Study on Wearing Fusion Hanbok at Child's First Birthday Party

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Abstract This study explores the opportunities for new market of traditional Korean costumes, Hanbok, following not only the consumer's needs and wants, but marketing trends of fashion industry. This paper is the exploratory consumer research of fusion Hanbok, it aims at examining how consumers wear fusion Hanbok. Study participants were limited to mothers who wore Korean-fusion Hanbok to their baby's first birthday party once or more. A total of 221 respondents completed online questionnaires. The results of this study are as follows. First, regarding the reasons of wearing fusion Hanbok is a beautiful and traditional dress although traditional Hanbok is uncomfortable and inconvenient. Second, the most satisfactory aspect of fusion Hanbok was found to be its design. Satisfaction with the color, size and length was also high. Third, most female consumers in their 20s and 30s have stronger preferences for and intentions of purchasing fusion Hanbok. Some people criticize that as fusion Hanbok is westernized in its designs and materials, it has lost the classical beauty and impression of traditional Hanbok. However, if no one routinely wears Hanbok, Hanbok will never be popularized or globalized. This study suggest that traditional Hanbok should be improved by developing effective merchandising strategies based on consumer needs for traditional Hanbok such as various product assortment and promotion strategies using traditional Korean beauty. So, traditional Hanbok could be retained and succeeded in the future by improving consumers' dissatisfactions of traditional Hanbok and creating the new market of traditional Hanbok in which fusion Hanbok are produced focused on consumers' needs and market environments.

Key words fusion Hanbok, traditional Hanbok, wearing condition, satisfaction, preferences, purchase intentions

Introduction

A traditional dress refers to a unique clothing style that people of a certain area or a certain country have developed and worn for a long time. Unlike universal or trendy clothes, traditional dresses reflect the social norm, customs and values, not to mention the traditional style. In this regard, Hanbok is

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Korea's traditional dress, part of the Korean culture, and a symbol of Korean history, spirit and value. As a symbol of a nation, the clothing culture plays a critical role (Lee & Han, 2006).

Unlike in the past, today's Hanbok is used as a ceremonial dress for special occasions, and more symbolic than ever before. Accordingly, Hanbok has become extravagant and showy in its use of materials, methods and designs (Jin, 1990). Therefore, consumers have both positive and negative perceptions about Hanbok: traditional Hanbok is a beautiful dress symbolizing the traditional beauty of Korea, while it is inconvenient and expensive. As consumers became reluctant to purchase Hanbok, competition in the Hanbok industry has intensified, creating the vicious cycle.

Recently, "fusion Hanbok" that combines traditional Hanbok and western suits was introduced by the media to viewers, drawing the attention of young female consumers. Popular Korean TV drama "Hwang Jinee," broadcast in 2006, showed beautiful Hanbok, which drew public attention to Hanbok. The, so called, "Hwang Jinee Hanbok" influenced modern Hanbok designs. As young people began to wear fusion Hanbok in their weddings or their child's first birthday parties, the traditional Hanbok industry got a second wind. Academia also tries to establish the identity of Hanbok as a unique Korean design in this digital era. As the social paradigm shifted from industrial to digital era from the late 20th century, Korea also began to be know as an IT powerhouse, departing from the image of a late industrial country. Korean Wave helped the image shift and enhancement. As a result, this country began to establish its unique cultural identity in earnest (Kim, 1995; Kim, 2008). As a result, designers, such as Kcino, Jin Tae-ok and Lee Young Hee, adopted traditional components of Hanbok to their designs, like the silhouettes and patterns of Hanbok skirts and jackets, and developed unique Hanbok designs that retain traditions while improving its practicality. In other words, designers have tried to re-interpret and re-create modern Hanbok so that Hanbok can be universally enjoyed by the global population. Through such efforts, Hanbok can ultimately become an everyday dress at home and abroad (Kim, 2008).

This study defines "fusion Hanbok" as a combination of traditional Hanbok silhouettes, materials, colors and other symbolic components and western tailoring, and as an effort to popularize Hanbok. It is necessary to conduct a basic study that examines how young female consumers wear fusion Hanbok, and inspires designers to develop Hanbok designs to reinvigorate the market. Therefore, as an exploratory study, it aims at examining how consumers wear fusion Hanbok. In particular, as consumers participating in this study had experiences of wearing fusion Hanbok at their children's first birthday parties, their comments about satisfactory and dissatisfactory characters of fusion Hanbok are expected to help develop fusion Hanbok designs.

Theoretical Review

Traditional Hanbok Becoming a Ceremonial Dress and Consumer Awareness

By the end of Joseon Dynasty, Korea had maintained a dual dress system: the ruling class dress had gone through changes affected by the Chinese style (Hwang, 2007), while the ruled class had stuck to the traditional jackets (Jagory) and skirts or pants. As people were allowed to wear western suits (Cho,