[Original Article]

Korean "Little Emperor": A Grounded Theory Approach to Clothing Market for Pre-schoolers

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Abstract

In this study, we tried to understand preschooler clothing trends and identify the purchase behaviors of various consumers, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and parents, who are the main consumers of the preschooler clothing market. We conducted in-depth interviews with consumers who were interested in preschooler clothing, purchased it frequently, and bought preschooler clothing within the last three months. Their purchase motivations and purchase behaviors were analyzed through exploratory and inductive analysis. The analysis was conducted by integrating categories into one process centered on core categories through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The results of this study included that 1) a variety of clothing purchase behaviors appeared as a central phenomenon, 2) the causal conditions that contributed to this phenomenon were the buyers' childcare experiences, purchase experiences, the personal consumption values of individuals, and income levels, 3) in response to the central phenomenon, the parents' action/interaction strategies were acceptance and rejection of purchased clothing, 4) contextual and Intervening conditions affecting action/interaction strategy were family environment changes, the VIB (Very Important Baby) phenomenon, parents' clothing involvement, and the relationship with the buyers, and acceptance by the users, and 5) as a result of the strategy expressed as acceptance and rejection, various clothing behaviors emerged. In this study, we identified that there are various influencers, apart from parents, involved in children's clothing consumption. Therefore, we need to keep in mind that various purchase behaviors and clothing trends that appear during one's childhood may affect the individual's clothing behavior in the future.

Keywords: preschooler, little emperor, grounded theory

I. Introduction

The concept of "eight-pocket kids," a new term in Korea referring to children that receive clothing not only from parents and grandparents but also from their unmarried aunts and uncles, has recently become a hot topic in the Korean marketing industry (Kim, Kim, Lee, & Lee, 2011). Unmarried aunts and uncles are receiving

considerable attention from clothing companies because they are starting to be recognized as core consumers of child-related products. Therefore, child-related product manufacturers and distributors are expanding their target consumer base to include not only parents but also grandparents, uncles, and aunts (Koo, 2017). According to analyses conducted by credit card companies and distributors, people between the ages of 40 and 60 are the biggest consumers of toys and items for children, such as furniture, books, cosmetics, accessories, and food, indicating that people are increasingly buying items for their nephews, nieces, or grandchildren (BC Card, 2016; Lee, 2016; Park, 2016). The Korea Federation of Textile Industries (2016) estimated the size of the children's clothing market also grew to 1.2069 trillion won in 2016.

Low birth rates and TV programs featuring celebrities babysitting their nephews, nieces, or children are identified as the as the leading causes of this phenomenon. Due to a decrease in overall marriages and an increase in late marriages, the average number of children in a single household has decreased to one or two. According to Statistics Korea, the average number of babies born is drastically decreasing. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the number of babies born annually was between 600,000-700,000, but in the 2000s, this number began to decrease sharply. The number of babies born annually decreased to 406,000 last year. Given these trends, the number of babies born this year is unlikely to exceed 400,000 (Kim, 2017). As a result of the low birth rate, unmarried aunts and uncles tend to purchase more products for their nephews and nieces. If the birth rate continues to decrease and one-child households become even more prevalent, the "eight-pocket" phenomenon will become more prominent in the future.

Studies on children's clothing have been limited to the consumer behaviors of parents, especially mothers (Jin, 2013). In recent years, however, many other people have emerged as major consumers in the preschooler's clothes market. Therefore, studies on purchase behavior of consumers who were not considered in previous studies such as grandparents, uncle and aunt are essential to understand new consumers and develop marketing strategies to meet their needs and wants. This study expanded the scope of the studies by using the grounded theory method to analyze the purchasing behaviors of consumers who engaged in the consumption in the context of eight-pocket phenomenon in Korea.

Ⅱ. Literature Review

1. Grounded Theory Method

Grounded theory is a method that can be useful if there is not enough research on specific groups or a specific social phenomenon. Grounded theory has evolved and developed since its creation in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss. Traditionally, grounded theory approaches have been applied to various academic disciplines, such as nursing, health, organizational studies, sociology, etc. Recently, it has been actively used in marketing and consumer studies (Goulding, 2005). Unlike most deductive research in which the researcher establishes a hypothesis and verifies it based on an existing theory, the grounded theory method focuses on conceptualizing and creating a theory by grasping the essence of the phenomenon itself; this process consists of setting a core concept (or category) for one of the analysis concepts (or categories) extracted from the collected data and stating the relationship between the extracted concepts by referring to the features or attributes found in the analysis process (Kim, 2003). Through this process, the research participants can reveal how to solve the problems themselves.
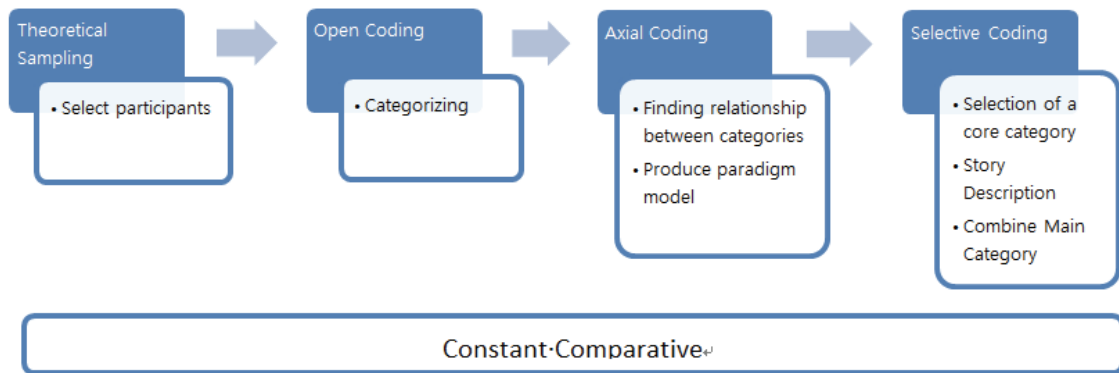
Figure 1. Analysis framework based on paradigm model (Cho & Lee, 2014, p. 9)

