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A Comparative Analysis of Street Fashion Colors between Beijing and Seoul: The Case of Summer 2012*

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JEL Classifications : L60, L67, O53, O57.

Abstract

Purpose – This thesis aims to increase the success of Korean fashion brands in the Chinese consumer market by providing basic items in fashion colors preferred by women in their twenties and thirties, having the highest purchasing power, in Beijing and Seoul, in the summer of 2012.

Research Methodology – The street fashion color data were retrieved for the case study by taking pictures and recording videos at the famous fashion streets in Beijing and Seoul. The WINDOWS SPSS 18.0 program was applied, to determine the frequency of street fashion colors.

Results – The results might be ascribed to the tendency of Chinese women to favor the symbolism of traditional colors. Conversely, women in Seoul have more attachment to international fashion color trends than to the traditional color symbolism.

Conclusions – This study suggests that Korean companies should consider the differences in street fashion color preferences when planning to launch a fashion brand in the Chinese consumer market. To gain the long-term perspective, further research on the local Chinese area might be essential to help Korean fashion companies and brands launch into the Chinese consumer market.

Keywords : Chinese Fashion Market, Street Fashion, Fashion Color, Beijing, Seoul.

1. Introduction

From 1979 on, China has developed economically in a unprecedented speed for about 35 years, and finally established a huge consuming market, let alone of playing the role as a factory of the world. The power of consumptions came to be alarmingly expanded as the income of the workers reached the level of 4,000 dollars of personal GDP in 2010 (China in Past Five Years, 2011). Generally the consumption starts to be increased at the level of 3,000 dollars of personal GDP and come to be explosive at the level of 4,000 dollars of the personal GDP. This is regarded as the great chance for many global companies to launch into the Chinese markets (Kim & Bae, 2011).

On the part of the Korean company desperate to be successful in these competitive Chinese markets. The study about color preferences in fashion of the Chinese women in their twenties and thirties with leading purchasing power would be expected to be helpful. This leads South Korean companies to be in a position where surviving the Chinese fashion market would be important for determining its economic future.

The previous studies about Chinese fashion are as follows. Kim (2000) studied about the preferences of clothing design by questionnaire of the Beijing women. Im et al. (2001) compared the street fashion between China and Korea. Choi (2004, 2005) researched on the fashion style of employed women and casual image shown in the Beijing street fashion. Kim and Ro (2006) compared denim fashion of between Seoul and Beijing, while Bae (2010) compared the street fashion style of Seoul, Shanghai and Beijing in Summer season of 2009. Oh (2010) also comparatively analyzed street style between Chinese cities, Beijing, Shanghai and Dalian and Seoul, Korea. Kim and Yu (2010) presented the paper including the non-metropolitan city, showing the regional variances in three Chinese cities of Shanghai, Beijing and Yanji in F/W of 2008. Oh and Bae (2005), Bae et al. (2008a) also published the street fashion of Shenyang in north eastern area of China. While Cheon and Bae (2006), Bae and Oh (2007, 2009), Bae (2007, 2008, 2011), Baek and Bae (2008), Bae et al. (2008b), Kim and Bae (2011),

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Oh and Bae (2011), Oh et al. (2012) analyzed the street fashion style or color of north eastern area in China, Dalian, Harbin and Shenyang.

On this background, the investigation about the specificity and local trend in fashion like the color preference in this thesis should be persistently searched in view of the long term perspective, which would contribute to the successful launching of the Korean fashion brand. In this perspective, this thesis makes it an aim for Korean fashion brand to be successful in Chinese fashion market by providing the basic information about fashion color preferred in 20 and 30's women with the highest purchasing power in Beijing and Seoul in the summer season of 2012.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Characteristics of Chinese Female Consumers

Shaun Rein, founder and managing director of the China Market Research Group, asserted that younger Chinese women from the age 24 until 32 are smart enough to drive the growth of the Chinese retail sales and also demanded to take the traits of the local consumers into account (Rein, 2012). The Chinese women tend to like the styles different from those of western of Korean women. Chinese young women prefer 'cute' style to 'Barbie' style. 'Hello Kitty', 'Snoopy' and 'Teenie Weenie' are the hottest fashion brands to them. Why they like cuter fashion style than sexier style. This might due to the fact that they live with their parents until marriage and are treated like little princess or little empress, with parents cooking and washing clothes for their daughters even after they have entered the workforce full time (Rein, 2012). The parents and grandparents tend to do everything for their daughter even after she is fully grown up, because of the 'one child policy' which affected this tendency of favoring the child to this extreme. For those reason, fashion brands and companies could not just bring same fashion products that worked in the Western and Korean fashion market into China.

