

# Influence of Country-of-Origin on American Consumers' Evaluation of Apparel Products Made in Korea

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원산지 표시가 미국소비자의 한국산 의류 제품  
평가에 미치는 영향

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(1994. 9. 1 접수)

## 요 약

본 연구는 원산지 표시(country-of-origin)가 미국 소비자의 한국산 의류상품 평가와 제품 이미지(product image)에 미치는 영향을 고찰하기 위하여 소비자 특성과 원산지 표시의 영향, 의류상품의 제품이미지와와의 관계를 집중 분석하였다.

미국 전역의 성인을 무작위 추출하여 설문지를 우편으로 발송 회수하여 284부의 설문지가 자료 분석에 포함되었다. 본 연구 결과에 의하면 미국 소비자들은 한국과 중국, 한국산 의류제품과 중국산 의류제품의 차이를 거의 느끼지 않는 것으로 나타났다. 미국 소비자들은 한국산 의류와 중국산 의류는 모두 저가의, 위신성이 낮고 대량 생산되어 부분처리가 떨어지는 평범한 제품이라고 인식하고 있었다. 한국산 의류는 유행색의 사용이나 유행성에서는 많이 뒤떨어지지 않으나, 위신성과 부분처리에서 특히 낮게 평가를 받았다.

라이프스타일, 점포유형에 따른 쇼핑빈도, 성별, 교육정도, 소득수준, 인종에 따른 제품 이미지의 차이는 없는 것으로 나타났으나, 연령, 결혼여부, 직업에 따른 차이는 유의하였다. 50세 미만의 사람들이 50세 이상의 연령층보다, 결혼한 사람이 결혼하지 않은 사람보다(독신, 이혼 등) 좀 더 긍정적인 제품이미지를 가지고 있는 것으로 나타났다. 또한, 다른 직업을 가진 사람들보다는 전업주부의 제품이미지가 더 긍정적이었다. 의류제품이 다른 어떤 제품보다도 한국을 대표하는 상품으로 나타나서, 한국산 의류제품의 이미지 향상은 섬유업계만의 문제가 아니라, 다른 산업계와 정부, 단체가 모두 힘을 모아서 노력하여야 할 과제임을 시사하였다.

\*\*본 연구는 1993년도 산학협동재단 지원과제로 수행되었음.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Textile products have been a driving force in exports-led Korean economy, even though the importance of textile exports has decreased in recent years. Nonetheless, textile products accounted for 19.3 percent of total exports from Korea in 1993. 35 percent of textile exports from Korea in the same year were headed to the U.S. market. Therefore, it is of great interest for Korean textile and apparel industries to understand how the U.S. consumers evaluate textile products, particularly Korean-made products.

Previous studies which included products made in Korea showed that Korean products have an overall poor image and the country-of-origin information negatively influences consumers' product evaluation on goods from Korea (Hong & Wyer, 1989; Wall & Liefeld, 1989). Such findings indicate that Korean companies are facing serious obstacles in promoting their exports. However, certain issues with regards to country-of-origin need to be addressed before any strategies can be developed. For example, it is possible that country-of origin influence differs according to some consumer characteristics so that consumers can be "segmented". Thus, characteristics of consumers should be considered before examining the influence of country-of-origin on consumer product evaluation.

In spite of some conflicting results, a considerable amount of research indicated that country-of-origin influences consumers' evaluation of products (Bilkey & Nes, 1982). Country-of-origin may influence consumers' evaluation in direct and indirect ways. Hong & Wyer (1989) noted that country-of-origin not only acts as a product attribute having direct influence on product evaluation, but also activates attention to other concepts and knowledge making consumers to think more extensively and provide a heuristic basis for product judgement. The

main components in this process are consumers, products, and the country where the products are made. Previous research dealt with issues in relation to the components, i.e. how country-of-origin influence may differ according to products or product classes, origin of products, nationality of consumers, and demographic and other characteristics of consumers. Among these issues, the most controversial area is concerned with the demographic characteristics of consumers who may have more extensive use of country-of-origin information (Hong & Toner, 1989).

