Images Positioning of Women's Formal Wear Brands
− Tuning in the three department stores in Daejon −

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze and to position the clothing images of women's formal wear brands carried by at least two department stores in Daejon, for providing data for a basic marketing strategy for fashion manufacturers and distributors.

The results from the study were as follows ;

The brand that showed the highest classic image was 'BCBG'(83.6%), the brand that showed the highest feminine image was 'Obzee' (80.2%), the brand that showed the highest character image was 'Doho' (84.1%), and the brand that showed the highest mannish image was 'F.Station' (64.1%).

On the brands image positioning map, brands, such as 'Deco', 'Mine', 'Time', and 'Anne Klein', lying on or near the point of intersection (where the vertical and horizontal axes meet) showed 4 types. They were 'smart & chic cluster', 'charming & luxury cluster', 'character elegance cluster', and 'sportive elegance cluster' that showed compound images. These clusters would be differentiated from young casual lines by emphasizing the brands' shape and cut, higher quality fabrics and materials, and elegant and graceful colors.

Analysis of target ages and tweed jacket prices for brands carried by at least two department stores showed that the target was between 23 and 50, and that the prices range from 198,000 won to 460,000 won.

Key Words : Image Positioning, Women's Formal Wear Brands, Retail Merchandising

I. Introduction

Fashion trends are a reflection on society New trends and customs reflect changes in social phenomena, which in turn reflect the people's feelings and views. People purchase, possess, exercise, and crave things, and express themselves not only via words, demeanor, and behavior, but also by what they wear. Hence, a society's cultural and aesthetic beliefs reside within lines, colors, fabrics, silhouettes, details, and brands.

Korea's ready-to-wear market started in the early 1970s via the participation of major companies. In the thirty-odd year since, many brands were created to supply customers with the kinds of clothes they demanded. In the 1980s an explosive economic development brought forth life-style changes, and clothes lines became increasingly fractured to meet new demands in the areas of sports, leisure, and overseas travel. The new millennium has seen the accelerated development of the casual clothes market, however, the women's formal market is showing signs of weakening, relatively speaking. In order to counter these trends, the women's formal wear brands have been setting lower target ages, or introducing a younger, more casual look to their clothes, and repositioning themselves as casual formal brands.

Even ten years ago, women in their forties tended to wear solemn-looking formal wear. Women currently in their forties, however, heavily invest in their health and in their bodies, and have different demands. They are loath to wear clothes that make them look old, and are major consumers of formal clothes that have a breath of freshness. The fashion code for today's women in their forties are acutely different from past generations, due to the adoption of casual clothes in the workplace and the promotion of women in the workplace. At the Shinsegye department store, the brand On&On, targeted towards people in their teens, sells one third of their merchandise to women in the thirties and forties[1], and department stores are changing their configurations to cater to these women. In simple terms, the department stores are configuring their merchandise towards brand images that are preferred by their customers.

The current research, in order to provide department store positioning and operating status on national brands on women's formal wear, does the following ; 1) examines the concepts of a national brands, women's formal wear, and delves into the theoretical background of brands, 2) analyzes the current operational status of department stores' women's formal wear brands, 3) categorizes the images of women's formal wear brands on map.

The current research will be used as a basic reference by fashion companies and their distributors for formulating their marketing and operations strategies, in accordance to the view that brand image acts as a coupler between consumers and enterprises.

II. Theoretical Backgrounds

Today, the individualistic consumers is prevailing in the society[2], and are ready to purchase clothes that are styled according to their tastes and preferences, hence, fashion manufacturers and distributors must focus on creating a different, impressive brand images reflecting end-users' tastes and preferences, and capitalize on the difference between one company's product with the rest of the market. One of the factors that governs the product's success in the market is design, that is the creation of clothing images, because the individualistic consumers are willing to purchase the higher value attached to design over functionality in fashion products[3-4]. As it were, it

is the most important things for fashion manufacturers and distributors to crasp the end-users' tastes and preferences, and to visualize them.

Most of the department stores in Korea differentiate each floor of their store with merchandise according to age, gender, price, end-use, and product quality. Each floor gets its own concept, and brands are stocked to match this concept. In the case of Daejon's three biggest department stores, the first floor features sundry fashion goods, cosmetics, and luxury goods. The second floor is composed of young casual clothes. The third floor features national brands for women's formal wear. The fourth floor showcases designer's brands for women's formal wear and imported luxury brands. The national brands are the less expensive and the more popular than the designer's brands. However, this research covers only national brands for women's formal wear.

