive and fashion leaders. The influence of "Han flow," Taiwanese were interested in Korean fashion and cultures. Taipei is a metropolitan city with a population of approximately six million people, representing 28.4% of the entire population of Taiwan. And the full range of fashion brands is offered in Taipei through a number of markets working at several levels of price range, also the Taiwanese historic shopping pattern can be a helpful resource for creating a current model for the local Mainland China fashion market⁹⁾.

Therefore, understanding culture and comparing different groups of consumers within and between cultures is essential for globalization in business. The study will help marketers and retailers who develop new products and new markets aimed at Korea and Taiwanese women in terms of clothing satisfaction, clothing choices,

and clothing deprivation. This study was focused on how young women are satisfied and/or dissatisfied in what they choose to wear in three occasions: clothes for school, clothes for friends, and dress-up clothes. It is also examine the influential clothing factors when Korean and Taiwanese women choose what clothes to wear. Therefore, the study purpose was to assess and compare the perception of clothing deprivation and clothing decision criteria between Korean and Taiwanese women.

The study objectives were as follows:

1. To investigate and compare the priority of importance choice of clothing decision factors for choosing what to wear by Korean and Taiwanese women.
2. To investigate and compare the perception of clothing deprivation by Korean and Taiwanese women when choosing clothes for three occasions.

II. Theoretical Background

1. Clothing Deprivation

Satisfaction research has been conducted based on an recognition of the role of emotion, as reflected in statements such as "Satisfaction is an emotional state, their post-purchase reactions can involve anger, dissatisfaction, irritation, neutrality, pleasure, or delight¹⁰⁾."

2. Korean Women's Clothing Behavior

A study of Lee and Kim¹¹⁾, the study analyzed to self-image, clothing attitude, and clothing products evaluation. To using 411 Korean samples, 45% of the participants were chose casual, sporty, and natural style from 4 clothing style images for outdoor; elegant, romantic, casual,

sporty, natural, sexy, bold, and classical, conservative. The least preferred outdoor style was sexy, bold clothing style image. From the study, clothing style preferences and self-image share the same order. Active people tend to prefer sexy style rather than elegant or classical style and people who prefer casual style to classical style regard themselves as active person.

Hafstrom, Chae, and Chung¹²⁾ studied the consumer style inventory (CSI) among Korean college students and found the time-energy conserving factor to be unique to the Korean consumers. The study found that the general decision making styles identified for young Korean consumers were similar to those of young U.S. consumers. However, Korean consumers regarded recreational aspects of shopping as more important than did U.S. consumers.

Lennon, Rudd, Sloan, and Kim¹³⁾ identified gender roles, self-esteem, and body image among college women by culture. The finding was that Korean, Caucasian-American, and African-American women scored similarly on appearance orientation.

Kim and Arthur¹⁴⁾ investigated that how strength of ethnic identification influences attitudes toward and ownership of ethnic apparel, importance of product and store-display attributes, and purchase intention among Asian American consumers in Hawai'i. The study indicated that the participants who identified themselves strongly with their ethnic group put more emphasis on ethnic features of clothing and window displays than those with a weak ethnic identification.

Chang, Burns, and Francis⁴⁾ researched 746 Korean undergraduate students regarding the moderating role of hedonic shopping value in conjunction with gender differences in apparel shopping satisfaction. The results indicated that

involvement and variety seeking influenced shopping experience satisfaction directly through hedonic shopping value in the female group. For the male group, hedonic shopping value did not play a role as an intervening determinant.

According to Kim and Rhee¹⁵⁾, they divided by consumers two groups; low and high sensation seeking tendency groups. The findings were that consumers with higher sensation seeking tendency had higher tendency of impulse buying and they were likely to show the pleasure dimension of needs of clothing purchase, and the pleasure seeking and the time seeking factors of shopping behavior. Another study of Kim and Rhee¹⁶⁾ found that consumer's clothing brand loyalty was significantly related to price of clothing.