The researchers systematically develop a theory through constant comparative methods, theoretical sampling, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (See Figure 1). The researcher repeats the process of identifying events and actions to continuously develop categories and continually compares them with the categories in which they are found (Park & Lee, 2008). To do this, the researcher writes notes and memos during the research, and the collected data is analyzed and conceptualized through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Grounded theory focuses on the discovery of major processes existing in social phenomena rather than the description of specific units. In this study, we used the grounded theory method to comprehensively analyze the purchasing behaviors of consumers in relation to the eight-pocket phenomenon in the Korean preschooler market.

2. Change and Development of the Korean Children's Clothing Market

The Korean children's clothing market began to grow mainly in wholesale markets, such as Namdaemun, in the 1970s. In 1997, the distribution structure of the children's clothing market changed greatly due to the foreign exchange crisis. As traditional markets declined, discount stores started to appear as new distribution channels. Due to the rapid growth of discount stores, the distribution structure of children's clothing was divided into discount stores and department stores. In the 2000s, brands catering to discount stores began to emerge. With the introduction of imported children's clothing brands in the mid-2000s, the quality and fashion of children's clothing received an upgrade. In the late 2000s, a large number of brands were imported, and domestic brands, global SPA (Specialty retailer of Private label Apparel) brands, and imported luxury brands began to intensify competition centered on distribution in department stores. The growth of imported brands and SPA brands polarized the children's clothing market and the decrease in the number of children in each household allowed parents to invest more money in their children's attire.

The trend of parents and children dressing in similar styles is also becoming more popular. Many brands, such as SPA, luxury brands, domestic women's wear, and outdoor brands, extended their children's lines as new trends emerged. In recent years, the fashion of celebrities and their children has become a hot issue due to broadcasting and social networking. Furthermore, as more people are showing their children's daily lives and fashion sense through SNS (Social Network Service), regular parents have also become more interested in children's fashion. Despite the economic downturn, the increase of late marriages, low birth rates, and double-income families, the children's

clothing market continues to grow because more family members are purchasing children's clothing. The subject of most previous research has been limited to mothers, as they were considered the main purchasers of children's clothing. Grandparents, aunts, and uncles, who have become central consumers in the babywear market, were not addressed in previous studies. However, in order to thoroughly analyze the purchasing behavior of various consumers in the preschooler's clothing, it is necessary to expand the research scope to include grandparents, aunts, and uncles. The results of this study can be a new basis for future research on children's clothes and will help to understand the purchasing behavior.

3. Studies on Children's Clothing

Previous studies on children's clothing have been conducted by dividing the respondents into two groups: the children (the wearers) (Birren, 1984; Choi, 2002; Choi, 2011; Darian, 1998; Seo, 1981) and the mothers (the buyers) (Choi, Chung & Jang, 2006; Darian, 1998; Lee & Rhee, 2013; Lee & Kim, 2011; Lee & Kim, 2015; Park & Lee, 2009; Shin, Noh, Kim & Koh, 2012) according to the theme of the study. Among the previous studies on preschooler clothing, most were based on the colors and items preferred by the preschoolers.

Studies on children's clothing purchase behaviors, examining factors such as evaluation criteria or preference images when purchasing preschooler clothing, generally focused on the mother as the primary buyer of preschooler clothing. When purchasing children's clothing, mothers preferred easy-to-wear and simple clothing (Youn, Chung, & Lee, 2009) as well as cheerful, cute images, regardless of gender (Kim, Choo, & Kang, 2000). However, Lee and Kim (2011) found that there is a difference in the preferred images conveyed by preschooler clothing based on the relationship between the buyer and the child. According to this study, parents prefer a relaxed, active image compared to other groups, while grandparents prefer a more fancy image. In addition, parents and grandparents preferred a simple style when purchasing preschooler clothing, but uncles and aunts did not.

Consumer characteristics influencing the purchase of preschooler clothing include demographic variables, such as the mother's age (Kim, 1986; Choi et al., 2006), income (Zhang, Lee, & Kim, 2013), education level (Jang et al., 2013), perceived clothing benefits (Park & Lee, 2009), and clothing involvement (Lee & Rhee, 2013). According to Kim (1986), young mothers displayed higher brand awareness, were less likely to dress their children in second-hand clothes, and were more likely to purchase more expensive clothes than older mothers. Choi et al. (2006) found that it is important for young mothers to dress their children appropriately for their age or social image, and they perceive a social psychological risk in regard to the evaluations of others. In addition, 31-35 year old housewives were found to exhibit these behaviors less and were more likely to base decisions on media information and personal observation. Young housewives collect and use peer or media information more easily, and they actively research fabric and clothing management methods while observing the past purchase experiences and attire of nearby children. Jang et al. (2013) found that the higher the mother's income was, the more likely she was to purchase children's clothing at a department store and take the fit of the clothing into account. Mothers with lower incomes, however, preferred discount stores and were influenced mostly by the price of products. Jang et al. (2013) was also discovered that the higher the education level of the mothers was, the more likely they were to return clothing after purchase due to the size, color, and design of the product.