The main objectives of this study were to examine how American consumers perceive apparels made in Korea and other countries and to determine if consumers of different characteristics may have different attitudes toward products of different nationalities. The results of this study are of great interest to Korean apparel exporters in developing a successful product mix and defining target markets. In view of increasing competition from cheap apparel products from other developing countries, Korean apparel exporters should be concerned about how they can successfully upgrade their products. Furthermore, strategies should be developed that would convince American consumers that Korean-made apparel is no longer cheap and "shoddy" but of high quality. The results of this project provide valuable guides to such successful strategies.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Product Image of Korean Products in Foreign Markets

There have been a few previous studies which included products made in Korea, and indicated how the products were viewed by consumers in foreign countries. Overall, products made in Korea have suffered from poor product image.

Geadeke (1973) surveyed college students in the U.S. to examine how products made in eleven developing countries were perceived. Products made in Korea were ranked seventh among eleven countries for products in general, while food products and textile products ranked fifth, and electronics third among five countries. Kaynak and Cavusgil (1983) conducted a similar survey with Canadian consumers. The respondents rated the quality of products from several countries for products in general, and for different product classes. Products in general from Korea were rated twenty-fourth among products from twenty five countries; electronic items, food products and household goods were ranked lowest among fourteen or fifteen countries; and fashion merchandise was ranked fourteenth among fifteen countries.

College students in the U.S. were asked if they viewed the quality of clothing made in 18 different countries as favorable, unfavorable or neutral (Bergeron and Carner, 1988). Over 70 percent of respondents considered clothing made in France, Italy and the US to have favorable quality, while twelve percent of respondents rated the quality of clothing made in Korea as favorable; 18 percent as unfavorable; and 66 percent rated as neutral. In comparison, 24 percent of respondents rated clothing made in Hong Kong as favorable; 16 percent as unfavorable, and 56 percent as neutral.

In the study by Han (1989) with 116 consumers in the U.S., the country-of-origin image of television sets and automobiles made in Korea were rated 3.92 and 3.80 on 7-point scale, which were much lower than the ratings on the country images of the products made in the U.S. and Japan. Hong and Wyer (1989) reported that in their pretest, electronics made in Korea received an average of 3.56 on 1 to 10 favorableness scale.

Morganosky and Maglaris (1989) conducted a telephone survey using a national probability sample of 325 American consumers. They found

that apparel products from Korea had a "fair but expensive" value image, along with apparel products from China and Costa Rica. Canadian consumers examined a knit shirt and rated it on perceived quality, perceived risk, perceived price and likelihood of purchase (Wall & Liefeld, 1989). In all cases, there were no significant differences between the shirts made in Canada and the U.S., while shirts made in Korea were rated significantly lower.

Han (1991) conducted an extensive study on consumers' attitudes toward Korean products using American and Belgium samples. Korean products in general received, from the US sample, overall average of 3.9 on 1 to 7 image scale. The image rating on Korean apparel was lower (3.7) than on TV's (4.2), personal computers (4.1), automobiles (3.8) or shoes (3.9). It should be mentioned that automobiles and apparel were the most frequent responses when the American respondents were asked about two products which first came to their mind when they thought about Korean-made products.

In a recent study, Park (1993) selected five countries (the U.S., the U.K., Taiwan, Australia and Saudi Arabia) and examined perceived quality and favorableness of products made in the U.S., Japan, Taiwan and Korea. With all respondents pooled, products made in Korea were rated 2.53 in perceived quality and 2.46 on favorableness on a 5-point scale, ranking the lowest among the four countries in his study. However, when separate analyses were conducted for each country, the favorableness and perceived quality of Korean products were rated similar or little higher than products from Taiwan, the U.S., Australia and Saudi Arabia. Differences in perception of product quality were also found depending on the nationalities of respondents. The Korean products were rated most favorably by Saudi Arabians, while the respondents in Great Britain and Taiwan were most critical about the

Korean products.

In summary, the previous studies show that products made in Korea have a poor image and are perceived to have low quality even compared to the countries such as Taiwan, and Hong Kong, or sometimes to the countries whose stages of economic development are lower than Korea. It is a serious challenge for Korean exporters how to upgrade their products and overcome this pre-existing poor image of Korean products. However, there is a sign of hope that the image of products from Korea seems to have improved over time. Also, as Han (1991) found in his study, the image of Korean products has not yet been firmly established in the minds of American consumers so that it may not be as difficult as it is expected to succeed in building a good reputation for Korean products.