Consumer groups were significant differences in clothing purchase behavior according to factors such as brand intention, status symbol intention. However, regardless of clothing shopping motives, consumer preferred department stores in purchasing formal dress, and preferred haberdashery bonded store in purchasing casual wear¹⁷⁾.

Kim¹⁸⁾ studied that to investigate the characteristics of clothing buying behavior under the refund policy of stores and the influence variables for the clothing refund. The reasons for the clothing refund were size followed by unflattering appearance, design and comfort.

3. Taiwanese Women's Clothing Behavior

Hsu and Burns⁵⁾ found that the importance of clothing evaluative criteria was very similar between the two cultures; U.S. and Taiwan. The participants, 119 of Taiwanese and 84 from U.S. college women were asked to fill out seven point scales of the importance of 12 clothing evaluative criteria: fabric, comfort, size/fit, qual-

ity, location of manufacturer, color, how pleasing it was to others, brand name, appropriateness for campus wear, price, style, and coordination with other clothing.

Although the Taiwanese and U.S. are far from each other both geographically and culturally by Hofstede³⁾'s East Asia vs. Western culture. The participants from both cultures chose size/fit as the most important criterion when purchasing a specific clothing item.

The CSI classifies consumer decision-making into six categories: perfectionist and high quality conscious consumer, brand-conscious and price equals quality consumer, novelty and fashion conscious consumer, recreational and hedonistic consumer, price conscious and value for money consumer, habitual and brand loyal consumer¹⁹⁾. By applying CSI to a sample of Chinese college students, Fan and Xiao²⁰⁾ identified a five-factor model comprised of brand consciousness, time consciousness, quality consciousness, price consciousness and information utilization.

Lee et al¹¹⁾ was to identify the relationship of clothing involvement, consumer characteristics, and clothing buying behavior of college female students in China. The participants were divided into low clothing involved and high clothing involved groups according to the level of clothing involvement. The high involved consumers showed more importance than low involved consumers about materialism especially in happiness purchasing about conspicuous consumption in status symbolic, and about influence of reference group in comparative. The high involved consumers put more importance than low involved consumers individual motive as clothing purchasing motive, and marketer managed in clothing fashion information, evaluating attributes of product, and store patronage criterion.

III. Methods

1. Sample

A convenience sample of Korea and Taiwanese female college students was used for this study: 101 female college students in Seoul, Korea with a mean age of 20.78 (range: 18 to 36 years, SD = 4.24), and 137 female college students in Taipei, Taiwan with a mean age of 21.03 (range: 18 to 32 years, SD = 2.41). There were no missing data for the Korean and Taiwan data collection. Nineteen out of 156 questionnaires were not included for the data analysis because they were completed by male students in Taiwan. Therefore, Taiwanese eligible questionnaires were 137 questionnaires. The part of the Korean data was used a study of Lee²²⁾.

All the participants in Korea and Taiwanese were undergraduate students. Approximately, 49% of the Korean college students' monthly clothing expenses were ranged from ₩100,000 to ₩ 300,000 followed by 38% were under ₩100,000. However, Taiwanese student's monthly expenditure data were not available for the study.

For the Korean participants, 22.8% in freshman followed by 10.9% in sophomore, 36.6% in junior, and 28.7% in senior. For the Taiwanese participants, about 46% in freshman, 12% in sophomore, 18% in Junior, and 20% in senior.

To prevent missing data and ensure complete response all the questions in both countries, the questionnaires were explained to the participants in terms of the terminology and scales. The questionnaires, originally developed in English, were translated into the local language and then back translated into English in both cases.

2. Scales

The clothing decision criteria for what clothes to wear in this study were adapted from May²¹⁾. The scale represented the peer influence and self fulfillment for clothes choice. In addition, fit was the one of the important criteria considered by many researchers. Therefore, the following final seven clothing decision criteria were used: clothes that (a) look best on me, (b) are like those that my friends will be wearing, (c) are comfortable, (d) are my favorite color, (e) are the newest fashion, (f) have a popular brand name, and (g) fit me well. The scale used was developed by Lee²²⁾, and Lee, Ulrich, and Connell²³⁾. how often you think about the following things when you decide what clothes to wear. The likert scale was used from (1) Never to (5) always.