The following chapter is an overview of the theoretical background on brands for analyzing brand images and for examining the current status on women's formal wear brands in the three biggest department stores in Daejon.

1. Conception of Brands

1) Definition of Brands

Brands are essentially product identifiers (goods or services) used to differentiate one particular product from other similar products in the market. Brands can include a particular name, expression, design, symbol, and other specific identifiers. In general, a brand is a legally backed trademark[5]-[10].

Brands are legally protected in order to instill credibility in the manufacturer's products, leading to its future development, and to protect the consumer. More specifically, brands allow the following: Product differentiation from other similar products in the market, identification of manufacturer, giving credit to the manufacturer for its products, as a form of quality assurance. Furthermore, they can accelerate sales and have social significance (social status, etc).

Consumers tend to view brands as a indirect form of quality assurance and as a source of information on a particular product. Due to this reason, companies will spend an inordinate amount of capital in order to give a certain favorable image to their brands.

2) Brand Images

Brand images refer to the physical characteristics of a product, plus whatever subjective feelings a consumer may have about that brand[11]-[12]. Brands imply a certain quality inherent in the product, and are a big factor in the decision making of a purchaser. Furthermore, as consumers select products not based on functionality or price, but on the perceived value of the image itself, the consumer's purchase decision is beginning to have an impact on product strategies.

The distributor can divide products according to brands image in order to help consumers in their purchasing activities, and pressure manufacturers to maintain the quality at constant levels in order to increase the customers' preferences.

Fashion products have an image all of their own, essentially in its design. An image is formed by the combination of lines, color, and material. Tailored suits made of black tweed have a masculine image, while pink-tinted silk one-piece dresses project a romantic image. Hence, understanding the image of a particular product is essential for manufacturers, distributors, and consumers. Images are reflective of a person's sensitivities, and consumers prefer products which have images that reflect their own self-image. It wouldn't be unfair to say that a product's image and design are a method of communication.

Lines, colors, materials and other factors are methods of symbolizing certain cultural features into clothes, such as social status, gender, age, occupation, life style, race, individual attitudes and values[13]. In other words, the certain combination of lines, colors, and fabrics can exude images that range from classic, avant-garde, modern, ethnic, or some combination of these properties, etc.

The current research employed the Jakida and Hayashi image classification scheme[14-15], and the 1999-2004 World Collection report[16] for obtaining and defining the eight major images which are classic, modern, mannish, sportive, new avant-garde(character), ethnic, feminine, and elegance images.

3) Image Positioning

The multi-dimensional scale method is widely used to compare and analyze the images of brands. It is a method of positioning each brand and comparing it to the standard dimension to visually identify the brand image.

For example, a company can establish a distinct product and brand strategy by comparing and analyzing the other company's brand image that is positioned in the identical dimension. The brand image can be compared and analyzed by measuring the relative distances of those brands on multiple dimensions. The brands that are positioned closely might be direct competitors. Also the company can initiate a differentiated promotion strategy as the positions of the other ones are exposed to it.

This study positioned the 8 images mentioned above on multiple dimensions with 5 point scales to classify the similar brands into clusters.

2. National Brands & Women's Formal Wear

1) National Brand (NB)

National brand means the manufacturer's label that is attached to the finished good by the manufacturer. National brand wins a high brand recognitions as it is mass-producted, mass-circulated, and advertised through the mass-media that targets the national market. National brand is a mass-fashion product, including almost every domestic clothing brands. There are more kinds of brands, such as private brand which is attached by the distributor, license brand, designer's brand and its second line brand. Designer's brand is a brand that produces the designer's originality, confidence, high fashion, and high-priced products.
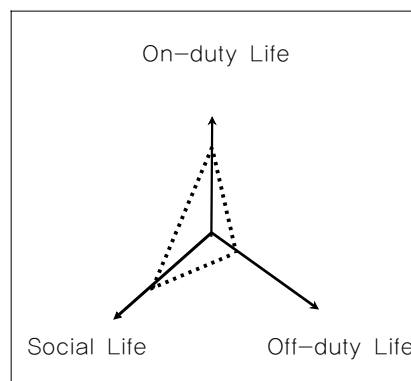
2) Women's Formal Wear

〈Table 1〉 shows the classification of clothes by T.P.O.(Time, Place, and Occasions). Formal Wear means one of the official wear on-duty life space which is needed while performing the public tasks such as meeting or working, and it is standardized in style and made of luxurious materials. On the other hand, the casual wear refers to comfortable clothes that can be worn off-duty life space.