## **2. Consumer Characteristics and Country-of-Origin**

Researchers have examined if consumers of different nationality have different attitudes toward products made in specific countries. It has been shown that consumers have a tendency to evaluate their own country's products relatively more favorably than do foreigners (Bilkey & Nes, 1982). Nagashima(1970) compared Japanese and American businessmen in their attitudes toward products made in the USA, Japan, Germany and France. Japanese businessmen did not regard their domestic products as highly as the American counterparts regarded products made in the U.S. Also, it was found that products made in France carry a unique prestige value, even though in both Japan and the U. S., French products had the poorest image. Lillis and Narayama (1974) examined American and Japanese consumers attitudes toward product made in different countries and found significant differences between U.S. consumers and Japanese consumers. Other studies (Johansson, Douglas, and Nonaka, 1985; Forney, Rabolt and Friend, 1993) all

confirmed that consumers of different nationalities have different attitudes toward products made in own country and other countries.

Demographic characteristics of consumers were frequently investigated as source of different attitudes toward products made in other countries. Schooler (1971) reported that older consumers tended to evaluate foreign products more highly than younger consumers. Johansson et. al, (1985) with Japanese and American samples showed mixed results. Older consumers rated less favorably the handling of a car than younger ones, while older consumers gave higher overall ratings on Japanese automobiles. No significant difference due to age was found in the overall ratings on American and German automobiles. The study by Mclean et. al (1986) which included American college students and older women showed that age did not influence the respondents' decision as to whether to buy a domestic blouse or an imported one.

Some studies found that females rated foreign products more favorably than males (Schooler, 1971; Bilkey & Nes, 1982). But, Johansson et. al (1985) found that males rated Japanese cars (imported) more favorably than females. Park (1993) also reported that male consumers in the U.S., the U.K, Taiwan, Australia and Saudi Arabia have attitudes toward products from Korea either more favorable than or as favorable as females. Hong and Toner (1989) disputed the results of previous studies showing sex differences in the use of country-of-origin and its influences. They suggested that the effects of country-of-origin may be a function of the subjects' general knowledge level about the products rather than their gender, and attributed mixed results of the previous studies to the specific products (either male- or female-oriented) used in the studies.

Consumers with higher income and education are generally known to be more favorable toward foreign products (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Park, 1993).

However, no significant differences were found in the study by Mclean, et al. (1986). Park (1993) examined the relationship between occupation and the influence of country-of-origin. He found that white-collar workers in the U.S. have more favorable attitudes toward products made in Korea than blue-collar workers, but there were no significant differences in other countries.

Very few researchers have examined consumer characteristics other than demographic characteristics. Anderson and Cunningham (1972) found that level of dogmatism, conservatism, and status concern were inversely related to preference for foreign products. The study by Wang (cited in Bilkey & Nes, 1982) also suggested the inverse relationship between conservatism and attitudes toward foreign products. Tongberg (cited in Bilkey & Nes, 1982) found that significant differences exist only among high dogmatics in favorableness toward foreign products due to the level of dogmatism.

### III. METHODS AND PROCEDURE

#### 1. Sample

The sample population was randomly selected from a data base of the National Demographics and Lifestyles (NDL). The researchers randomly selected 1,900 names, representing each region of the United States. Questionnaires were sent and a total of 304 questionnaires were returned for a return rate of sixteen percent, which was normal in mail survey without follow-ups. Of those, 284 were

<u>Age</u>	
under 20 year old	2 ( 0.7)
21-29 years old	27 ( 9.7)
30-39 years old	48 (17.2)
40-49 years old	64 (22.9)
50-59 years old	57 (20.4)
60 and over	80 (28.7)
<u>Gender</u>	
Female	195 (69.9)
Male	84 (30.1)
<u>Education</u>	
less than high school	10 ( 3.6)
high school graduate	62 (22.2)
vocational/technical training	21 ( 7.5)
some college	86 (30.8)
college graduate	66 (23.7)
graduate	34 (12.2)
<u>Marital status</u>	
single	30 (10.9)
married	192 (69.6)
widowed, divorced, separated	53 (19.2)
<u>Income</u>	
\$9,999 or less	21 ( 8.0)
\$10,000-\$19,999	30 (11.5)
\$20,000-\$34,999	85 (32.4)
\$35,000-\$49,999	63 (24.0)
\$50,000-\$65,000	35 (13.4)
over \$65,000	28 (10.7)
<u>Occupation</u>	
retired	74 (26.5)
upper management/ administration	14 ( 5.0)
home maker	35 (12.5)
clerical/white collar	27 ( 9.7)
unemployed	4 ( 1.4)
professional	54 (19.4)
middle management/ sales/service	43 (12.2)
blue collar	13 ( 4.7)
student	10 ( 3.6)
other	14 ( 5.0)
<u>Race</u>	
Asian	3 ( 1.1)
White	260 (93.9)
American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut	3 ( 1.1)
Black	10 ( 3.6)
Pacific Islander	1 ( 0.4)

