

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

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## 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.<sup>1)</sup>

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

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.<sup>2)</sup>

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', 'Igenpost', 'Nice Club', 'Karkani', 'D-day', 'Reibous Clride', '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 wearred 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-

egories: comfortable, natural, active.<sup>3)</sup>

The form of classic styles can be summarized into two types of box in straight and simple H-line and of slim one eliminated of unnecessary margin, both of which styles has the common fact of non-restriction of activities of human body. As form is simple, material and color dominated the style largely. Colors form the stable group of tones which is less affected by the trend and try diverse mixtures in giving the freshness using the change of tones and subtle colors.<sup>4)</sup>

In art patterns, stripe pattern, logo and emblem are distinguished. Items is constituted of jacket, jumper, shirt, T-shirt, sweater, skirt, pant and one-piece dress. Each item is simple in ornaments, and is not technologically complex in aspects of composition. As it sustains the consistent style relatively not affected by season and years compared to trendy casual, it can be said not to be less affected by change in fashion mode. <Figure 1><sup>5)</sup> There is not big difference in items between male and female, while there are many looks of unisex able to be fit to both genders.<sup>6)</sup>



<Figure 1>  
American Classic  
Casual



<Figure 2>  
American Trendy  
Casual

Shoes are weared in style of clean ones for

walking and basic design for sports. As accessories, big pack in big size or messenger bag are weared with baseball hat. POLO, Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger, and Levis can be exemplated as representative classic casual brands

## 2. American Trendy Casual

Trendy casual appeared to express personality and beauty of individual's body since 1990 in which era, interest in health and sexual freedom have deepened. Therefore, characteristics of trendy casual lies in its capacity of showing being casual and being sexy at the same time while it sustains being casual. That is to say, its ability of coordinating for individuality and sexual charming on exposed body while still in pursuing comfort and practicability attracts women in 10's and 20's with its fashionable mode in addition. There are changes according to seasons and years in aspects of material, colors and forms in differences among styles such as silhouette and forms in each genders. Though the composition of items does not show big difference from traditional casual, it shows the distinguished difference in silhouette, matching, material, and color. As it mainly focuses on revealing the curve of body, its form is small and short in length and is constituted of fitted silhouette, while loose sweater or pants are sometimes in vogue to create the effect of contrast. Elastic stretching material are dominant while diverse colors and tones are used on each situation on mode.

Women's trendy casual styles show the total trend of shortage and lightness. T-shirts are dominated by styles of exposing waist fitted to body as they have diverse designs with prints of characters or big logos of English alphabet or numbers. In fall and winter season, T-shirt with hood tightly fitted

to body or training jacket, casual jacket and blue jacket pointing out the change in material or design, are wearred. Pants are dominated by very short micro-mini skirts while wearing skinny jean or leggings emphasizes the main point of exposing silhouette of legs. Silhouette constitutes the basic line by A type or the straight fitted well into body. The style with flare or gather put into short skirt of A form is dispersed as it is cheered up as items able to show young girls's cuteness and the sexy of them. <Figure 2><sup>7)</sup> Man's style is dominated by loose T-shirt and trousers in addition to denim jacket with many pockets or jumper with hood. In case of trousers, both genders wear the row-rise jeans fitted well into body with shortage in length in below and above, while trousers with cargo style in abundance of pockets and silhouette are sometimes in wearing in affection of military styles.

Accessories try to give the point in wearing belt of diverse design on short pants while sandals in summer season, shoe without hoof or sports shoes in winter season upgrade the level of activity. Abercrombie & Fitch, American Eagle, Urban outfitters, Holister, etc., are representative brands in this style.

### III. Domestic Expanding Trace of American Trendy Casual

The reason of domestic expansion of American trendy casual style is that globalization has upgraded the frequency of contacts with American culture. Though its expanding trace in domestic influx are diverse as literature review and internet search show them, three main paths can be considered into exposition to mass media such as drama and film, the use of online-network, shopping experience through representative sales service.