However, with the changes of life style, the formal wear have been increasingly simplifying, also, as shown on 〈Figure 1〉, the formal wear have been increasingly covering mostly on-duty and social life spaces, and slightly off-duty life space, in order to counter new trends in the areas of sports, leisure, and overseas travel.

This study considers only the national brands for women's formal wear.

〈Table 1〉 Classification of Clothing in T.P.O.

T.P.O.		Classification of Clothing	
On-duty Life	Official Wear	Business Wear	Business Wear
		Social Wear	Afternoon dress, Cocktail dress Afterfive, Party dress
		Formal Wear	Semi-Formal Wear
Off-duty Life	Casual Wear	Town Wear	Town Wear
		Campus Wear	Campus Wear
		Leisure Wear	Active Sports Wear, Resort Wear
		Home Wear	Working Wear, Lounge Wear

〈Figure 1〉 Life Spaces of Formal Wear

3) Prospects of Women's Formal Wear Market

The main customer of the women's formal wear usually in their 30s to 40s. But as the social environment changes, so does the dress code in the target market. The image of the formal wear for women in their forties is changing as their preferences keep changing to privacy, lightness, and brightness.

And due to the growth of married customers in their thirties who want to maintain their youth, the market for missy wear will expand. The major shift in the market is the change of preference of the style from age-confined to ageless dresses as the women in their forties started to work on their body to maintain their health. In order to cope with these trends, fashion manufacturers and distributors must lead a more segmented market of women's formal wear.

III. Research Methods

This study is based on both surveys and field work, and has been worked on by the following procedures :

1. Consideration of Brands & Women's Formal Wear

Documents, internet sites[16], and promotional information related to brands have been used for setting the theoretical background of brand conception, image positioning, and describing the prospects of women's formal wear market.

2. Choosing the Women's Formal Wear Brands

This study surveyed the current state of women's formal wear brands, from September 1st to 30th, 2003, in the Lotte, Timeworld, and Say department stores in Daejon. The department stores had been chosen not only because they covered multiple brands, but also because they were more convenient to contact.

The women's formal wear brands were extracted from the brands that were carried by at least two of the Lotte, Timeworld, and Say department stores in Daejon. The survey excluded designer brands and only covered the national brands.

3. Analyzing the Brands Image and Making the Image Map

Sixteen panels (fashion distributors) perceiving the brands, participated in the image analysis. The survey panels were required to describe the brand images by using the eight images in a free descriptive way. They were required to indicate the degree of clothing images of each brand in the percentile rank(total images=100%).

The average was obtained from the highest percentage image among the images of each brand evaluated by 16 panels, for figuring out the intuitive clothing Image of each brands. And the highest scores of each images were used as the guide-scores on the multidimensional space(8 spaces) divided by 4 pairs(Classic-New avant-garde, Elegance-Sportive, Modern-Ethnic, and Feminine-Mannish) of opposite image groups.

First of all, fashion creation is generated from the desires of the newness and sex connoted in human beings. A pair of 'New avant garde—Classic image' indicating the degree of the newness position on vertical axis, a pair of 'Feminine—Mannish image' indicating the characteristics of the sex position on horizontal axis, and elegance image positions on between classic and feminine image, and modern image positions on between classic and mannish image. The vertical and horizontal axises were used as the guide-lines on the multi-dimensional space(8 spaces) divided by 4 pairs of opposite image groups. The point of intersection of the vertical and horizontal axises on 5 point scale is zero.

The similarity among brand Images can be found by examining the relative distances on the multidimensional space(8 spaces). And the similar brands might be classified to specific product families of images through clusters[17].

4. Making the Price and Age Map

The vertical axis indicates price and horizontal axis indicates the target ages, and this positioning map is used for figuring out the distribution of price and target of each brand.