A study by Lee and Rhee (2013), which examined whether there is a difference in the value of children's clothing purchases based on the level of children's clothing involvement, showed that the high-involvement group considers

aesthetic value and vicarious satisfaction more than the low-involvement group. Perceived clothing benefits also have an effect on the purchase of children's clothing. According to Park and Lee (2009), the brand-seeking group makes planned purchases while the fashion-seeking group makes more impulse purchases. There was also a difference in the purchase location of the children's clothes. For example, brand-seeking and fashion-seeking groups preferred purchasing children's clothing at department stores while those seeking practicality and individuality preferred to purchase children's clothing at discount stores. In regard to the use of information sources when making purchase decisions, all groups regarded purchase experiences and the advice of family, friends, and neighbors as important sources (Park & Lee, 2009). According to Lee and Kim (2015), the factors consumers consider when purchasing preschooler clothing are dependent on their level of interest in how easy clothing is to maintain, meaning it is also necessary to study the considerations of aunts and uncles who have no childcare experience. Therefore, this study aims to examine the eight-pocket phenomenon which refers to eight people – parents (2), grandparents (4), uncle and aunt – spending money on one child and analyze the purchase processes of various consumers not covered by previous research.

Ⅲ. Method

1. Selection of Respondents

Theoretical sampling is an important feature of the grounded theory method. Through this process, the researcher selects participants who best fit the theory, collects the data, codes and analyzes the data, and then decides which data should be collected and where to find the data. In the grounded theory, data is usually analyzed as it is collected. When using the ground theory method, respondents are selected based on whether they fit the theory and whether they satisfy the conditions the researcher has established through agreed upon definitions from the previous studies and related reference materials such as newspaper articles, consumer reports and books. However, in this study, we selected respondents based on newspaper articles, because there is not enough previous research on uncles, aunts, and grandparents as buyers of preschooler clothing.

According to previous studies, preschoolers are young children from one to six years of age (Lee & Rhee, 2013; Rhee & Lee, 2012). Preschooler clothing tends to reflect the buyers' opinions rather than those of the wearers. This study included various consumer groups in the children's clothing market, such as grandparents, aunts, and uncles, who have shown an interest in purchasing children's clothing, bought clothes for children frequently, and who have purchased preschooler clothing for their children, nephews/nieces, or grandchildren under the age of six within the last three months. Theoretical samples were selected through convenience and snowball sampling.

2. Characteristics of Respondents

In this study, we analyzed the responses of 13 consumers who have purchased preschooler clothing within the last three months. The respondents were six parents (four mothers, two fathers), four aunts, one uncle, and two grandmothers. They bought clothes for preschoolers between the ages of two to six, and the average amount spent per month on preschooler's clothes was between 100,000 and 250,000 won. The characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

According to Lee and Rha (1998), the cost of clothing has a more direct impact on clothing involvement. The respondents of this study responded that they had a high involvement in their respective preschooler's clothing, and

the monthly average cost of purchasing clothes for preschooler was 100,000 to 250,000 won. This is higher than the monthly average preschooler's clothing expenditure of 100.19 thousand won in the high clothing involvement group in the study of Lee and Rhee (2013).

Table 1. Characteristics of the respondents

Case	Age	Residence	Preschooler's Age/Gender	Relationship with child	Average cost for children's clothes (month)	Preferred brand
1	30	Gyeonggi-do	3 years, boy	Mother	100,000～150,000	Gap, Uniqlo
2	33	Gyeonggi-do	5 years, girl 2 years, boy	Mother	100,000～150,000	No Brand
3	30	Seoul	3 years, girl	Mother	100,000～200,000	Hanna Andersson, Monsoon
4	40	USA	3 years, boy	Aunt	100,000～200,000	Gap, Carter's, Gymboree
5	31	Gyeongju-si,	4 years, boy	Mother	100,000～200,000	Zara, Uniqlo, h&m
6	42	Seoul	6 years, boy	Aunt	200,000～250,000	Polo Ralph Lauren
7	33	Seoul	3 years, boy	Father	100,000～200,000	Molo
8	61	Gyeonggi-do	4 years, boy	Grandmother	150,000～200,000	Uniqlo, Zara
9	31	Busan	5 years, boy	Uncle	100,000～150,000	Adidas, Nike
10	38	Gyeonggi-do	4 years, boy	Father	150,000～200,000	Gymboree, Polo Ralph Lauren, J. Crew
11	36	Incheon	5 years, girl	Aunt	150,000～200,000	Hatley, Monsoon
12	30	Seoul	2 years, girl	Aunt	150,000～200,000	Johnnie & Jack, Gymboree, Polo Ralph Lauren
13	59	Busan	3 years, boy	Grandmother	100,000～150,000	No brand, Uniqlo, Zara

3. Data Collection

A total of 13 participants between the ages of 30 and 61 were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling. Case 1 was the first interviewee in this study, and she introduced us to cases 4, 7, and 13. We then interviewed cases 2, 5, and 11. Case 5 introduced us to case 8 and case 10. Case 10 introduced us to case 9. Finally, cases 3, 6, and 12 were interviewed. The interviews consisted of 11 face-to-face interviews and 2 telephone interviews.

Interviews were conducted two to three times each in a place where the respondents felt comfortable, mainly in the respondent's house or at a coffee shop near the house. The first interviews were conducted in April - June 2016, and the second round of interviews were conducted in June - July 2016. Each interview took 40-60 minutes to complete, and when responses required confirmation for accuracy or were needed as the research progressed, questions were asked in the second and third interviews.

The basic questions are as follows: 1) For whom do you purchase clothes? 2) What attributes do you consider when purchasing preschooler clothing? 3) Where do you usually buy clothing for preschoolers? 4) When do you usually buy preschooler clothing? 5) What kinds of clothes do you usually buy? 6) What is your favorite brand? 7) How often do you buy preschooler clothing?