Table 1. Respondent's profiles

Variable	Frequency (percent)
<u>Region</u>	
midwest	73 (26.4)
south	83 (30.0)
west	50 (18.1)
north	71 (25.6)

useable and included in the analysis of the data.

The characteristics of respondents included in the study are presented in Table 1. The sample was fairly evenly distributed in terms of region and those of over thirty years of age. Seventy percent of respondents were female, and over thirty-five percent of them had college or graduate school education. Approximately seventy percent of respondents were married. A little over half of the sample participants had annual incomes between \$20,000 and \$50,000. Twenty-seven percent of the sample were retired, which might be attributed to the fact that the survey was conducted on a voluntary basis and retired people may have more free time than people engaged in occupations. The second largest group of respondents had professional careers. The sample was dominantly white (94 percent).

## 2. Survey Instrument

The first part contained open-ended questions asking respondents to list any and all product categories which came to mind when they observed the following: Made in Italy, Made in the Peoples' Republic of China, Made in the Republic of Korea and Made in the U.S.A. The second part used a semantic differential scale modified from a survey conducted by Nagashima (1970). From the pretests, thirteen bi-polar adjectives were chosen to evaluate apparel products made in Italy, the United States, South Korea and China. To eliminate bias and avoid any kind of halo effect, the order of the countries and bi-polar adjectives were scrambled. The third part of the survey included fifteen lifestyle questions to ascertain the activities, interests, and opinions of the sample population. The final portion of the questionnaire asked for demographic information and questions regarding how often they shopped in a discount store, department store, specialty store or an off-price store.

## 3. Methods of Analysis

Analysis of variance was separately performed to test the differences in thirteen semantic differentials pertaining to apparel product image according to source countries. Duncan's multiple range tests were used to test the differences in group means. In order to examine the relationship between country-of-origin and characteristics of consumers, a regression model was constructed and estimated by ordinary least square methods. In order to investigate if consumers with different life styles have different product image, life style questions were factor analyzed and four factors were drawn as a result. The factor loadings on each factor are listed in Appendix 1. Factor 1 may be named as independent leadership, while Factor 2 represented shopping behavior seeking mainly value. Factor 3 indicated strong orientation to fashion and Factor 4 adventurous traits. Four factors representing the life styles and other dummy variables which were constructed to represent demographic information were included in the regression model as follows:

$$I = b_0 + b_1CNTRY1 + b_2CNTRY2 + b_3CNTRY3 + b_4FACTOR1 + b_5FACTOR2 + b_6FACTOR3 + b_7FACTOR4 + b_8DISTORE + b_9DEPSTORE + b_{10}SPESTORE + b_{11}OFFSTORE + b_{12}AGE1 + b_{13}AGE2 + b_{14}AGE3 + b_{15}SEX + b_{16}EDU1 + b_{17}EDU2 + b_{18}MARI + b_{19}INCOME1 + b_{20}INCOME2 + b_{21}OCCUP1 + b_{22}OCCUP2 + b_{23}OCCUP3 + b_{24}OCCUP4 + b_{25}RACE + V$$

where I=overall product image as a sum of thirteen semantic differential scales;

CNTRY1=1 if country is USA; CNTRY2=1 if Italy; CNTRY3=1 if China;

FACTOR1, 2, 3, 4,=factor scores on each factor drawn from life style measures;

DISTORE=frequencies of shopping in a discount store;

DEPSTORE=frequencies of shopping in a department store;