The clothing deprivation scale was designed for three occasions: school, doing things with friends, and dress-up clothes. The clothing deprivation scale examined how often the college women feel that they do not have or can't get clothes that they would choose to wear for the three types of occasions²²⁾²³⁾. The scale was rated from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

3. Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 14.0 for windows was used for the data analysis. The dependent variables for the study were either the seven clothing decision criteria or the clothing deprivation when choosing clothes for three occasions. The independent variable was nationality with two levels: Korea and Taiwan. The level of statistical significance was set at 0.05 .

IV. Results and Discussion

1. To investigate and compare the priority of importance choice of clothing decision criteria for choosing what to wear by Korean and Taiwanese women.

As the most important ranking of the seven clothing decision criteria, Korea women chose clothes that fit me well, followed by look best, favorite color, comfortable, newest fashion, brand name, and friends would be wearing, while Taiwanese women chose clothes that look best, followed by fit, comfortable, favorite color, newest fashion, brand name, and friends would be wearing.

As shown in Table 1, there were five significant differences in clothing decision criteria for the choice of what clothing to wear between Korean and Taiwanese women: Clothes that friends would be wearing (2.30/ 2.07, $t = 1.937$, $p = 0.05$), Clothes that are comfortable (3.58/3.87, $t = -2.560$, $p = 0.01$), Clothes that are favorite color (3.85/3.58, $t = 2.210$, $p = 0.02$), Clothes that are newest fashion (3.27/2.96, $t = 2.567$, $p = 0.01$), and Brand name (3.22/2.58, $t = 5.133$, $p = 0.00$).

Clothes that look best was not statistically significant difference (4.11/ 4.10, $t = 0.12$, $p = 0.90$). Clothes that fit me well was not also statistically significant difference (4.28/4.09, $t = 1.80$, $p = 0.07$).

2. To investigate and compare the perception of clothing deprivation by Korean and Taiwanese women when choosing clothes for three occasions. To analyze the research objective, independent sample t-tests were conducted.

<Table 1> Mean Scores for 7 Clothing Decision Criteria Among Korean and Taiwanese Females

	Korean			Taiwanese			p-value
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	
Best looking	4.11	0.69	101	4.10	0.97	136	0.90
Friends will be wearing	2.30	0.92	101	2.07	0.90	136	0.05*
Comfortable	3.58	0.80	101	3.87	0.90	135	0.01**
Favorite color	3.85	0.87	101	3.58	1.01	137	0.02*
Newest fashion	3.27	0.93	101	2.96	0.92	137	0.01**
Brand name	3.22	0.91	101	2.58	0.96	134	0.00***
Fit	4.28	0.62	101	4.09	0.91	137	0.07

Note. Significant p values are noted by: *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$

<Table 2> Clothing Deprivation for Koreans and Taiwanese

	Korean			Taiwanese			p-value
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	
Clothes for school	2.37	1.074	101	2.95	1.017	135	0.00***
Clothes with friends	2.78	1.180	101	2.90	1.077	136	0.43
Dress-up clothes	3.46	1.136	101	3.30	1.207	136	0.32

Note. Significant p values are noted by: *** $p = 0.001$, ** $p = 0.01$, * $p = 0.05$

As shown in <Table 2> there were statistically significant differences between Korean and Taiwanese for clothing for school (2.37/2.95, $p = 0.00***$). Taiwanese respondents did not have the right clothes for school compared to the Korean respondents. There were no statistically significant differences for clothes with friends or dress-up clothes. However, both Korean and Taiwanese women felt a high level of clothing deprivation for dress-up clothes. Both groups responded to the deprivation questions in three occasions: clothes for school, clothes for friends,

and dress-up clothes. The score for clothing deprivation for clothes for school was two times higher for the Taiwanese compared to the Korean women.