These are only the basic questions. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the respondents. In qualitative research, since free-flowing reasoning is more reliable (Spradley, 1979), the interviews were carried out conversationally, so that the flow of the stories was not interrupted or influenced by the researcher's preconceptions. In addition, different questions were added to each respondent. One researcher conducted interviews, and the recorded interviews were transcribed by another person for analysis in Korean. To achieve accuracy in the translation process, we translated the Korean text into English and translated them back into Korean. The English was checked by a bilingual translator.

4. Data Analysis

This study analyzed the data using the NVivo 11.0 software to ensure the reliability and ease of data processing. NVivo is one of the most widely used qualitative analysis software products and is designed to process vast quantities of quality data quickly. In order to analyze the data, the contents of the interview with the research participants were transcribed and saved as a text file. The collected data was analyzed and conceptualized through open coding, axial coding, and a selective coding process(Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding is a way to get new analytical insights beyond the existing interpretation of phenomena via data. In order to conceptualize the original data, the researcher reads the transcribed data several times and repeats the process of classifying meaning by sentence and paragraph and attaching the concepts. Axial coding establishes a relationship between concepts emerging during open coding, centered on one central phenomenon that the researcher focuses on, and includes causal conditions, contextual conditions, action/interaction strategies, intervening conditions, and results (Creswell, 2012). Finally, in the selective coding stage, the categories are refined, connected, and integrated into a single paradigm process by excluding superfluous categories or attributes.

We repeatedly read the contents of the interview, and proceeded with coding to create nodes with words or phrases that can summarize the content by designating meaningful words and sentences. Data that cannot be analyzed during the coding process was excluded, and then similar nodes were merged or categorized by specific topics. We organized data using a bottom-up method, in which the relationships among the nodes are grasped and specific nodes are placed under the other nodes or in parallel to form a hierarchical structure. This is a way of deriving a specific trend based on the collected data. Through this process, it is possible to conceptualize the one-dimensional data described from the consumer's point of view and draw a theoretical consensus by analyzing the relevance and the content discussed in existing studies.

In order to secure the validity and credibility of the qualitative data analysis and coding, which is the core process of research, experts and colleagues evaluated the correspondence between interview content and nodes set by the researcher. After discussions with three specialists who majored in apparel, the analysis category was confirmed. In the process of comparing the concepts presented in the data, we tried not to over-emphasize the cases that support the hypothesis or intentionally ignore other cases. We also tried to improve the objectivity of the results by maintaining a skeptical attitude toward the analytical results while having an open mind toward various perspectives by examining the data analysis process and results together with an expert group.

Ⅳ. Result

1. Difference in Purchase Behavior of Preschooler Clothes According to Buyer

In order to investigate the purchase behavior of preschooler's clothing according to consumers, keywords were derived based on the respondents' responses and KrKwic was used to analyze the frequency of the keywords and the networks between the keywords. KrKwic software calculates the frequency of use of each word in a text message to facilitate understanding of the core vocabulary, but it does not automatically process synonyms or derivatives, so it must be refined. Therefore, in this study, similar words and phrases were refined. For example, words such as' unique ',' distinctive 'and' uncommon 'are refined with the word' unique 'so that they are calculated as a single vocabulary, and meaningless words such as 'and' and 'also were excluded'. The refinement process is repeated and finally 65 keywords extracted. Next, in order to understand the relationship between keywords and the relationship between texts, a network is created and visualized as shown in <Figure 2> using NodeXL.
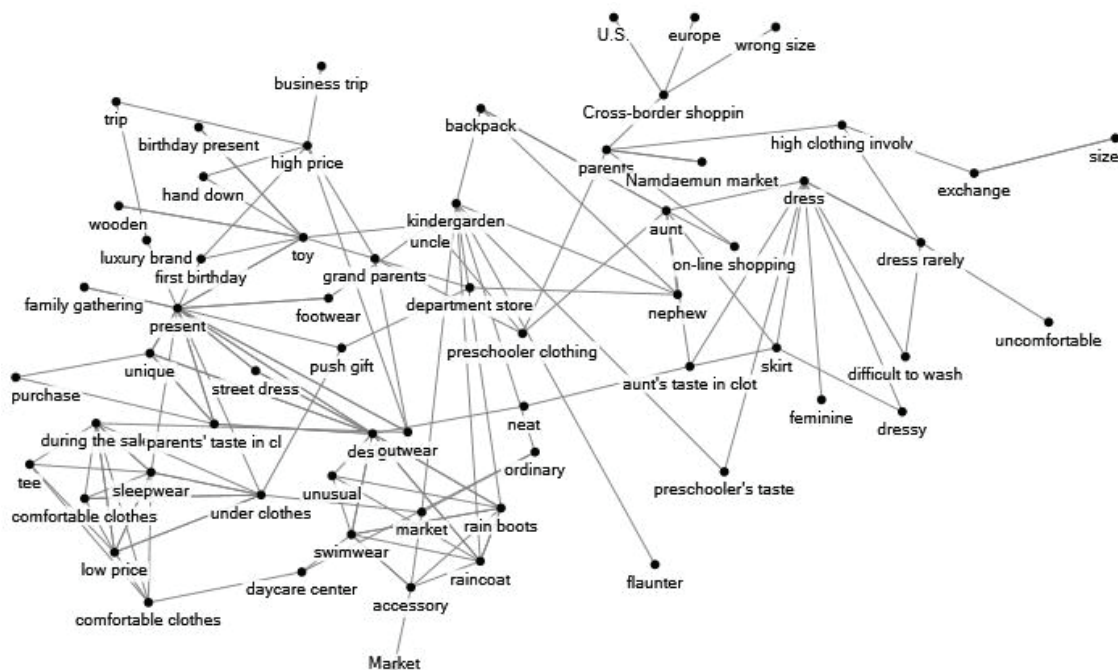
Note: The figure was created using NodeXL Pro by the Social Media Research Foundation

