Characteristics of Imitation for American Trendy Casual Styles Made by Domestic Casual Brands

Chanju Kim
Professor, Dept. of Fashion & Industry, University of Incheon

ABSTRACT

American trendy casual styles can be characterized as fitted to body and rendering sexy and fashionable images and now very popular in Korea. This paper aims to identify diffusion channels of American trendy casual style among Korean market and the characteristics of imitation for American trendy casual styles made by Korean casual brands. American trendy casual style was introduced and diffused mainly through 3 channels: American films and TV dramas, on-line communities, on-line shopping mall specialized for purchasing American apparel brands. Some of American celebrities became fashion icons and played critical roles in diffusing American trendy styles. After searching websites and fashion magazines and visiting brand stores, several Korean casual brands imitated the styles of American trendy casual brands and the scope of imitation was vast across items. Imitation was found mainly among T-shirts, jacket, jumper, pants, skirt and accessories. Also imitation was found in almost every aspects of clothes such as shape, silhouette, color, prints and stitching, belt, and drawstring.

Key Words: American trendy casual style, diffusion, imitation, Korean casual brand

I. Introduction

Contemporary Korean society is now changing its style of clothing into casual trend of easy fit and high applicability as regulations on clothing in company become loose and rule of five working days per week has been established. The phenomena of consumers' preference of casual clothes can also be found in the fact that the increasing rate of scale has been sustained in market of casual clothes. The result of analysis of consuming trend in domestic market of clothes practiced by Korea Association of Clothes Industry shows that casual apparel market has shown highest rate of development since year of 2002.1)

The current status of casual market is characterized by competitions between easy casual for comfortable fit, feminine casual with emphasis on softness as woman's uniqueness, active sports casual, as categorized in details by many casual brands. However, as these casual brands have similarities with each other, it is pointed out as problem that they have the shortage in stylistic characters and diversities, as well as in clear expression of gender discrimination based on each gender's physical characteristics. Opposite to this status, as current young generation, who has grown up in pursuit of

Chanju Kim, E-mail: cjkim@incheon.ac.kr
individual characters, has strong motivation of exposing their distinguished physical charms with their own personalities even in casual clothing, become to look for new styles being unsatisfied with domestic casual styles existing in similarities between them.\(^2\)

At this moment, American trendy casual emerged as alternative style of satisfying their sensibilities by its comfort and practicability as well as its sexy and fashionable character which casual ware can have.

As American casual style till now has reflected the spirit of American culture pursuing the rationality and practicability, it has been known as style of affirmation into basic elements such as activity and comfort above decoration and craftsmanship. However, since 1990's, trendy casual has dominated the market as it has delivered the sexy look of exposing body lines and characteristic styles in casual wares for young generation, balancing with the trend of emphasizing the characteristic expression and sexy look in fashion. Recent entertainment programs and street fashions often show young generation's cheerful and sexy looks with American trendy casual styles in large amount of exposition of body. As American trendy casual styles has gained the popularity among young generation more and more, many cases of imitations of them by domestic casual brands have been increasingly found in the market. If these cases of imitations would not be monitored, they will result in serious troubles, such as damaging the brand images and bringing in international disputes, while which cases have not been investigated yet. Therefore, this study surveys the characteristics of American trendy casual styles and its domestic popularization with understanding of the current status of imitations in investigating cases of imitations of American trendy casual practiced by domestic brand, leading to suggest solutions for them.

As research methodology, literature review and internet-search have been practiced to understand the characteristic of trendy casual and domestic path of its expansion, in collecting cases that are expected to have imitated products of American brands with investigation into shops and brand sites for young casuals by dividing categories into clothes and goods. The investigational periods were May and June in 2005, and May in 2006, as this study presumed that clothing by its style appears in the market more in spring and summer rather than fall and winter. As brands producing American trendy casuals, 'Abercrombie & Fitch', 'American Eagle', 'Hollister', 'Urban Outfitters' were selected, while as domestic brands, 'Who a u', 'Igempost', 'Nice Club', 'Karlan', 'D-day', 'Reibous Cride', 'Radio Garden' and others were selected as diverse young brands.

II. Characteristics of American trendy casual

To survey characteristics of American trendy casual, This paper illustrate those of American traditional casual style which has represented the image of American casual style.

1. American Traditional Casual

American traditional casual embodies open, rational, and frontier spirits of America as it has been loved by Americans in its ideal and typical clothing styles. Especially as it is dressed in viewing sports games such as basketball and baseball enjoyed by American audiences or spending leisure time such as traveling or equipping campus ware, its characteristics can be summarized into three cat-