Chinese younger women aspire to a luxury life and brands. They increasingly have a good job and money to buy global luxury brands to achieve their aspirations. They are called 'After birth 1980 (80後)', 'After birth 1990 (90後)', 'Tajingji (她經濟)' and 'Wie Guangzu (月光族)' (Yoo, 2013; Oh & Bae, 2011).

These groups have strong power in on-line market with SNS, smart phone and tablet PCs. According to i-Research, online transaction through mobile purchase was estimated to reach 11.48 billion RMB in 2011, five times more than the transaction value in 2010 (Su, 2012). Their consuming characteristics are summarized in Table 1 and 2, which explains about the most powerful consuming group's consuming behavior in China.

<Table 1> Consuming Characteristics of After Birth 1980 in China

Characteristics	Consuming behavior
Preference of Luxury Brands	-Prefer luxury brands and good design -20-40 ages consumers purchase 80% of luxury brands in China
Consuming pattern of New Family	-Key person of purchasing decision -New generation parents -Child copy their parents consuming pattern
Mature Consumer	-Change to mature consumer -Strong demand for good after service -Changing from early adapter to trend innovator

Source: This information originated from Yoo, J.S. (2013. 8. 20), Open the Chinese Wallet for knowing Little Emperor, Shindonga. Retrieved September 25, 2013, from <http://shindonga.dinga.com/docs/magazine/shin/2013/08/20/201308200500000/2013>

<Table 2> Consuming Characteristics of After Birth 1990 in China

Characteristics	Consuming behavior
Reasonable Early Adaptor	-Early adaptor of new fashion trend and new goods -Need global quality, design and function -Don't mind country of origin
Experimental Consumption	-Curiosity seekers for diverse brands and goods -Strong experience desire about personal belongings such as cellphone
Key Consumer in Internet Shopping	-Familiar in internet and mobile world and shopping in Online mall(Lee, 2005) -90 after's online shopping market share is 35%

Source: This information originated from Yoo, J.S. (2013. 8. 20), Open the Chinese Wallet for knowing Little Emperor, Shindonga. Retrieved September 25, 2013, from <http://shindonga.dinga.com/docs/magazine/shin/2013/08/20/201308200500000/2013>

The foreign fashion brands should use of Chinese models that show how Chinese can look in the clothes, and imagery to which Chinese can better relate.

2.2. Chinese Traditional Colors

Each color has various emotions depending on its own area, race culture and nationality. Chinese and Korean people love special colors along with their long tradition and color symbolism. The traditional Chinese 5 color system contains Blue, Red, Yellow, White and Black. Normally, even in the same area, race and nation, the color preference and symbolism have been slightly changed. During cultural and periodical changes, the love for certain colors have been shifting to another color according to the fashion color trends. However, it is surprising that the persistence of Chinese color preference endures numerous thousands years (Kim & Bae, 2011).

For example, the money for wedding celebration and New Year's bowing are enclosed in Red envelopes. The money in Red envelope means that money will flourish like fire. The ceremonial costumes of bride are Red as well, because Red drive out devil and bad luck. Yellow color is meaning of Chinese emperor and symbolize as a richness, glory and fortune (Park, 2006).

To the modern Chinese people, Red and Yellow colors signify the human desire of making a great amount of money and taking a power like an emperor (Park, 2006).

3. Research Methodology

The case study was performed for collecting the data in two cities. Both taking pictures and recording camcorders' were used at the famous fashion streets, where the 20-30 aged young women preferred, in Beijing(Wangfujing, Xidan) and Seoul(Shinchon, Myongdong, Gangnam).