IV. Data Analysis

1. Current Status on Formal Wear Brands in the 3 Department Stores in Daejon

The Lotte, Timeworld, and Say department stores in Daejon divided their merchandise according to age, occasion, price, and image. The second floor has been on display clothes for young women, the third floor has been on display women's formal wear, and high-priced women's formal wear on the fourth floor. In the case of the Say department store, the first and second floors have been on display clothes for young women, with the third floor dedicated to women's formal wear. The display of young women's clothes in the first and second floors of the Say department store was in stark contrast with the Lotte, Timeworld department stores. Forty-three national brands are present in Lotte, fifty-one in Timeworld, and twenty-four in Say.

The status on formal wear brands being examined in this research are as follows. In the Lotte department store, styles are divided into character/trendy, career, and traditional clothing according to image, target age, occasion, and price, and these clothes are on display on the third floor. This is also true for the Timeworld department stores, though their divisions are on the ling of character/trendy, career, and missy elegance clothing. Say department store feature national and designer brands on the third floor of their store, but the actual number of different brands is half of what the two above stores have on offer. The present status on women's formal wear brands at the three major stores in Daejon can be summarized as seen in 〈Table 2〉.

〈Table 2〉 Current status on Women's Formal Wear Brands
in the 3 department stores in Daejon

D*	Character/Trendy	Career	Traditional	Miss Elegance	T**
L	Anivee F, Arte, Deco, Doho, Jiggot, Ecole de Paris, Elle, Lynn, Michaa, Mine, Minimum, MojoSphine, Obzee, Reneevon, Renoma, Satin, Tabby, Telegraph, Une,	Anne Klein, Beart, Bestibelli, Blouson, Creson, Demian, Flamingo, Givy, Izzatbaba, Johanex, Kuho, Kup, Prendang, She'smiss, Solezia, VeradiTouch, Time, Uva	B.C.B.G, BeanpoleLadies Keith, PoloRalph Lauren Tommy Hilfiger White Horse		43
T	Anivee F, Beart, Deco, Doho, Kuho, Michaa, Karra, Kup Latulle, MCM, Minimum, MojoSphine, Obzee, Renoma, Reneevon, Satin, Telegraph, YK038,	A La mode, Bestibelli, Blupepe, Carte Blanche, Clemonte, Creson Compagnia, DKNY, Emcee, F.Station, Izzatbaba, Joinus, Kanaleports, Kup, Marie Claire, Mine, Resume, She'smiss, Solezia, Stepanel, Time, Uva, VeradiTouch, YSB		B.C.B.G, BeanpoleLadies Givy, Keith Micmac, PoloRalph Lauren Tommy Hilfiger White Horse	51
S	Damoo, Dobababoo Minimum, itMichaa, Telegraph, Zizou	Cheraff, Chrishapper, Diaprer, Emcee, F.Station, Gudicelli, Idem,I,nees, Lancy, Kanaleports,Messy, Ophir, Resume, Sordino, Zinos,	Marks& Spencer, Sisil&Nalsil, White Horse		24

* name of deparment stores(Lotte, Timeworld, and Say), ** number of total brands

2. Image Analysis of Women's Formal Wear Brands

Women's Formal Wear Brands were chosen from the brands that were carried by at least two of the three department stores featured in 〈Table 2〉. The average was obtained from the highest percentage image among the images of each brand evaluated by 16 panels, for figuring out the intuitive clothing Image of each brands. As summarized in 〈Table 3〉, the brands that showed the highest classic image was Bcbg (83.6%); the brand that showed the highest feminine image was Obzee (80.2%); the brand that showed the highest character image was Doho (84.1%); and the brand that showed the highest mannish image was F.station (64.1%).