Figure 2. Purchase behavior of preschooler's clothing according to consumers

First, buyers bought their first baby clothes before and after the birth. the reason why the other buyer not parents purchase baby clothes before and after the birth seems to be mainly because of the culture of presenting underclothes as a baby gifts. In fact, mothers responded that they received a lot of underclothes for a baby as push gift. And they answered that they dressed these underclothes a baby because they had no experience of purchasing a child's clothes and not many opportunities to go out to exchange clothes. In the case of expensive coats or luxury brand apparel, it is shown that purchaser buy it for a reason such as a gift for a trip or business trip, a birthday present for a child. Especially, there were some respondents who answered that they bought a bag for a nephew and niece when they

entered kindergarten because of the common saying that if aunt bought a bag for a nephew and niece, the child will doing well at school.

Clothing that is easy to wear, such as underwear, pajamas, and T-shirts, is mainly purchased by parents. Parents answered that when they buy these clothes they choose affordable clothes or cut-price goods. After a year, parents responded that they usually throw away these clothes because these clothes become shabby and stained. This is different disposing behaviors compare to the parents hand down expensive clothes to others. it turns out that the factors that parents consider when they purchase preschooler's clothes differ according to the item. due to the request of the daycare center, even parents who have high clothing involvement dress ordinary and comfortable clothes a child when a child go to daycare centers, however, in the case of these parents consider design and brand when they buy rain boots or swimwear. Especially mothers who have a daughter answered that she care about daughter's accessories.

The purchase channel of the baby clothes was found to be consistent with the buyer 's clothing purchase channel. Respondents who want to see and touch clothes before purchase also prefer off-line shopping when they buy clothes for a child. Respondents who are shopping online also purchase child clothes in online includes foreign online shopping mall. The reason for purchasing a child's clothes directly from overseas is that domestic clothing products are too expensive or the designs are not favored. Even in the case of foreign brands that can be purchased domestically, since the selling prices in domestic are too high as compared with overseas, buyers buy clothes directly from abroad. The major cross-border shopping countries were the U.S and Europe, and consumers' percept the size related risk when they do cross-border shopping.

2. A Paradigm Surrounding Various Consumers' Clothing Consumption for Preschoolers

In this study, we used the grounded theory paradigm model proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) to find theoretical relationships. Using this model, we have established a process surrounding various consumer purchase behaviors for preschoolers. Through this model, the relationships of the eight-pocket phenomenon can be shown at a glance and interpreted holistically.

<Figure 3> shows the conditions involved in the process of consumer clothing consumption for preschoolers. First of all, the central phenomenon of a variety of clothing purchases for a single child was observed, and the causal conditions that led to this phenomenon were the childcare experience, purchasing experience, personal consumption value, and income level of the buyer. The strategies chosen by the parents were 'acceptance' and 'rejection' in response to the central phenomenon. The contextual and intervening factors influencing the strategy were changes in the family environment, the VIB (Very Important Baby) phenomenon, parental clothing involvement, the relationship with the buyer, and the intention of acceptance. As a result of the strategy expressed as 'acceptance' and 'rejection,' various clothing behaviors appeared, such as the purchase of high-cost clothes, cheap clothes, unique designs, smooth and ordinary designs, as well as wearing domestic and foreign brands together. The process surrounding consumer clothing consumption for preschoolers is shown in figure 3.
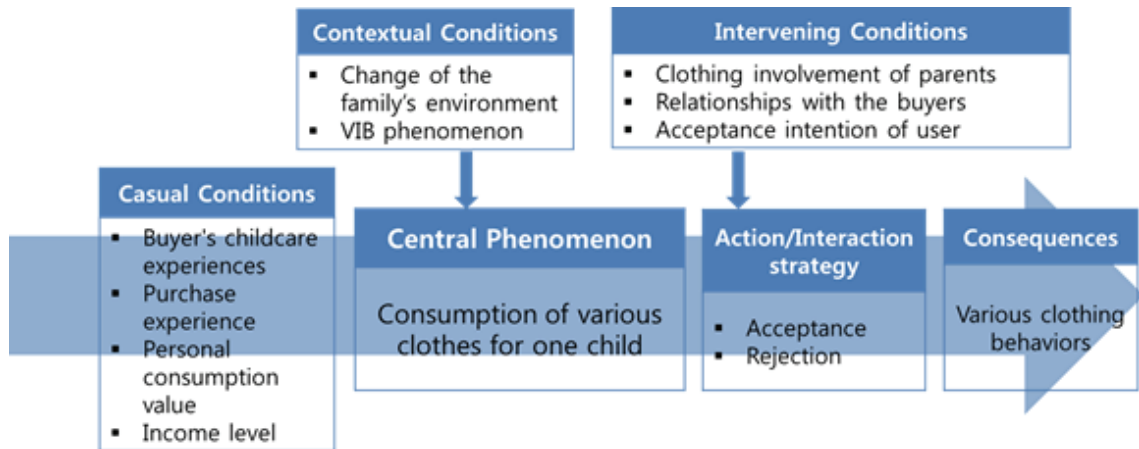
Figure 3. A paradigm process surrounding various consumers' clothing consumption for preschoolers

3. Central Phenomenon

The answer to the question *"For whom do you purchase clothes?"* led to the central phenomenon of *"the purchase of clothing by various people for one child."* Respondents replied that they bought preschooler's clothing for their children, nephews/nieces, and grandchildren, respectively. Case 13 answered that she is always looking for something for her grandson. *"Last month, I bought an eco-friendly wooden toy and a book that is good for creativity development... A few days ago, I bought diapers from home shopping because they included a slide... he likes to play on slides. Recently, I'm looking for good lactic drinks for my grandson to increase his immunity,"* she said. Case 6 bought a school bag for her nephew. *"I heard that aunts should buy their nephews school bags so that they do well at school. That's why I bought a school bag for my nephew."*

Among the respondents, parents' answers showed that a variety of consumers, such as friends, relatives, siblings, were purchasing for one child.