The period of investigation was from 26th of June to 11th of July 2012, twice a day A.M. 9:00-11:00, P.M. 16:00-18:00 at the same spots. For exact analysis of street fashion color, the same spots and time under the same weather. Then were selected 500 pieces of photo samples of street fashion in each city. For the frequency analysis of street fashion color, WINDOWS SPSS 18.0 program was used in this research.

Munsell color system having chromatic basic colors-Red (R), Yellow Red (YR), Yellow (Y), Green Yellow (GY), Green (G), Blue Green (BG), Blue (B), Purple Blue (PB), Purple (P), Red Purple (RP) with 11 tones were introduced in this article in order to describe the general color preference. The achromatic 3 colors were White (Wt), Gray (Gry) and Black (Blk). When the color was obscuring its main color because of the clothing patterns, it was classified into Multi color. This color analysis method refers to the preceding paper of Bae (2011), Oh and Bae (2011) and Oh, Kim and Bae (2012).

4. Results

Table 1 shows the results of street fashion items. The two piece style was predominant in the style. This is due to the popularity of casual style affecting the fashion colors.

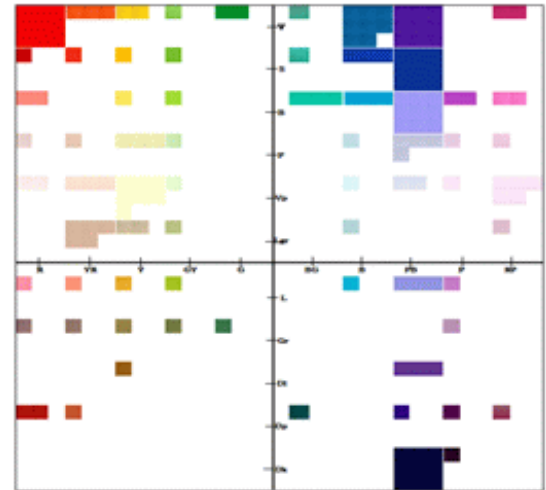
<Table 3> Street Fashion Items in Beijing and Seoul (%)

Classification	Beijing	Seoul
one-piece	195(39)	197(39.4)
two pieces	305(61)	303(60.6)
Total	500(100)	500(100)

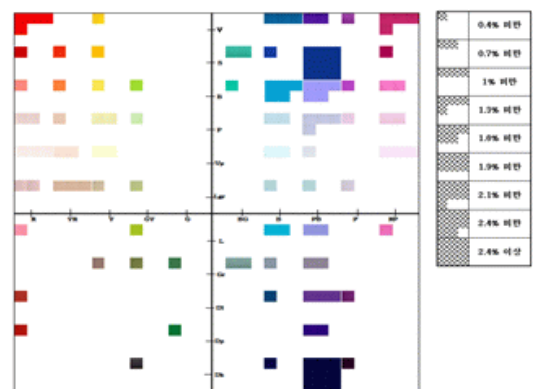
Figure 1 displays the results of the Beijing women's street fashion colors and figure 2 shows the results of the Seoul women's street fashion colors. Most of all, Red, Yellow and Blue show the big differences.

Two cities show the high frequency of Blue (B) color category due to the preference of blue jeans. Beijing displays the higher frequency of Blue and Purple Blue than Seoul, which means Chinese women love blue jeans more than Seoul. Figure

3, 4, 5, 6 show the examples of blue jeans in Beijing and Seoul. Especially Beijing women preferred dark blue jeans even though in the summer season. It is analyzed that Chinese women want to be shown in slimmer leg than their own realistic body.



<Figure 1> Street Fashion Colors in Beijing



<Figure 2> Street Fashion Colors in Seoul

In terms of Red, as figure 1 clearly shows the high frequency of vivid Red, Beijing women still seem like their traditional red preference, which is same result of Jung and Bae, 2011 and 2013. Seoul women preferred Purple Red rather than vivid Red, because Purple Red (PR) was the international fashion color in 2012 S/S season.

In terms of Yellow, whole band of Yellow color category were preferred in Beijing. Yellow shows lower frequency than Blue and Red, but Yellow in Beijing displays still higher than Seoul one (Figure 7, 8).