### 1. Exposure to Mass Media

We become to know American culture and fashion style through TV, movie, internet and magazine in case we don't have direct experience of American culture. Many American dramas have been and now are being shown on cable TV as well as public broadcasting which are very popular among young women in Korea. Most typical dramas among them are 'Sex & City' and 'Friends'. 'Friends' has shown high rate of viewing as it reached up to 4th rank among programs including ones in public broadcasting, and 'Sex & City' has created the trend of viewing American drama among young generation as almost twenty five thousand are joining the fan club of 'Sex & City', which has made one of trends in young generation as pronounced as 'MiD'.<sup>8)</sup> This popularity is resulted from detailed description of culture which women living in trendy city enjoys, in dealing with common problems every women have, which is well accepted into domestic market in Korea in its harmonized integration of specific aspect of culture in American city and cultural universality.

On next, as the cause of expansion of American casual style, the fact that many trendy movies are now being screened in domestic market can be considered. Among those movies, fifteen movies such as "Win a date with Tad Hamilton", "Along Came Polly", "50 First Dates", "The Prince & Me", "Mean Girls", has been ranked in domestic box office.<sup>9)</sup> As these movies had the elements of teenager's cheerful can be enjoyed without stress and represent American culture well, they were popular in Korea. Because main female characters in these movies focus mainly on decorating their appearances with light romances of teenager's, we can see their casual look in raw, which can be

easily accepted in Korea as they have high potential of being weared in real life.

These movies and dramas also created fashion icons. Key Earston in *Spider Man*, Jenniper Lopez as singer as well as movie actress, Olson sisters in New York mean it, Sarah Jessica Parker in *Sex and the City*, Peris and Niki Hilton as inheritor of Hilton Hotel, Singer Larry Dup and Amuly Simpson, Marsha Button, Siena Muller are representative fashion icons. Because products they wear in music video or screen become to be in vogue or photographs of their daily lives become to be known through internet and cable TV with easy mode of imitation, their styles weared in daily lives become to be also among consumers in Korea.

## 2. Using Network

American trendy casual can be more easily contacted in diverse modes through internet cafe or club which are the most effective place for creating networks among new generation. In case of cyworld([www.cyworld.com](http://www.cyworld.com)), number of related clubs reaches up to ninety, and daum([www.daum.net](http://www.daum.net)) also has one hundred number of related cafes. Except these cafes, daily appearance of hollywood actors shown in blogs such as in naver, as they are mostly wearing comfort and practical styles, general customers can accept their styles and wear them easily. These casual styles also deliver very unique image different from easy casual or unisex in Korea. That is to say, as they are natural styles with capacity of expressing the sexy and the cute, they can fulfill diverse demands of domestic young customers in Korea.

## 3. Shopping Experience

Another reason of fast expansion of American

casual style is that it becomes possible to purchase American casual brand without going abroad. In past, it was hard to purchase products weared by stars as most of them were not traded in Korea. However, around twenty of internet shopping malls giving the services of buying foreign brands, such as wizwid([www.wizwid.com](http://www.wizwid.com)), usshop([www.usshop.co.kr](http://www.usshop.co.kr)), iehouse([www.iehouse.com](http://www.iehouse.com)), enjoynewyork([www.njoyny.com](http://www.njoyny.com)), are now being in active sales, in which their gross sales are increasing rapidly.<sup>10)</sup> Domestic customers can easily buy products of styles which stars in American entertainment wears in low price as well as diverse choices.

## IV. Cases of Imitations of American Trendy Casual Styles by Domestic Brands

As popularity goes wider on American trendy casual style traded in domestic market in diverse ways, it has been found that customers as well as domestic casual market imitate and produce trendy casual styles in slight modification or in exact copy. The results of investigation into domestic casual brands in division of clothes and goods are as below.

### 1. Clothes

In comparison of American brands producing casual styles and domestic young casual brands, common facts have been found in silhouette, form, material and details of clothes. First of all, seeing outer wears in blouses, styles of American brands which are short in length and fitted to body have been dominant in market, which styles can be found in domestic products as they are short in length, small in size for breast and waist, and nar-

row in shape of sleeve <refer to table 1>. Products of American brands have mostly long sleeves fitted to body shapes of Americans who have long arms, as products with long sleeves have also be found in domestic casual brands, it can be regarded that they are short in considering the body shape of domestic consumers'. Printing parts also show the strong similarities between both products,were in case of track jacket, character of letter style and their position are similar each other. The part of printing English characters used same position and shape in products with similar materials <Table1>.