SPESTORE=frequencies of shopping in specialty store;  
 OFFSTORE=frequencies of shopping in a off-price store;  
 AGE1=1 if age is 39 or less; AGE2=1 if 40-49; AGE3 =1 if 50-59;  
 SEX=1 if male, 0 otherwise;  
 EDU1=1 if respondents have had vocational/ technical training or some college education;  
 EDU2=1 if college or higher education;  
 MARI=1 if married, 0 otherwise;  
 INCOME1=1 if income is \$20,000-34,999; INCOME2 =1 if \$35,000-49,000; INCOME3=1 if \$50,000 or over;  
 OCCUP1=1 if retired; OCCUP2=1 if upper management or professional; OCCUP3=1 if homemaker; OCCUP4=1 if clerical or middle management  
 RACE=1 if white, 0 otherwise;  
 b0 to b25=parameters, and  
 V=error terms.

**IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The respondents answered to open-ended questions asking which product(s) came to their mind if they heard made in Korea, USA, Italy, or China. Table 2 lists the four products which were most

**Table 2.** Products frequently associated with specific countries

Korea	USA	Italy	China
clothes (134)	cars (207)	shoes (124)	clothes (122)
toys (36)	clothes (174)	clothes (87)	toys (39)
electronics (30)	appliances (83)	cars (54)	shoes (0)
shoes (32)	furniture (22)	leather goods (52)	dishes (18)
none (57)	none (6)	none (38)	none (62)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are the number of responses

frequently mentioned by the respondents and the frequencies of those who said they could not think of any. Korea and China are similar in the sense that it was clothes which were mentioned far more frequently than any other products, and 57 and 62 respondents said they could not think of any products in association with Korea and China, respectively. Toys and shoes were also mentioned with Korea and China. Electronics was mentioned 30 times for Korea, whereas dishes was the category

**Table 3.** Average scores of product image by countries

Semantic Differentials	Korea	USA	Italy	China
Expensive***	3.02	4.42	5.74	2.87
-inexpensive	C	B	A	C
exclusive***	2.56	3.53	5.51	2.64
-common	C	B	A	C
careful***	3.05	4.37	5.17	2.95
-not so careful	C	B	A	C
handmade***	2.47	2.56	4.98	2.96
-mass produced	B	B	A	B
large choice***	3.73	5.27	3.81	3.57
-limited choice	B	A	B	B
reasonably priced***	5.19	4.29	2.94	5.16
-unreasonably priced	A	B	C	A
more for young people*	4.56	4.33	4.59	4.46
-more for old people	A	B	A	AB
recognizable***	2.91	5.55	4.35	2.70
-unrecognizable	C	A	B	C
more for women***	4.42	4.10	4.06	4.45
-more for men	A	B	B	A
upper class***	3.02	4.19	5.39	2.84
-lower class	C	B	A	C
uses updated colors***	4.02	5.36	5.19	3.91
-does not use updated colors	B	A	A	B
good quality***	3.32	5.36	5.41	3.36
-poor quality	B	A	A	B
fashionable***	3.96	5.40	5.71	3.87
-unfashionable	C	B	A	C

\*\*\* : significant at p=0.01

\* : significant at p=0.10

Note: Means with the same letter are not significantly different.

associated with China. Cars and clothes were products dominant in the minds of respondents as products made in the USA. Italy, on the other hand, seem to have several products representing the country. Shoes were the product most frequently mentioned in association with Italy. Clothes, cars and leathers goods were also frequently mentioned.

Thirteen semantic differentials were used to measure different aspects of image of products from four countries. The results of analysis of variance and Duncan's multiple range tests are shown in Table 3. Significant differences among the countries were shown at  $p=0.01$  in twelve semantic differentials, and at  $p=0.1$  in one differential.

Overall, apparel made in Italy had the most positive product image followed by apparel made in the USA. Product image of apparel from Korea and China did not differ in any of the thirteen differentials. Apparel from Italy was perceived as more expensive, exclusive, carefully made, upper class and fashionable than apparel from any other countries. Apparel from the USA received the next highest ratings in those differentials.

Apparel made in Italy seemed to stand out as distinctively handmade as opposed to apparel from three other countries which was perceived as mass produced. Apparel from the USA was rated high on large variety of choices, which seemed to be natural since consumers should have more choices in domestically produced apparel than in imported apparel.