〈Table 3〉 Image Analysis of Brands

Brand Name	the highest image of the 8 Images	(%)*/ p**=16
Anivee F	Feminine	65.3
Anne Klein	Modern	58
B.C.B.G	Classic	83.6
Beart	Feminine	65.4
Bestibelli	Modern	60.3
Compagnia	Classic	70
Creson	Elegance	60.3
Deco	Classic, Modern	52
Doho	New Avantgarde	84.1
Emcee	Elegance	75
F. Station	Mannish	64.1
Givy	Feminine	75
Izzatbaba	Elegance	60.2
Kana Lepots	Sportive	80.4
Keith	Classic	83.1
Kup	Ethnic, New Avantgarde	50.6
Kuho	Modern	70
Michaa	Feminine	75.2
Mine	Feminine	54.2
Minimum	New Avantgarde	60.3
Mojo Sphine	New Avantgarde	75
Obzee	Feminine	80.2
Reneevon	Feminine	60
Renoma	Modern, Sportive	65
Resume	Classic	75
Satin	Feminine,	75.6
She'smiss	Elegance	75
Solezia	Elegance	75.7
Stepanel	Sportive	86.2
Telegraph	New Avantgarde	79.4
Time	Classic	52
Tommy Hilfiger	Sportive	83.6
Uva	Elegance	80
Veladi Touch	Modern	70.3
White Horse	Ethnic, Feminine	52.2

* The average of the highest image(%) by 16 panels**.

3. Image Positioning Map

The highest scores of each images were used as the guide-scores on the multidimensional space(8 spaces) divided by 4 pairs of opposite image groups, they are Classic-New avant-garde, Elegance-Sportive, Modern-Ethnic, and Feminine-Mannish.

First of all, fashion creation is generated from the desires of the newness and sex in human beings. As showed in 〈Figure 2〉, the positioning on the vertical and horizontal axises derives from the insight that women's formal wear are essentially composed of two dimensions. The horizontal axis, indicating whether the image is masculine or feminine, is the basis for fashion concepts, i.e., the departure of fashion origin. The vertical axis, indicating whether the image is classic or new avant-garde (character, trendy), depicts innovation, i.e., the degree of newness. The point of intersection of the vertical and horizontal axises on five point scale is zero.

And, the similarity among brand images can be found by examining the relative distances on the multidimensional space(8 spaces). And the similar brands might be classified to specific product families of images through clusters [17].

For example, the brands from the position of 'Deco', via elegant image to modern image were considered as a smart & chic cluster, also the brands from the position of 'Mine', via ethnic image to elegant image were considered as a charming & luxury cluster, the brands from the position of 'Time' via ethnic image to sportive image were considered as a character elegance cluster, and the brands from the position of 'Anne Klein' brand via sportive image to modern image were considered as a sportive elegance

cluster.

The images within each clusters(triangular area) would be further developed by transforming and mixing silhouettes, details, colors, and materials essentially.

1) Smart & Chic Cluster

The smart & chic cluster which career women select first has essentially a classic image, with elegance image to its left and a modern image to its right on map. Modern yet elegance fashion products, specific characteristics include a glimpse of silhouette and a conservative perception. Yet, a breath of boldness and delicacy in the patterns and details are being incorporated into this image.

2) Charming & Luxury Cluster

Charming & Luxury Cluster which is focused on feminine images, yet incorporating elegance, ethnic, and country images, indicates brands from the position of 'Mine' via ethnic image to elegant image on map, expresses modern and sexy images, and is geared towards highly sensible, highly cultured women. This particular fashion line has transformed the conventional hard and conservative image into a free and rhythmical image full of life.

The late 1990s witnessed the winding down of simple, low priced, and casual styles, and was replaced by individualistic, avant-garde styles. The Charming & Luxury Cluster is now the representative style of women in their thirties. This line exemplifies confidence and grace, and is oriented towards elegance.

〈Figure 2〉 Image Positioning Map

3) Character Elegance Cluster

Character elegance cluster is brands from the position of 'Time' via ethnic image to sportive image on map. This cluster focuses on creating character images, and incorporating ethnic, country images, sportive images, and harmonizing a person's personality and current trends for a very strong individualistic image. A new avant-garde image that seems to court future innovative trends expresses an innovative image elegantly.

4) Sportive Elegance Cluster

Sportive elegance cluster is brands from the position of 'Anne Klein' via sportive image to modern image on map, focused on mannish images, yet incorporating sportive, image, and modern image. Sportive elegance is expressed with a light, smart-looking townwear, very light and a new style that overflows with creativity.