Case 1 stated *"My mom, brother, and sister-in-law buy clothes for my son. My husband also likes to buy clothes for our son."* Friends of parents also buy clothes for a child. *"Among my friends, only I have a baby... My friend takes a monthly holiday to come see my baby... After I became a mom, all presents, such as birthday, housewarming, and travel gifts, are baby clothes or toys,"* case 2 said.

It was also found that consumers purchase various clothing items for one child. Case 1 said that she usually buys 5,000 won t-shirts on sale at Gap or Uniqlo. But her mother always buys her son's clothes at a department store. *"Honestly, I don't like the designs, but she thinks that department stores are the best places to buy products,"* she said. Case 2 replied the clothes she bought and her sister bought for were completely different. *"Since kids are always spilling water, dropping food on clothes, and falling, they have to change clothes many times a day. Since I often do laundry, I think that it's better to buy comfortable and cheap clothes. But my sister doesn't have a daughter, so she only buys dresses, like a princess. It's pretty, but it doesn't dress a child well."*

Case 8 responded that she did not like the clothes her daughter purchased for her grandchildren, so she purchased clothes. *"The babies look bright when they wear bright colors and look pretty... Our grandson has a fair face and he can take any color. Even though he is a boy, purple and pink look great on him, but my daughter always buys black*

or gray clothes for him."

4. Casual Conditions

The factors that directly affect the central phenomenon were the childcare experience of the buyer, past purchase experiences, personal consumption value, and income level. Most previous studies on children's clothing assume that the mother's intrinsic values will be reflected in the purchase of children's clothing. Song (2003) also found that parents' own purchasing behaviors and purchase behaviors for their children were similar. In fact, in this study, respondents replied that they also bought clothes for children based on the brands they like or from the places where they usually buy clothes.

Case 5 said that she sometimes bought the same brand for her clothes and her son's clothes. *"I especially buy a lot from Zara online. I roughly know things like the quality or color of their products because I've purchased items from them before."* On the other hand, Case 6 responded that she always buy clothes for her nephews at department stores. *"I usually go to department stores. I don't buy clothes online. I think it is important that I see clothes with my own eyes before buying them."*

The buyer's childcare experiences also influenced the purchase of children's clothes. Grandmothers, especially, considered the practicality of their purchases based on their own parenting experiences. Case 8 responded that based on her childcare experiences that children's clothes should be comfortable and practical. *"In my experience, children's clothes should be comfortable. No matter how beautiful they are, parents do not wear clothes that are uncomfortable or difficult to wash."*

Income level and personal consumption trends of buyers also influenced the purchase of preschooler clothing. Case 7 said that because he is the sole provider, he cannot buy everything he wants to buy for his son. *"So I buy only one or two things I want to buy, and other things can be handed down."*

Case 10 thinks that the products he uses and the space he lives in represent him. He said that when buying his son's clothes, he considers design and brand identity rather than price. *"I think that those things come together to form a taste or a sensibility. So I don't want to dress my son carelessly or buy something that isn't special."*

5. Contextual Conditions

Contextual conditions, which are the social and cultural factors affecting central phenomena, were changes in the family's environment and the VIB phenomenon. The interviews that led to the contextual conditions are as follows.

The changes of family environment affecting the consumption behavior of children's clothing consisted of subcategories, such as the increase of late marriage and the low birth rate. Case 6, a 42-year-old unmarried woman, answered that she loves her nephew so much and has bought a lot for him. *"I didn't like kids before, but my nephew is so pretty. He is really handsome. I usually upload my nephew's pictures to SNS. Whenever I go out, I love to buy clothes and toys for my nephew. Since I'm not going to get married, I can give all my love to my nephew."* Case 7 said there is only one child in both families. *"We don't spoil my son. But even if we say no, my parents do anything he wants behind our backs. Because he receives a lot of love, he is very charming and sociable. But I'm afraid that he will become spoiled."*

According to participant responses, the changes in the family environment resulted in a decrease in the number of children per family, which showed that parents, grandparents, uncles, and aunts were more focused on one child than

in the past. Case 1 said that there is only one child in both families, so everyone's attention is focused on her son. *"Every day, I send pictures and videos to his aunt, uncle, grandma, and grandpa... After she watches the video, she wants to do a video call with him.* "

As a result, children's clothing consumers with diverse shopping preferences and clothing selection criteria are leading the diversification of the children's clothing market. It was found that the consumption of high-quality products that were a little expensive, but luxurious and safe, also increased. *"My son is a two-generation only son. Sometimes, when I see my husband's relatives, they say 'Be careful not to let our grandson get hurt. Buy and show him good things all the time. You don't need anything else, and all you have to do is raise your baby well.'"* case 10 said. Case 6 also replied that she buys her nephew high-quality and unique products even if it is expensive. *"A few months ago I went to China. I bought my nephew's clothes at Shanghai Tang. I didn't buy clothes for myself because it was too expensive."*

6. Action/Interaction Strategy

Parents, who are the actual adopters of children's clothing, have been shown to take action/interaction strategies to accept or reject children's clothing. 'Acceptance' consisted of active acceptance, which favored gifts that were presented, and passive acceptance, which consisted of adopting the product for a specific situation or place.