Apparel from Korea and China had high ratings as reasonably priced, whereas apparel from Italy was rated the lowest as most expensive. There was not a big difference in the more for young people-old people differential among four countries. Apparel from all four countries was perceived as being more for young people. Apparel from Korea and China was more associated with women than apparel from the USA and Italy. This result may indicate that mainly women's clothes have been imported to the

USA from Korea and China, whereas more diverse items from the USA and Italy have been available to American consumers. Apparel from both Italy and the USA were rated high on use of updated colors and quality.

In summary, apparel from Italy seemed to have good product image, particularly in style and prestige related aspects. Apparel made in the USA was perceived as offering large choices, good quality but not being exclusive or handmade. Apparel

**Table 4.** Regression results: Product image and consumer characteristics

Variables	Coefficients	T-value
Intercept	44.46	10.17***
CNTRY1	11.57	7.10***
CNTRY2	12.79	7.45***
CNTRY3	-4.03	-2.42**
FACTOR1	0.74	1.19
FACTOR2	0.74	1.14
FACTOR3	0.49	0.82
FACTOR4	-0.63	-1.08
DISTORE	-0.21	-0.27
DEPSTORE	-0.68	-0.95
SPESTORE	0.69	0.88
OFFSTORE	0.86	1.12
AGE1	5.23	2.19**
AGE2	5.65	2.41**
AGE3	3.67	1.63
SEX	1.41	1.01
EDU1	-1.81	-1.19
EDU2	-2.00	-1.20
MARI	2.31	1.75*
INCOME1	-1.48	-0.93
INCOME2	-2.03	-1.12
INCOME3	-3.01	-1.50
OCCUP1	1.69	0.63
OCCUP2	-0.21	-0.10
OCCUP3	3.81	1.66*
OCCUP4	-1.54	-0.79
RACE	0.14	0.06

\*\*\* : significant at  $\alpha=0.01$

\*\* : significant at  $p=0.05$

\* : significant at  $p=0.10$



from Korea was not distinguishable from apparel from China. Both countries had poor product image in apparel. Apparel from Korea and China was perceived primarily as cheap, mass produced, unrecognizable, low prestige and not carefully made merchandise.

The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 4. The regression model was significant at  $p=0.001$  ( $F$ -statistic=7.775). Adjusted  $R^2$  was 0.4274. As expected from analysis of variance, the coefficients of country variables representing the USA and Italy were positive indicating positive product image of those countries. CENTRY3 which had a value of one in the case of apparel from China was significant with a negative coefficient. The result shows that apparel from China has a significantly lower product image than apparel from the USA, Italy, and Korea. None of the variables representing life style, shopping frequencies, gender, education, income and race were significant. Among the age groups, people under 50 years old had a more positive product image than people fifty years old or over. This result contrast to the results from previous studies which found that older people tended to have more favorable attitudes than younger people.

Married people had a more positive product image than people who are not married. Occupations did not explain much of the variances in product image, except that home makers had a more positive product image than people with other occupations.

## V. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Data for this project were collected from a mail survey sent to consumers all over the USA. When the respondents were asked about products that came to their minds when they saw "made in" label of Korea, USA, Italy, or China; clothes were the product most often mentioned for Korea and China. Cars

were mentioned most often with the USA, and shoes with Italy. Almost the same product categories were frequently associated with Korea and China, except the electronics which were mentioned only with Korea.

Korea and China also seemed to have quite a similar product image of apparel, as being inexpensive but low in prestige and mass produced merchandise. Apparel made in Italy, on the other hand, was perceived most favorably among the four countries in all semantic differentials of product image except in price and choices. Apparel made in the USA was positioned between Italy and Korea and China in almost all aspects. Apparel made in the USA was perceived as better in recognizability and offering larger choices than apparel made in Italy.

The results also showed some relationship between overall product image and characteristics of consumers. The USA and Italy were shown to have a more positive product image than China or Korea, while China was shown to have significantly lower product image than other countries including Korea. Life styles, shopping frequencies in different types of stores, gender, education, income, and race were not significantly related to product image that consumers have for apparel from different countries. In contrast, age was significantly related to perception of product image so that people under 50 years old were shown to have more positive product image than others. Married people compared to those who are not (single, separated and, so on) rated more favorably on product image. Among different occupations, home makers were the only category that was significantly related to product image ratings. The home maker had a more positive product image than other groups.