It is important to effectively use the image map in order to create a distinct image in today's mature marketplace. In the case of 'Deco', following the

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〈Table 4〉 Positioning Map on Price and Target

Price(₩)/ Age	23	25	27	29	31	33	35	37	39	41	43	45	50
460000—		Kuho, Obzee, Reneevon, Time											
440000—459000	Doho												
420000—439000	Anivee F, BCBG												
400000—429000	Michaa, Mine, Mojo												
360000—399000	Keith, Satin, Telegraph												
340000—359000	Deco, AnneKlein												
320000—339000			Kup, Uva										
300000—319000			She'smiss, Solezia										
280000—299000			Kanaleports										
260000—279000	Tommy Hilfiger												
198000—239000	Bestibelli, Compagna												

axis connects it with the classic image, while 'Mine' connects with the feminine image. 'Time' connects with the character image and 'Anne Klein' with the mannish image. The addition of details, colors, fabrics, and patterns allows the design of new images. It is important to predict what the consumer trends will be with the improvement in standards of living, and to create products for a new market.

4. Positioning Map on Price and Target

Analysis of target ages and jacket prices for brands carried by at least two department stores showed that the target is between 23 and 50 years of age, and that the prices range from 198,000 won to 460,000 won. The highest priced brands were 'Kuho', 'Obzee', 'Reneevon', 'Time', and the brands with highest target age were 'Kup' with a trendy, ethnic image due to the combination of patterns, materials, and colors, and 'Uva'. The target age and price positioning of brands are as shown in 〈Table 4〉.

V. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to analyze and to position the clothing images of women's formal wear brands carried by at least two department stores in Daejon, for providing data for a basic marketing strategy for fashion manufacturers and distributors.

The results from the study were as follows ; The Lotte, Timeworld, and Say department stores in Daejon divided their merchandise according to age, occasion, price, and image. The second floor were on display clothes for young women, women's formal on the third floor, and high—priced women's formal wear on the fourth floor. In the case of the Say department store, the first and second floors were on display clothes for young women, with the third floor dedicated to women's formal clothes. The display of young women's clothes in the first and second floors of the Say department store were in stark contrast with the Lotte, Timeworld department stores. Forty—three national brands were present

in Lotte, fifty-one in Timeworld, and twenty-four in Say.

According to the brands image analysis, the brand that showed the highest classic image was 'BCBG'(83.6%), the brand that showed the highest feminine image was 'Obzee' (80.2%), the brand that showed the highest character image was 'Doho' (84.1%), and the brand that showed the highest mannish image was 'F. Station' (64.1%).

First of all, fashion creation is generated from the desires of the newness and sex connoted in human beings. The horizontal axis, indicating whether the image was masculine or feminine, was the basis for fashion concepts, i.e.,the departure of fashion origin. The vertical axis, indicating whether the image was classic or new avant-garde (character, trendy), depicts innovativeness, i.e., the degree of newness.

And, the similarity among brand images would be found by examining the relative distances on the multidimensional space(8 spaces). Brands, such as 'Deco', 'Mine', 'Time', and 'Anne Klein', lying on or near the point of intersection (where the vertical and horizontal axes meet) showed 4 types that showed compound images.

The brands from the position of 'Deco', via elegant image to modern image were considered as a smart & chic cluster, also the brands from the position of 'Mine', via ethnic image to elegant image were considered as a charming & luxury cluster, the brands from the position of 'Time' via ethnic image to sportive image were considered as a character elegance cluster, and the brands from the position of 'Anne Klein' brand via sportive image to modern image were considered as a sportive elegance cluster.

These clusters would be differentiated from young casual lines by emphasizing the brands'

shape and cut, higher quality fabrics and materials, and elegant and graceful colors. And, the images within each clusters (triangular area) would be further developed by mixing and transforming silhouettes, details, colors, and materials essentially.

Analysis of target ages and jacket prices for brands in at least two department stores showed that the target was between 23 and 50, and that the prices range from 198,000 won to 460,000 won. The highest priced brand was 'Kuho,' 'Obzee', 'Reneevon', 'Time', and the brands with highest target age were 'Kup', 'Uva', 'She's miss', 'Solezia'. It is believed that offering products with a wider range of prices would lead to better retention of customers in light of the fact that the target range will become even wider, trends indicate that the formal wear market was becoming ever more casual, which would attract young, conservative customers.

Using the above results, suggestions can be made to fashion manufacturers and distributors on their sales strategies. As the standard of living increases, consumers are becoming ever more fractured, increasingly focusing on trends and their own aesthetics and tastes. Customers will require clothes that are focused on life, and living it to their fullest with special emphasis on their own individualism.

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