In the clothing pattern, Beijing women preferred bold and vivid colored clothing pattern, however Seoul women preferred small and neutral colored one (Figure 9, 10). The stripe pattern also showed same results. In Beijing, bold and colorful stripe were popular such as Figure11 and 12. While, simple and narrow stripe were preferred in Seoul such as Fig. 13.

Figure 1 and 2 indicate that the two cities have different

street fashion colors. Beijing women more preferred vivid Red, Yellow and Blue colors than Seoul women. It seemed that the preference of vivid Red, Yellow and Blue seems to be originated from Chinese traditional color symbolism which is further research needed.

Table 2 and 3 display the total color's (hue and tone) frequency including achromatic colors in Beijing and Seoul respectively. Seoul shows the higher frequency of achromatic colors (43%) than Beijing (33.2%). Especially, White was preferred in Seoul. The frequency of multi colors shows same numbers (207) in Beijing and Seoul because the patterned one-piece dresses in summer were prevalent in both cities (Figure 9, 10). This was also presented in the previous papers already published (Bae & Oh, 2009; Bae, 2010; Kim & Bae, 2011; Oh & Bae, 2011).



<Figure 3> Blue Jean PB, Beijing
 <Figure 4> Blue Jean PB, Beijing
 <Figure 5> Blue Jean B, Seoul
 <Figure 6> Blue Jean B, Seoul

<Table 4> Frequency of Hue and Tone of Street Fashion Colors in Beijing

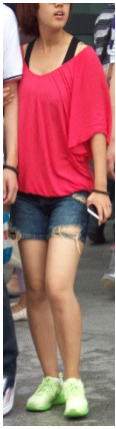
Hue Tone	Chromatic Color										Achromatic Color			
	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	Wt	Gry	Blk	Multi
V	24(3)	6(0.7)	3(0.4)	1(0.1)	5(0.6)	1(0.1)	18(2.2)	23(0.9)		5(0.6)				
S	1(0.1)	2(0.3)	2(0.2)	1(0.1)		1(0.1)	7(0.9)	27(3.4)						
B	4(0.5)		2(0.2)	1(0.1)		7(0.9)	7(0.9)	19(2.4)	3(0.4)	4(0.5)				
P	1(0.1)	1(0.1)	7(0.9)	1(0.1)			3(0.4)	8(1.0)	1(0.1)	3(0.4)	475 (59)	805(100)		
VP	3(0.4)	7(0.9)	15(1.9)	1(0.1)			3(0.4)	3(0.4)	1(0.1)	11(1.4)				
Lgr		12(1.5)	5(0.6)	1(0.1)			1(0.1)			3(0.4)				
L	1(0.1)	2(0.2)	2(0.2)	1(0.1)	1(0.1)		2(0.2)	7(0.9)	1(0.1)					
Gr	1(0.1)	2(0.2)	2(0.2)	1(0.1)					1(0.1)					
DI			1(0.1)						6(0.7)					
Dp	3(0.4)	1(0.1)				1(0.1)		1(0.1)	1(0.1)	1(0.1)				
DK								25(3)	1(0.1)					
Total	38(5)	33(4)	39(4.8)	8(1)	6(0.8)	10(1.3)	41(5.6)	119 (14.8)	9(1.1)	27(2.6)				
Total	330(41)										805(100)			

*The fashion color counted multiply.

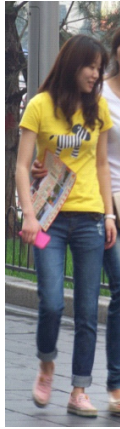
<Table 5> Frequency of Hue and Tone of Street Fashion Colors in Seoul