Regarding clothes for friends, 60.8% of the Taiwanese did not have such clothes compared to 47% of the Koreans. The percentage of the women who did not feel they had clothes for dress-up was almost the same for both groups at 76.3% for the Korean and 68.1% for the Taiwanese.

<Figure 1> shows that the results of both

countries' women responses to deprivation questions in three occasions; clothes for school, clothes for friends, and dress-up clothes. Clothing deprivation for clothes for school were twice as much as Taiwanese can't get than Korean women.

Clothes for friends were 60.8% of Taiwanese did not have clothes for hang out with friends than 47% of Korean's do not. Almost same percentage 76.3% and 68.1% of both countries women did not feel they had clothes for dress-up clothes.

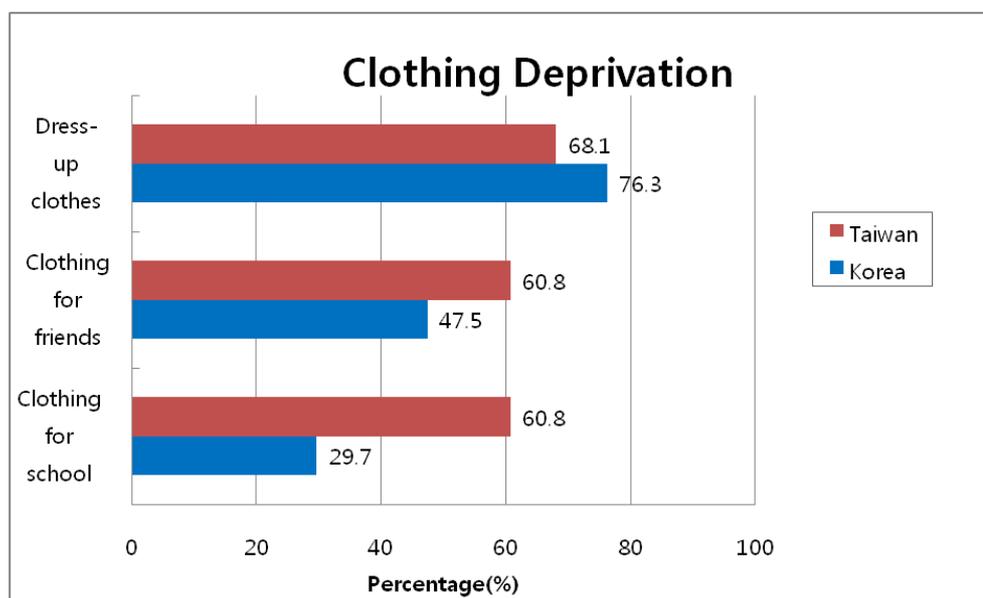
V. Implications and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the perception of Korean and Taiwanese women's clothing decision criteria when clothes for choose to wear and clothing deprivation for three occasions. The first objective of the present study was to investigate and compare the perception