Cases 6 and 11 answered they were happy because their niece/nephew love to wear the clothes they bought. *"I actually like the girly style and fancy clothes, but I don't wear them because my body doesn't support them. So, I buy skirts for my niece...A few days ago, she wore a dress I bought when she was planting a tomato or pepper in kindergarten. Dressing up and planting tomatoes. How funny,"* case 11 said.

"Kids' clothes are really pretty these days. By the way, my nephew only wears a sweat suit every day. His mother doesn't have any interest in clothes. So I bought him clothes and bags and he used them well. He went to his kindergarten and bragged," case 6 said.

On the other hand, Case 7 said that he dresses his son in clothes received as gifts from relatives only at family gathering. *"When we attend a gathering, if I received clothes as a gift from them, I dress my son in the clothes. I have to show them off for the person who gave us the clothes. Maybe they will believe I dress my son well."*

'Rejection' appeared in the form of exchange, use suspension, and re-gifting. Case 1 answered that she had exchanged clothes for gifts. *"Last year, my friend bought a suede coat for my son. How many times will my baby wear it? And at that age, babies get whatever they have into their mouths and suck on it. So I just exchanged it for t-shirts and pants."* Case 10 replied that she would ask for her daughter's opinion first when she bought stuff for her grandson, because her daughter had not used her gifts because she did not like them. *"My grandson liked Pororo so much, so I bought him a blanket and some underwear. My daughter said she hated them and she didn't use them,"* Case 10 said. Case 3 replied that if she does not like the product other people give her, she gives it to someone else. *"It's not really my style, it just doesn't look good. Such a thing is good to give to someone else who it will be more suitable for, like a friend's baby."*

7. Intervening Conditions

Intervening conditions refer to emotions that affect the form and implementation of strategies. In this study, the mediating conditions influencing the acceptance and rejection of clothing purchased by others were the clothing

involvement of parents, relationships with the buyers, and acceptance intention of user (child). According to previous research, high-involvement groups consider the aesthetic value and the value of vicarious satisfaction when purchasing children's clothing, and they take a more active buying role. In this study, parents with high clothing involvement refused to accept gifts if they did not satisfy their aesthetic sensibilities, indicating that parents' clothing involvement influences disposition behavior as well as purchase behavior. *"My sister exchanged most of the things I gave my nephew for something else. Recently, I bought him a sweat suit from Adidas, but she exchanged it for shoes. She said because he has a lot of clothes. I think she just didn't like it. Nowadays, just as a joke, she says to just give her the money and she'll buy what he needs,"* case 9 said. Parents who have excellent fashion sense and a high level of involvement in clothing are accustomed to selecting clothes according to taste and prefer to dress their children to suit their tastes. They prefer children's clothing brands with trendy colors and designs, but they will not accept children's clothing with colorful characters. Case 7 responded that because his involvement in clothing is so high, others presented clothes that fit his preferences. *"Because my likes and dislikes are clear, people give me baby clothes that suit my style. They say they bought them because they thought the prints or designs were unique,"*

"I hate to wear the same clothes as the others. So, when I buy clothes for my son, I avoid brands that many people wear, without exception. I really hate clothes with large brand logos or characters. Sometimes when my sister in America sends me Gap hoodies, I only dress my son in them at home," case 10 said.

On the other hand, when parents' involvement in clothing was low, they replied that they just dressed their children in clothes that were given. *"My sister-in-law is a designer, but she hasn't married yet. Since she was interested in clothes, she bought a lot of clothes. She bought them because they were pretty, she bought them when she bought her own clothes, she bought them on sale, she bought them on business trips, etc. I don't wear clothes well, but thanks to her, I don't have to worry about baby clothes,"* case 2 said.

On the other hand, the relationship with buyers also affected the acceptance and rejection of the children's clothes. If the parents are not able to refuse the clothing, such as when grandparents purchase clothing, it is shown that the child will wear the clothing on special occasions. *"I just put on what my parents-in-law bought when we meet them. They said to exchange it if I don't like it, but how could I do that?"* case 2 said.

In addition, the acceptance intention of the child as a wearer also affected the acceptance and rejection of clothing. Children may compare themselves with their friends through clothing and show interest and envy. Therefore, unlike infant and baby clothing, children's clothing should be made so that the wearer can wear it with confidence. *"He likes most of things his grandma bought for him. He especially loves clothes featuring animal characters, such as tigers and sharks, and he likes to imitate them. I don't like that,"* Case 5 answered. Case 2 also said that the opinion of the wearer is important. *"Whenever my daughter goes out with her aunt, they buy only pink or lacy clothes. My daughter will say that she wants to wear them to kindergarten and she prepares them the night before."*

8. Consequences

In a paradigm based on grounded theory, a result is the reaction of an individual or group to an action/interaction or a situation brought about by it. It appears to be an intentional or unintended action. In this study, the results of various clothing behaviors were formed as a result of acceptance or rejection of clothing by parents and children. Popular clothing purchase trends appeared to be purchases of expensive clothes, low-cost clothes, unique designs, smooth and ordinary designs, and wearing domestic and foreign brands together. The following interviews were based on the

above results. *"Usually, I dress my daughter in off-brand or Uniqlo clothes that my mom bought. Since she goes to daycare, it's necessary to be frugal. I'm still looking for pretty clothes, for example, Lash gardens and accessories. I prefer the brand Monsoon when I buy accessories and I bought rain boots and a raincoat from England. I also bought crocs with a design that can't be found in Korea,"* case 3 said. Case 10 responded that his favorite clothes worked together as outfits while he disliked clothes that were used for bedtime. *"When we're at home, even I don't like the designs. As for outfits, design is important, so I dress my son in clothes I bought. Gymboree is good. Polo also is good for boys. I like J. Crew, too. "*

"She usually just wears pants and a tee, but when she attends weddings or family gatherings, her mom dresses her in special clothes I bought for her birthday. The clothes are pretty even though there are some price differences."