Hue Tone	Chromatic Color										Achromatic Color			
	R	YR	Y	GY	G	BG	B	PB	P	RP	Wt	Gry	Blk	Multi
V	11(1.4)		1(0.1)				7(0.9)	3(0.4)	1(0.1)	8(1)				
S	1(0.1)	1(0.1)	1(0.1)			3(0.4)	1(0.1)	19(2.4)		2(0.2)				
B	1(0.1)	1(0.1)	1(0.1)	2(0.2)		2(0.2)	13(1.6)	18(2.2)	1(0.1)	5(0.6)				
P	4(0.5)	1(0.1)	4(0.5)	1(0.1)			3(0.4)	8(1)	1(0.1)	3(0.4)	552 (68.7)	803(100)		
VP	6(0.7)	5(0.6)	3(0.4)				4(0.5)	2(0.2)		8(1)				
Lgr	3(0.4)	6(0.7)	2(0.2)	1(0.1)				1(0.1)	1(0.1)					
L	1(0.1)			1(0.1)			4(0.5)	5(0.6)		1(0.1)				
Gr			2(0.2)	2(0.2)	2(0.2)	2(0.2)	1(0.1)	4(0.5)						
DI	1(0.1)						1(0.1)	6(0.7)	1(0.1)					
Dp	1(0.1)				1(0.1)			4(0.5)						
DK				1(0.1)			1(0.1)	37(4.6)	2(0.2)					
Total	29(3.6)	14(1.7)	14(1.7)	8(1)	3(0.4)	7(0.9)	35(4.4)	107 (13.3)	7(0.9)	27(3.4)				
Total	251(31.3)										803(100)			

*The fashion color counted multiply.



<Figure 7>
Blue Jean,
PB & R, Beijing



<Figure 8>
Blue Jean,
PB & Y, Beijing



<Figure 9>
One-piece,
Multi, Beijing



<Figure 10>
One-piece,
Multi, Seoul



<Figure 11>
One-piece
Multi stripe
Beijing



<Figure 12>
One-piece
Mono stripe
Beijing



<Figure 13>
One-piece
Mono stripe
Seoul

5. Conclusions

This thesis makes it an aim to compare the 2012 summer season street fashion colors between Beijing in China and Seoul in Korea by analyzing the 1000 photos of street fashion, in view of the clothing colors of women in their 20-30 years of age.

China have developed unbelievably fast, and established the world huge market, securing the key role in the world economy last 35 years. Since 1979, China has been changed from the world factory to the world consumption market. In this Chinese consumption market, 20-30 years of age women, so called 'after birth 1980' and 'after birth 1990', take a key role for decision making. Especially in the fashion market, women's consumption power is essential and critical in their new atomic family as a decision maker.

The results of this research show that the different street fashion colors between Beijing and Seoul. Seoul showed the 68.7% of Multi and achromatic colors, Beijing 59.0%. It meant that the chromatic colors take place of 31.3% in Seoul and 41.0% in Beijing. The color preference of women in Beijing showed high incidence of Multi colors> Black> Purple Blue> White> Blue> Yellow and Gray> Red> Yellow Red> Red Purple> Blue Green> Purple> Green Yellow> Green in its various colors that is motivated from Chinese traditional color sentiments. Especially, the V tone of Red and Yellow color category certifies that the Red and Yellow color category of traditional Chinese color preferences still are affecting the contemporary color choices. Due to the casual trend in the fashion, the results showed the high frequency of Purple Blue and Blue colors in Beijing.

The color preference of women in Seoul showed high incidence of Multi colors> White> Black> Purple Blue> Gray> Blue> Red> Red Purple> Yellow Red and Yellow> Green Yellow> Blue Green and Purple> Green. Compare to the Beijing color frequency, White showed higher frequency in Seoul. Blue and Purple Blue color category also showed high frequency in Seoul as well as Beijing, due to the jean casual trend in the fashion. However, the multi colors frequency showed exactly same numbers because of prevailing patterned one-piece dresses in summer season normally. Due to the seasonal impact of summer, the most frequent item was one-piece dress with the multi colored gorgeous patterns. Consequently, Beijing women more preferred chromatic colors than Seoul one.

The regional comparative study in Beijing and Seoul might be insufficient to define the tendency of the whole north eastern area of Asia. The further research into the respective Chinese local area would be essential in the long term perspective for helping Korean fashion companies and brands to launch into the Chinese fashion markets.

This result underscores that the Korean fashion brands or company should recognize the differences when they plan to launch a fashion brands in Chinese fashion market and seriously consider the color preferences of Chinese women.

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