The results from this project seem to paint a gloomy picture for Korean apparel exporters and at the same time suggesting there are silver linings behind the clouds that they should find. Apparel made in Korea has an overall poor image in the US

market. There are distinctive differences in the minds of American consumers between apparel from Korea and the USA or Italy, whereas there seems to be no or little difference between apparel made in Korea and China. As a matter of fact, participants in the pre-test showed that they were not able to distinguish Korea from other Asian countries such as Hong Kong and Taiwan. Considering that China has a definite advantage of low wage compared to Korea, it is alarming news that apparel from Korea is perceived as poor as that made in China. Therefore, it is clear from this research that the first step for Korean apparel exporters is to develop strategies to separate the images of apparel made in Korea from those made in other developing countries including China.

It has been often suggested that Korean apparel producers should upgrade their products in order to overcome the competition from low-wage countries. The results of this study indicate that Korean apparel is perceived as particularly poor in the aspects related to workmanship (3.05 on carefully made, and 2.47 on handmade) in addition to the aspect related to prestige. In comparison, Korean apparel was rated relatively fair on fashionability (3.96) and use of updated colors (4.02). Therefore, it can be recommended that details and construction is the area to pay great attention to in upgrading Korean apparel.

It was shown that a few characteristics of consumers are related to overall product images of apparel from various countries. Product image did not differ significantly according to the lifestyle, types of store where people shop, gender, education, income, and race. But, younger (under 50 years old), married and homemakers were shown to have a more positive product image than people who are not. Thus, it may be easier to promote Korean apparels to these groups of consumers. However, the results are not conclusive if significant differences exist among people of different charac-

teristics including life style as well as demographic characteristics. More research is needed to have a clear understanding of the relationship between consumer characteristics and country-of-origin influences on product image.

Limitations of this study should be mentioned. Data were collected only from the people who responded to a mail survey. Differences between respondents and non-respondents were not investigated. In addition, it was not possible to fully investigate the relation between race and product image due to the fact that most of the respondents happened to be whites. More comprehensive sampling methods with increased sample size should be used in future research. Finally, overall product image was calculated as the sum of semantic differential scores, which ignores multi-dimensional nature of the differential scales. Some scales may not be well suited for linear positive-negative scale. Future research may be directed to ascertain the components and the structure of the components which constitute overall product image.

Finally, it should be pointed that clothes were the product that American consumers associated most often with Korea. It is very likely that product image of apparel spills over to other products. Thus, it should be not only apparel and textile industries, but also other related industries, government and other interested parties who should be concerned about problems that apparel made in Korea has in the US market. A wide coalition and concerted efforts are needed in improving product image of Korean apparel and developing successful strategies to increase textile exports.

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Appendix 1. Factor loadings on life style factors

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
I am more independent than most people.	0.7675	-0.0760	-0.1182	0.1529
I like to be considered a leader.	0.7618	-0.0662	-0.1824	0.0790
I think I have a lot of personal ability	0.7346	0.1926	0.0558	0.1616
I think I have more self-confidence than most people.	0.7220	-0.0918	0.1808	0.0403
I shop for lot of "specials".	0.0514	0.8833	0.0137	-0.1160
I usually watch the advertisements for announcements of sales.	-0.0404	0.7208	0.1377	-0.1160
I find myself checking the prices in the grocery store even for small items	-0.0736	0.7181	-0.1776	0.1565
A person can save a lot of money by shopping around for bargains.	0.0211	0.6794	0.0881	-0.0582
I usually have one or more outfits that are of the very latest style.	0.2016	0.0709	0.7780	-0.0107
An important part of my life and activities is dressing smartly.	0.3188	0.0946	0.7139	0.0008
When I must choose between the two I usually dress for fashion, not for comfort	-0.0107	-0.1400	0.6133	0.2603
I often try the latest hairdo styles when they change.	-0.1376	0.0950	0.6022	0.3002
When I see a new brand on the shelf I often buy it just to see what it's like.	0.0045	0.0100	0.1223	0.8248
I often try new brands before my friends and neighbors do.	0.3233	-0.010	0.1540	0.7655
I like to try new and different things hairdo styles when they change.	0.4354	0.1124	0.1900	0.6022