Unique fact is that domestic products uses same shape for outer as well as inner face in case of same item to American products in outer clothes. In American brand, flower pattern with color tone or stripe ones are used for lining, while it uses bias tape of bright color scheme in case cloth does not have lining.

The tag for showing product specification has been made in large size of 3X5, while diverse shapes of tags are attached to each item as there is not only one kind of tag for one brand.


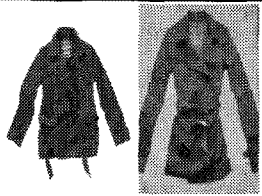

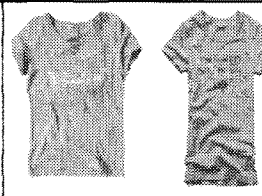
T-shirt shows strong similarities in color and printing. For example, T-shirt with yellow green from <who a u>, have similarities with that of <Abercrombie & fitch> in colors, English alphabets, and positioned flower pattern<Table 1d>. Except

this case, there is the case of imitating and modifying American characters, in which <Igenpost> uses bees in <American Eagle>, <Reibous>, <D-day> and many other domestic brands use print of coconut tree from <Hoillister> brand as California line.

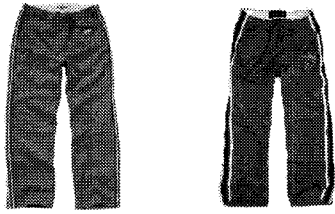
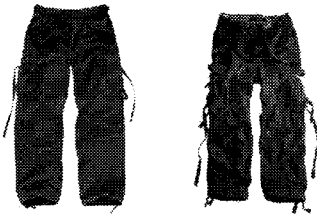
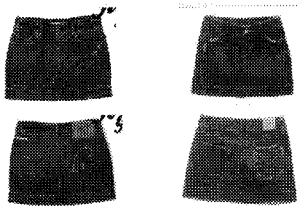
In case of trousers, there are many cases of imitations mainly in training pants, cargo pants, denim pants and denim skirts <table 2>. American training pants has side lines with bright and diver colors in printing logo or number of its brand in front part of pelvis. For example, products of Abercrombie has the application of company logo as A&F with side line, <who a u> has the line and brand logo at similar positins <table 2a>. Also in case of cargo pants in same brand, the lines of tightening the position of pocket and lower part of clothing are in same style also as they have similar color look in dark gray.

Denim pants and denim mini-skirts give similar look if there is not big change in details. Cases of imitations were done in back pockets. For example, there are many cases of printing brand logo line on back pocket, in which cases, domestic brand of <Kalkani> imitating <American Eagle>, copies exactly the dimension of lower part of cloth, position of washing operation, and pink brand logo line of back pocket <Table2>.


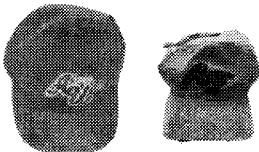

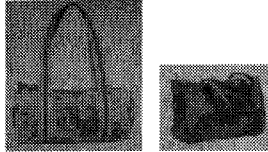
<Table 1> Cases of Imitation of American Trendy Casual by Domestic Brands -Top

			
<Who a u> <Aercrombie>	<Who a u> <Holister>	<Who a u> <Abecrombie>	<Who a u> <Abecrombie>
1a : case of cotton Jacket	1b: case of belted jacket	1c: case of short jacket	1d: case of T-shirt

<Table 2> Cases of imitations of American trendy casual by domestic brands - bottom

		
<Who a u>                      <Abecrombie>	<Who a u>                      <Abecrombie>	<Kalkani>                      <American Eagle>
2a	2b	2c
case of training pants	case of cargo pants	case of denim skirt

<Table 3> Cases of imitations of American trendy casual by domestic brands\_ accessories

			
<Clride>                      <Hollister>	<Who a u>                      <Abecrombie>	<L: Radio Garden> <R: Ralph Lauren>	<L: Radio Garden> <R: American Eagle>
3a	3b	3c	3d
case of baseball cap	case of baseball cap	case of bag	case of bag

As above, there are exact copies of various aspects of clothing forms, silhouette, decoration(print) of American brands into domestic brands, as the copy can be found even in case of lining of clothing.