And, there was also a tendency toward purchasing inexpensive clothes and high-quality clothes at the same time. *"I go to Namdaemun and purchase clothes from overseas directly for my niece's clothes. Because cotton products are good in Korea, I also buy underwear and socks at Namdaemun. However, accessories and dress designs from foreign brands are better than domestic brands,"* case 11 said. *"T-shirts and pajamas for one year are inexpensive, since I buy them on sale. But I ask my mom to buy expensive things. I know they're expensive, but they can be worn longer and so there's a reason for the high price... In addition, a child needs winter clothes with padding and, depending on the situation, a good coat is also needed,"* case 5 said.

Ⅴ. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the purchasing behaviors of various consumers in the Korean children's clothing market. In this study, we conducted in-depth interviews with parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles who were interested in preschooler clothing. The results of purchase behavior of preschooler clothes according to buyer is as follows. Buyers first purchase clothes for a baby as a push gifts before and after the birth. However, the respondents who had no parenting experience or unmarried buyers had difficulty in purchasing the baby clothes because they did not know about the infant clothing brand or had no knowledge about the size system of infant clothing. Respondents mostly replied that they bought baby clothes according to the recommendation of the sales person at department store. In addition, buyers answered that they attached exchange certificates for exchange the gift, but the parents did not exchange the clothes because they miss exchange period or it is annoying to exchange gifts. Therefore, if a brand selling a baby clothes provide a variety of services, such as exchanging products by postal mail or offering or selling gift cards for customers who are having difficulty in exchanging gifts, it is expected to establish long term relationship with the customer. In addition, if domestic children's clothing brands develop various designs and provide differentiated services such as subscription services that periodically deliver clothes appropriate to the child's age in consideration of the season and trend they are able to compete well with foreign brands that have strength in design and price.

The results of the exploratory and inductive analysis of the subjective purchase motives and purchasing behaviors through grounded theory are as follows. The present findings indicate that changes in the family environment, such as late marriages, the increase in the proportion of single people, the low birth rate, and the VIB phenomenon, have led to various family members purchasing preschooler clothing for one child. The contextual conditions in which various kinds of purchase behaviors appeared were consumer's consumption values, purchase experiences, income levels, and

child-raising experiences. Therefore, there were cases in which purchase decisions differed completely between sets of parents. As a result of the interaction between various clothing purchase conditions, the parents showed acceptance or rejection of clothing bought by family members. Especially, in the case of parents with a high level of involvement in their children's clothing, they showed rejection by exchanging or disposing of clothes when they did not like them. Meanwhile, the intervening conditions that affected the acceptance and rejection of clothes were the relationships between parents and buyers and the parents' level of clothing involvement. When parents' clothing involvement was high, family members purchased clothes while taking their tastes into account. In this case, however, acceptance was partially contingent on the relationship with the purchaser. Especially, when the purchaser was a mother-in-law or a sister-in-law, parents dressed their children using the purchased clothes on special occasions. As a result, a variety of clothing behaviors, such as purchasing high-cost clothing, low-cost clothing, unique designs, ordinary designs, and wearing domestic and foreign brands together appeared.

A general picture that emerges from our findings is that there are various influencers, such as grandparents, aunts, and uncles in the clothing consumption of preschoolers, not only parents. It is important to note that various purchasing behaviors and clothing behaviors are likely to affect future clothing decisions. While it may be difficult to establish the relative influence of each party, it is clear that retailers must address the needs of each party. The chance of purchase increases only if the manufacturers, retailers, and designers appeal to each party. Our findings suggest that children's clothing retailers would benefit from planning marketing activities for grandparents, uncles, and aunts. For example, if they visit with their nephew, niece, or grandchild, retailers can offer additional discounts. Also, for grandmothers and aunts who do not know what a child likes, manufacturers can plan special sales event by offering collections with products that children tend to like. Designers can also introduce matching shirts for children and their grandmothers or aunts. An attribute that had a strong impact on purchase decisions for grandparents, but not for unmarried aunts and uncles, was whether the clothing was perceived as practical. Therefore, promotions aimed at grandparents could emphasize the practical features of the retailer's clothing such as how easy it is to wash, the fabric, and overall comfort. On the other hand, promotions for aunts and uncles should emphasize design and uniqueness. Retailers would benefit by addressing the needs of both the parents and other buyers, such as grandparents, aunts, and uncles, without infringing on parental prerogatives. For example, it may be a good idea to issue an exchange certificate containing information on the brand, exchange procedures, and store locations to facilitate visits by parents who have never purchased from the brand.

This study is meaningful in that we tried to understand and describe the purchase behaviors of new consumers of the preschooler's clothes market, who were not covered in the previous study. Also, it is important that we tried to explain the social phenomenon and the consumer group which has not yet been studied by using the grounded theory method which is not widely used in the field of clothing. However, this phenomenon, in which various adults purchase clothing for a single child, appears mainly in Korea, Japan, and China, we should emphasize that these results may not apply to different cultures. Another limitation of this research is that the results of this study are limited to exploratory studies, because this study did not include more male buyers, such as fathers, uncles, and grandfathers.

Future research that would build on the results of this study could be conducted in two areas. First, this study could be replicated in other countries, such as Japan and China, where the eight-pocket phenomenon also appears. It could be particularly interesting to observe the purchase behaviors of fathers, uncles, and grandfathers. Second, in-depth

interviews and quantitative research could concurrently carried out. It may also be beneficial to identify whether there is a difference in the purchase behaviors of mothers and grandmothers (or aunts) and what factors affect the purchase behaviors.

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