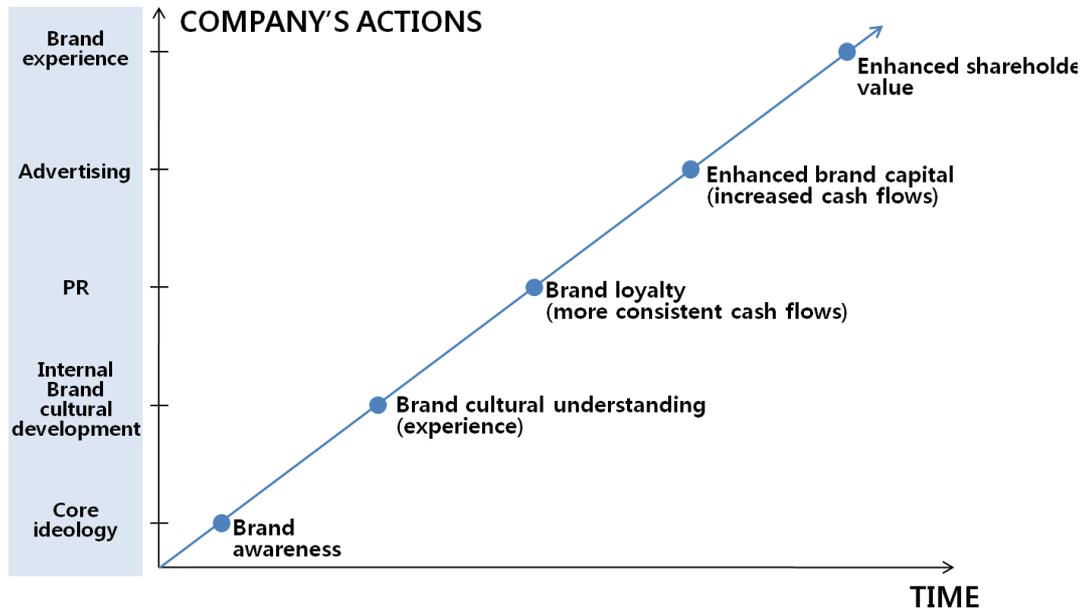
of clothing decision criteria by Korean and Taiwanese women when clothes for chose to wear. The second objective of the study was to investigate and compare the perception of clothing deprivation by Korean and Taiwanese women when clothes for chose three occasions; clothes for school, and for friends, and dress-up clothes.

According to the International Herald Tribune, 2008, 4 out of 10 have trouble finding clothes that fit them, mainly because sizes are inconsistent from one outlet to another and because what is on the racks is too small. Both countries chose fit (4.28/ 4.09) as an important factor of how often they think about things when they decide what clothes to wear.

In choosing what clothing to wear, branding was more important for Korean than for Taiwanese. According to another study²⁴⁾, Chinese students described friends who own more branding items as more self confident and fashionable than students who do not. Branding is



<Figure 1> Korean and Taiwanese Women's Clothing Deprivation



<Figure 2> The relationship of brand capital to shareholder value

Source: Gilmore and Dumont²⁷⁾

naming for a product and identity. The brand name is more attachable to consumers. The art of shopping is less about purchasing and more about experiencing a brand²⁵⁾. As shown in Figure 2, building a brand image is an expensive process that involves marketing effort, publicity and advertising and need an enormous budget in order to build a worthwhile campaign⁹⁾²⁶⁾.

The Korean chose both brand name and newest fashion as higher criteria than the Taiwanese did. Therefore, building brand identity is the first priority for the marketers who aim at young consumers in Korea.

The Taiwanese chose comfortable as more important criteria than Korean. Both countries; Korean and Taiwanese gave high mean score (4.11/ 4.10) for the best looking criteria. It reflects role of clothing as a management tool for the appearance in both countries; Korea and Taiwan.

For Korean, clothing deprivation was highly increased according to clothes for school (29.7%), for friends (47.5%), and dress-up (76.3%). Taiwanese expressed continuously high clothing deprivation in all three categories. In two categories, clothes for school and for friends exhibited the same percentage of deprivation (60.8%) and dress-up (68%). Dress-up category was a lower deprivation than for Koreans, indicating that Koreans prefer a brand name and the newest fashion which exerted a greater influence on deprivation for dress-up clothes.

Taiwanese women had higher clothing deprivation for clothing for school and doing things with friends. Korean women had relatively low percentage of clothing deprivation for clothing for school and for friends. However, they did have higher clothing deprivation for dress-up clothes. Taiwanese women had relatively the same degree of clothing deprivation for all three

occasions.

In the markets of both countries, there were many dress-up clothes for women. However, women still couldn't find the right clothes for their needs. Dress-up clothes were the hardest category to find the right clothes for party in Korean and Taiwanese women.

Regarding the study limitations, only two universities were selected. Therefore, further study using more participants chosen from more diverse universities and more diverse ethnic groups is required.

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