## 2. Accessory

These imitations of American casual brands appear often more in goods and accessories than in clothes, as its level of imitation is high especially in design <table 3>. Baseball cap shows most cases of imitations in accessories, while they are produced in a large mount by domestic brands as items harmonized with casual wears while clothing become casualized. As baseball cap produced by American casual brand has diverse pictures as well as logo and numbers in its front, domestic brand of

<Clride> arranges English letters of 'Mother Tuckers' in <Hollister>, using same picture of truck shape, into 'Clride jean' for market <Table 3a>. As <Hollister> and <Abecrombie & Fitch> arranges diverse characters in various shapes on caps, domestic brand of <Who a u> produced similar patterns with these products. Especially <whoareyou> changes English characters of 'A F' of <Abecrombie & Fitch> into 'A U' with application of similar materials <Table 3>.

In case of bags, <Radio Garden> copies exactly the contrast of colors between pink and yellow green as well as shape of Ralph Lauren's pink pony bag in full imitation of the rest except logo of polo <Table 3c>. <Radio Garden> also imitates the shoulder bag of <American Eagle> with Hawaiian

flower pattern in red color in using similar fabric of it <Table 3d>.

## V. Conclusion

Though it is estimated that the increasing rate of domestic casual market is high compared to other clothing market, as they are mostly focused on comfort and active styles, preference on American trendy casual styles become dominant among young and sensual generations of 10's and 20's for their comfort, fitted well to body with cheering mood. Following the results in investigation into imitation modes of American casual brands and its introduction and expansion into domestic market through literature review and survey of shops, this study produces conclusions as below.

The characteristics of American trendy casual style puts its basic principles of coordination of blouse and pant with shortage in length as well as with small portion of exposition in fitting well to body. As a result, it delivers comfort, practical, sexy and cheering mood while showing wearer's personality and physical charming. It also seems to give the passion to domestic young consumers who are sensitive to the fashion in that trendy casual styles reflect the trend rapidly, while domestic casual style is not so.

Major paths of introduction and expansion of American trendy casual styles into domestic market are categorized into three terms. First, the expansion of popular style is made possible through movies and TV dramas which describe the daily lives of American young generations in its gaining attractive attention from domestic young generation. As these dramas and movies especially deliver the uniqueness and universality at the same time to domestic young generation, they promote themselves largely

to understanding and learning their sense of styles as well as actual feeling of American culture. Moreover, main characters in movies and drama have many cases of being fashion icons, clothes which they wear and their daily lives with general clothing are introduced through internet or cable TV. Second, information about fashion styles of American stars and Korean stars are rapidly spread and traded nationwide through cyber networks such as cyworld, daum, and blogs in naver. Third path is through internet shopping mall which purchase the product in representation of domestic consumers, which accelerates the speed of expansion of American trendy casual into domestic market, where consumers can actually purchase and wear what they can only see in TV, movie and magazine.

As this expansion of American trendy casual, cases of imitation of American casual brands by domestic casual brands have been increased. In some cases of casual brands in investigation, most of surveyed items such as color, print, detail shows the exact copy of items of American trendy casual brands. They still have small gap in price and material, while sizes are fitted to domestic body shapes in some products. Imitations are found simultaneously in clothes such as jacket, T-shirt, skirt and trousers as well as accessories such as cap and bag, while the level of imitation is higher in accessories than in clothes.

It is expected that the preference of casual styles will be consistent in future as casual styles can make it possible to express physical charming freely as well as wearer's personality while keeping the fashion trend. The fashionable expansion of American trendy casual style will be consistent as the necessary of studying and training abroad are still existing, the exposition to American culture will be deepened through American TV dramas and movies



in domestic broadcasting, and information exchange will be accelerated through internet. Following these facts, it is urgently necessary for domestic casual brands to develop unique style without imitating items of American trendy casual brands. For this purpose, why American casual style is popular in young generation should be analyzed completely in the basis of style, material, image and trading routes, and what domestic customers prefer about casual wear exactly. Then, based on these surveys, physical uniqueness and diverse characters and passions of domestic consumers' should be reflected into trendy casual styles.

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